

# Zois the Eretrian, wife of Kabeiras (22 Ziebarth): Music, sexuality, and κιθάρισμα in cultural context<sup>1</sup>

---

KEVIN SOLEZ  
*MacEwan University*  
[solezk2@macewan.ca](mailto:solezk2@macewan.ca)

## *Introduction*

A 2004 article by Lucia Prauscello<sup>2</sup> argues for the interpretation of the word κιθάρισμα, which normally means ‘that which is played on the cithara, a piece of music for it’ (*LSJ* s.v.), as a metaphor for sexual activity on a lead curse tablet of uncertain date, but probably before the common era<sup>3</sup>, found in Boeotia in 1877 and edited by Erich Ziebarth<sup>4</sup>. This curse

---

1 — For helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper I would like to thank David Creese, Michael J. Griffin, Hendrik Obsieger, Zinon Papakonstantinou, the anonymous referees at EuGeStA, and the audience at the annual meeting of the Classical Association of Canada in Halifax, 2011. I am responsible for all errors that remain.

2 — CQ 54, 333-39.

3 — The debate is between a date as early as the fourth century BCE or in the first century BCE, see Gager 1992, 85-6. Since performing lyre-music in public is unheard of for married women in the Classical period, but only appears in the Hellenistic and becomes more common in the Roman period, the first century BCE date for the *kitharisma*-curse mentioned by Gager is more likely than a fourth century BCE date.

4 — The reference in Prauscello’s article to *SBAW* (1934) is incorrect. The text of this curse

is exceedingly rare because it curses a musical composition, performance, or skill, and it may be unique in this regard<sup>5</sup>. Throughout this paper it is referred to as the *kitharisma*-curse.

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 22 Ziebarth                       |    |
| (A) παρατίθομαι Ζο-               | 1  |
| ίδα τὴν Ἑρετρικὴν                 |    |
| τὴν Καβεῖρα γυναῖκα               |    |
| -[τ]ῇ Γῇ καὶ τῷ Ἑρμῇ, τὰ βρώ-     |    |
| ματα αὐτῆς, τὸν ποτᾶ, τὸν ὕ-      | 5  |
| πνον αὐτῆς, τὸν γέλωτα,           |    |
| τὴν συνουσίην, τὸ κιθ{φε}άρισ[μα] |    |
| αὐτῆς κῆ τὴν πάροδον αὐ-          |    |
| [τῆς], τὴν ἡδον<ήν>, τὸ πυγίον,   |    |
| [τὸ] (φρό)νημα, {ν} ὀφθα[λμοὺς]   | 10 |
| - - ἀπηρη(?) τῇ Γῇ.               |    |
| (B) καὶ τῷ Ἑρμῇ τὴν               | 1  |
| περιπάτη<σι>ν μοχθη-              |    |
| ρην, ἔπεα ργα, ῥήματα κακὰ        |    |
| καὶ τὸ — —                        |    |

(A) I commit Zoïs the Eretrian, wife of Kabeiras, to Gaia and Hermes. [I commit] her eating, drinking, her sleep, laughter, sexual intercourse, her κιθάρισμα<sup>6</sup> and her πάροδος, pleasure, little rump, thought, sight [...] to Gaia. (B) And to Hermes [I commit] her shameful walking about, her words, [d]eeds, evil speech, and [...]<sup>7</sup>.

Comparing this text to other curse tablets and love charms, Prauscello determines that the position of κιθάρισμα and πάροδος, situated as they are after ‘sexual intercourse’ and before ‘pleasure’ and ‘little rump’, clearly indicates a sexual connotation for both words, and adducing texts from Attic Old Comedy and Hellenistic epigram in which sexual and musical diction are used in metaphorical relation to one another, she concludes

tablet as edited by Ziebarth is found in *SPAW* (1934), 1040, i.e. *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 33, as cited in *LSJ Rev. Supp.* The bibliography on this text is yet more fraught. 22(A) Ziebarth contains the *hapax legomenon* πυγίον, which in the 1996 supplement to *LSJ* is said to appear on a text in *SDAW* (1934), i.e. in the *Sitzungsberichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, which was published only from 1948-1968. The tablet itself is in Athens, Nat. Mus. Inv. 9363.

5 — A lyre-player is cursed in an erotic context on *PGM* LXVI, but it is not his music or performance that is cursed; the spell attempts to cause a rift between the lyre-player, Philoxenus, and a male friend.

6 — The reading κιθάρισμα was first suggested by F. Hiller von Gärtringen (Prauscello 2004, 333; Ziebarth 1934, 1040), and has been accepted by all subsequent scholars, see Ogden 2009, 229; Chaniotis et al. 2004, 524; Gager 1992, 85-6; Faraone 1991, 14; Audollent 1967, Nr. 86, 556; Ziebarth 1934, 1040; Wünsch, 1900, Nr. 3, 71.

7 — All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

that κιθάρισμα metaphorically indicates “a kind of erotic foreplay” (2004, 339).

In this paper, I explore the alternative possibility that the meaning of κιθάρισμα in the curse has the more concrete ‘that which is played on the cithara’ referent, basing my arguments on the semantics of κιθάρισμα, examples of female lyre-players from the literary and epigraphic record, and musico-sexual metaphors in ancient Greek literature, which were not fully explored by earlier interpreters<sup>8</sup>.

The first reason that we should be literal in our interpretation is that the ancient practitioner of magic was not prone to metaphor but rather attempted to be as specific as possible in clearly identifying the entities to be cursed<sup>9</sup>. From a religious perspective one did not want to mislead the dangerous underworld deities and risk both an ineffectual result and personal harm<sup>10</sup>. If we take the words of the *kitharisma*-curse literally, we are presented with an accursed woman, the γυνή of Kabeiras, who has certain charms and skills that combine music and sexuality. On the musical side, she possesses κιθάρισμα, which is a musical composition for the lyre, and πάροδος, which, coordinated with κιθάρισμα, should mean ‘the first song sung by a chorus after its entrance’ (*LSJ* s.v. III.2.b) or ‘a public recitation’ (*LSJ* s.v. III.4). Zois’ musical skills are cursed alongside her sexual charms, such as sex, pleasure, little rump, and shameful walking about. The second reason we should take the text literally is that there is, in fact, no interpretive difficulty in the combination of items to be cursed if the cultural history of ancient Greek music is considered. Lyre-playing and sex are associated both in private and public contexts for both men and women – in the home, at symposia, in public recitals and musical competitions. The sexualized lyre-player is usually male [**Figure 1**]<sup>11</sup>, but there are many examples where a female performer is presented in this way [**Figure 2**], and one example from Achilles Tatius<sup>12</sup> features an unmarried woman performing her lyre-composition (κιθάρισμα) to erotic effect for male guests, providing a clear representation in literature of the kind of association between lyre music and sex found on the *kitharisma*-curse.

8 — κιθάρισμα is for Ogden (2009, 229) “lyre-playing”, for Gager (1992, 85-6) “playing of the kithara”, and for Faraone (1991, 14) “cithara playing”. The analysis of κιθάρισμα as an action-noun, ‘lyre-playing’, is otherwise unattested, and I do not adopt it here; see Prauscello 2004, 335-6. *LSJ Rev. Supp.* (1996) s.v. κιθάρισμα accepts this new proposed meaning based on 22 Ziebarth.

9 — I thank Zinon Papakonstantinou for this observation. See also Faraone 1991, 4-8. *Defixiones* often used special, twisted orthography (Ogden 2009, 210), and the fact that κιθάρισμα is written this way in the curse (κιθ{φει}άρισ[μα]) further suggests that this item was of particular importance; the magician or *defigens* intended to especially bind the κιθάρισμα.

10 — Voutiras 1999, 73, 75.

11 — Power 2010, 57-71.

12 — Passages in Achilles Tatius (*LC* 1.19, 2.7) analyzed on p. 9-10 below.

### *The semantics of κιθάρισμα*

Beginning with the semantics of κιθάρισμα helpfully reduces a potentially unwieldy set of evidence involving lyre music and sex. The meaning of this word is central to the sociology of this curse, because it prompts the question: what sort of woman composes lyre music or is known for her performance of pieces for the lyre? A search of the *TLG* and the *PHI* epigraphic database reveals eight literary and three epigraphic attestations of κιθάρισμα.

Preliminary observations are that it is not a common word, not attested earlier than Plato, and is most common in the second and third centuries CE. The literary examples are found in the works of five authors<sup>13</sup>, four of which were active in these centuries; only Plato's single use of the word predates the Second Sophistic. The three epigraphic examples<sup>14</sup> come from Delphi, Cyprus, and Boeotia (*kitharisma*-curse), with secure dates associated with the examples from Delphi (200-175 BCE) and Kourion (130/1 CE). Plato in the Classical period and the Hellenistic victory inscription from Delphi are followed by eight attestations in the second and third centuries CE and the undated *kitharisma*-curse.

In musical context, the term κιθάρισμα should be uncontroversial and straightforward. Prauscello's presentation of the syntax, morphology, and semantics is excellent (2004, 335-6): according to Faraone, Gager, and the *LSJ* Supplement<sup>15</sup>, 22 Ziebarth presents a *hapax* denotation for κιθάρισμα as a synonym of κιθάρισις 'playing on the cithara', but κιθάρισμα as a piece of music is "the only sense well attested by both epigraphic and literary evidence"<sup>16</sup>. By interpreting κιθάρισμα as a synonym of κιθάρισις previous commentators have created a linguistic problem that is not generated by the curse itself; for some reason, they do not wish κιθάρισμα to be a piece of music. Its coordination with πάροδος should allow a single contextualization for both nouns<sup>17</sup>, and the two terms together clearly relate to the often eroticized musical culture of the Hellenistic and Roman periods<sup>18</sup>.

An examination of all the attestations in ancient Greek demonstrates a semantic range of κιθάρισμα that goes beyond musical compositions; as we see below, at least one use of the word must refer to correct fingering for a piece of music or to the parts of a piece (Ael. *VH* 3.32.1-4). Pl. *Prot.*

13 — Pl. *Prot.* 326b; Max. Tyr. *Diss.* 1.6.16, 17.5.27, 26.2.16; Ach. Tat. *LC* 2.1.1, 2.2.1; CD *HR* 63.26.2; Ael. *VH* 3.32.4.

14 — *FD III* 3:128; I.Kourion 104, line 6; 22(A) Ziebarth, line 7.

15 — κιθάρισμα "2. = κιθάρισις, *SPAW* 1934.1040 (tab.defix., Boeot.)."

16 — Prauscello 2004, 336.

17 — Prauscello 2004, 335.

18 — Power 2010, 34. Gager 1992, 86 (n.3) allows the possibility of a sexualized public recital.

326a-b<sup>19</sup> presents κιθαρίσματα as the lyre parts that accompany the singing in ποιήματα. The term κιθαρίσματα is the object of the preposition εἰς governed by the participle ἐντείνοντες, literally ‘attuning’, but here, ‘playing’ might be better. These ποιήματα are presented as having set lyre parts, rhythms, and harmonies.

In the Delphic inscription dated 200-175 BCE<sup>20</sup> a κιθάρισμα from Euripides’ *Bacchae* is said to have been performed in the Pythian stadium<sup>21</sup>. Three hundred years pass before we get another attestation of this rare word. In the inscription from Kourion dated 130/1 CE κιθάρισμα is a piece of music dedicated (ἀνέθηκεν) to Chthonic Adonis by a certain Antinoos, but the fragmentary state of the text makes this uncertain<sup>22</sup>.

In the second and third centuries CE witnesses increase. Maximus of Tyre uses our word three times, always in negative comparison to philosophy or to Archaic poetry. In his first oration he consistently uses the image of the musician to explore themes in philosophy<sup>23</sup>, and he favourably compares his sophistic performances to musical and theatrical ones, coordinating αὐλήματα ‘pieces for the aulos’ and κιθαρίσματα with μούσα τραγική τις ἢ κωμωδική, that is, tragedy or comedy<sup>24</sup>. This establishes a formulaic pattern for Maximus, where κιθαρίσματα always appears as the second term, following αὐλήματα. In the seventeenth oration, Maximus coordinates αὐλήματα and κιθαρίσματα with τὰ Ὀμήρου, Homeric epic, stating the inferiority of these mere pieces of music<sup>25</sup>. In the twenty-sixth oration κιθαρίσματα appears again alongside αὐλήματα and Archaic hexameter poetry, τὰ μὲν Ὀμήρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου ἔπη, in a statement that Homer and Hesiod should be praised for more profound qualities than composition and harmony, as aulos and lyre music are<sup>26</sup>. In Maximus’ diction, κιθαρίσματα is always collocated with αὐλήματα in a formulaic expression referring to musical compositions, compared, always unfavourably, either with philosophy or with archaic hexameter.

The word κιθάρισμα appears in the work of the historians Dio Cassius and Aelian, in each on one occasion. It is used with a straightforward meaning in a famous episode at D.C. 63.26.2, where the Emperor Nero shows little interest in affairs of state, and rather focuses on τῆς τε φωνῆς καὶ τῶν ᾠμάτων τῶν τε κιθαρισμάτων ‘his voice, songs, and

19 — [...] ἐπειδὴν κιθαρίζειν μάθωσιν, ἄλλων αὖ ποιητῶν ἀγαθῶν ποιήματα διδάσκουσι μελοποιῶν, εἰς τὰ κιθαρίσματα ἐντείνοντες, καὶ τοὺς ῥυθμοὺς τε καὶ τὰς ἀρμονίας ἀναγκάζουσιν οἰκειοῦσθαι ταῖς ψυχαῖς τῶν παίδων [...].

20 — *FD III* 3:128.

21 — Dubois and Jouanna 2000, 497; Chandezon 1998, 36-40.

22 — *I.Kourion* 104, line 6. Prauscello is skeptical of the reconstruction (2004, 333, n.2).

23 — Trapp 1997, 3-4.

24 — Max. Tyr. *Diss.* 1.6.15-17.

25 — Max. Tyr. *Diss.* 17.5.26-7.

26 — Max. Tyr. *Diss.* 26.2.12-6.

cithara compositions'. Aelian presents a more complex example. Ael. *VH* 3.32.1-4 records a famous episode where Alexander III is learning the cithara as a child, and he is asked by his teacher to strike a particular note ἦν ἀπῆται τὰ κιθαρίσματα. Here, κιθάρισμα cannot mean 'a piece of music for the cithara', since a single song is being played, and κιθάρισμα is pluralized. It should in this context mean the specific fingerings or parts of the song the instructor wishes the student to follow. This is the first example which cannot be attributed the meaning 'piece of music for the cithara', and it should cause a reevaluation of prior instances. This is especially relevant for the earliest use of the word (Pl. *Prot.* 326a-b), where the music teachers εἰς τὰ κιθαρίσματα ἐντείνοντες, which could possibly be interpreted 'play according to the cithara parts/fingerings' or, as interpreted above, 'attune [the lyre] to the cithara pieces'.

Our exploration of the semantics of κιθάρισμα concludes with two examples preserved in Ach. Tat. *LC*. These attestations are highly relevant for the interpretation of the *kitharisma*-curse because of the following:

1. The individual performing the κιθαρίσματα is a woman.
2. The woman is the object of intense sexual attraction in the story and in the precise moment she performs music.
3. The woman's two specified κιθαρίσματα are clearly compositions for the lyre, pieces of music; one is a rendition of Homer and the other is possibly her own composition.

In the romance, Clitophon goes to his garden because the object of his affection, Leucippe, is walking there with her friend, Clio. He begins to talk to his friend Satyros about love and weddings in a voice all can hear, hoping to turn Leucippe's attention towards the erotic. This dialogue is interrupted by Leucippe's appointed time for playing the cithara<sup>27</sup>, and the young men follow her to her house, and listen to her performance (*LC* 2.1.1-3). She performs κιθαρίσματα (*LC* 2.1.1), firstly Homer's battle of the lion and the boar, and then a song that praises the rose. Her κιθαρίσματα increase the sexual attraction Clitophon feels and he fantasizes about her mouth while she sings and plays. When the music comes to an end, it is again called κιθαρίσματα (*LC* 2.2.1).

In Ach. Tat. *LC* the meaning of κιθάρισμα is plainly 'a piece of music for the cithara'. All of the literary and epigraphic attestations of this word are easily interpreted in the same way, except for Aelian's, where κιθαρίσματα must refer instead to the dynamics of performing a cithara piece. With these relatively uncomplicated semantics, the appearance of κιθάρισμα on the curse tablet – admittedly an unusual context for such

27 — Ach. Tat. *LC* 1.19.2: τῆς γὰρ κιθάρας αὐτὴν ὁ καιρὸς ἐκάλει.

a word – should not prompt a new formulation of its meaning by which it becomes a synonym of κιθάρισις. On the *kitharisma*-curse a piece of music is cursed; this is not so dissimilar from the Delphic inscription that celebrates a κιθάρισμα (*FD III* 3:128).

### *Female lyre-players*

With Ach. Tat. *LC* we have an example of a woman performing cithara pieces that partially contextualizes the *kitharisma*-curse. A young woman, the object of erotic desire, performs κιθάρισμα in a private, domestic context, which nonetheless includes a guest who is a potential lover. With the *kitharisma*-curse, I think the context is slightly different than Leucippe's domestic performance, because of the word πάροδος, which assumes a public performance. The fact that the *defixa* is married further differentiates the curse from the context of Leucippe's performance, and texts that contextualize a married female lyre-player will be discussed in this section. Because Zois is married we must keep in mind another possible motive for this curse, which is that Kabeiras himself had become displeased with the attention his wife attracted, and wished to curse her sexual and musical charms out of jealousy.

Which instrument is being intended by κιθάρισμα is an important consideration for the sexual sociology of music. Leucippe is said to play the cithara (*LC* 1.19, 2.7). There is a question in the study of Greek musical culture whether women ever played the grand concert-cithara of the virtuoso citharode<sup>28</sup>. This issue should not directly concern the topic at hand, since the terms κιθάρισμα, κιθάρισις, and the Homeric κίθαρις are not used exclusively in reference to the instrument known as the cithara, nor are the terms for different lyres used with precision in most ancient sources<sup>29</sup>. True to the Archaic meanings of κίθαρις, a term that referred primarily to lyre-playing on an instrument known as a φόρμιγξ<sup>30</sup>, from the Classical period onward κιθάρισμα and κιθάρισις referred to the music of the lyre and the act of playing it, whether that lyre be a λύρα, χέλυσ, κιθάρα, or φόρμιγξ, etc. Women may never have played the instrument of the cithara-virtuoso, but that has no bearing on the applicability of κιθάρισμα to the pieces of music women play on other types of lyre.

In addition to Achilles Tatius' Leucippe, the literary and epigraphic record preserves information on several other female lyre-players, fictional

28 — Power 2010, 59-60 (n.136).

29 — Power 2010, 58-9.

30 — κίθαρις refers to the action of lyre-playing at *Od.* 1.159, 8.248; *Il.* 3.54, 13.731, and only once to the physical instrument at *Od.* 1.153.

and real<sup>31</sup>. To best contextualize the *kitharisma*-curse, references to married and other respectable women are examined to account for the fact that Zois was Kabeiras' wife, and therefore likely not a *hetaira* or a slave.

Looking at lyre music made by married women or unmarried women in intimate relations with powerful men, and therefore respectable and powerful themselves, provides excellent evidence that Zois, a married woman of unknown status, could have performed her κιθάρισμα in such a way that a rival could become aware of it. Power (2010) assesses texts in which respectable married and unmarried women are understood to perform lyre music for audiences, and he posits the following possible contexts for such performances in the Hellenistic and Roman periods: religious festivals (60, 63), public recitals (62-3), theatrical concerts (64), in the woman's own home with guests present (66-7), and at private events not in their own homes (59, 68).

Two examples will amply demonstrate that a respectable woman could perform pieces for the lyre in a context where someone other than her husband might become aware of her prowess on the lyre. A funerary inscription from Rome dated to the Empire (*CIL* VI 10125) praises Auxesis, a married woman, calling her the 'best wife' and a *citharoeda*<sup>32</sup>. Among the qualities that made her praiseworthy in the eyes of her husband and family was apparently her skill at the lyre. This evidence does not prove that anyone other than her husband ever enjoyed her playing, but it certainly proves that her musical skill was not something to be kept private, but rather to be eternally praised in a funerary inscription. Could Auxesis have shown off her lyre music during her lifetime, either in the home or at a festival, to the approval of her proud husband? This is certainly possible.

A helpful example is Panthea of Smyrna, the mistress of the second century CE Roman Emperor Verus (r.161-9). She was a *hetaira* to be sure, but as the mistress of the Emperor, she was presumably no longer in the employ of other men, but lived in a kind of conjugal relationship. In her daily business she was escorted by eunuchs and soldiers<sup>33</sup>. *Hetaira* or not, she was a respected woman, subject of great fame and praise, and she sang while playing the cithara in the quasi-public domestic context that is the imperial court. In *Luc. Im.* 10 she is called τὴν βασιλεῖ συνοῦσαν [...] τὴν ἀοιδίμον αὐτήν '(sexual) companion/mistress of the Emperor [...] the renowned woman'. The term συνοῦσαν has resonance with the *kitharisma*-curse, as συνοῦσι 'sexual intercourse' is the last item cursed before κιθάρισμα; these two terms comprise line 7. Panthea's singing and lyre-playing are praised at *Luc. Im.* 13-4, with the word κιθάρα used three

31 — Female lyre-players and citharodes are explored at length in Power 2010, 57-71.

32 — Power 2010, 68.

33 — *Luc. Im.* 10.

times<sup>34</sup>, following praise of her beauty (Luc. *Im* 1-10). Here we have the kept woman of the Emperor renowned for both her physical beauty and her musical skill, an example of a relatively high-status woman whose musical prowess is considered alongside her physical charms. This is not to say that her status was that of a wife of the emperor or a member of the imperial family, but should be considered on par with “the family of Caesar”, that group of slaves and commoners who achieved a favourable status as bureaucrats, servants, and advisors to the imperial household.

These examples go to show that women considered appropriate for marriage or long-term relationships sometimes continued their musical vocation or hobby while in relationships with men. Women’s performance on the lyre or lyre compositions were not something reserved for those who were not married or marriageable, the *hetairai*, slaves, or lower classes. A married woman, high or low status, might cultivate this skill, and it may be a source of great pride for her husband. That it may have also been a source of anxiety for him does not require much argument, considering how Greek culture configured female performers, often assimilating them to prostitutes. This does not mean that every female lyre-player was a prostitute.

### *Musico-sexual metaphors in ancient Greek*

With the examples of female lyre-players presented above a clear context for the *kitharisma*-curse has been established. Moreover, the combination of lyre music with sex in the *kitharisma*-curse is not incongruous with Greek musical culture, and we can observe that there are many examples where sex and the lyre are associated in every period of Greek literature. The relationship between sex and music involving the lyre has received less scholarly attention than that between sex and music involving the aulos<sup>35</sup>, but the dichotomy of the lyre and the aulos created in philosophical discussions of the New Music, and influentially elaborated by Nietzsche, does not deserve to govern discussions of Greek musical culture at large, which was clearly more fond of the aulos than Classical

<sup>34</sup> — Power 2010, 66.

<sup>35</sup> — See Csapo 2004, Martin 2003, and Wilson 1999. Wilson and Csapo illustrate the perspective that favours the sexual representation of the aulos while downplaying the sexual valence of the cithara or *lyra*, and are partially refuted by Martin, but he too isolates the cithara from sensual contact between individuals in his analysis of lyre-playing in vase painting (Csapo 2004, 217-8, 233; Martin 2003, 153-4, 173; Wilson 1999, 69-70, 76, 82-85). An opposition of the lyre and the aulos is a development of the Classical period, as Martin (153) and Csapo (218) point out, especially among the philosophers Aristotle and Plato, but it was an attempt to comment on, and demean, the nature of the aulos as part of a critique of New Music. It was not meant as a judgement of the lyre, which retained its traditional associations in Classical Athens, some of which were erotic, as Wilson makes plain in his discussion of the symposium (84).

philosophers were, and did not preserve the cithara solely in orderly and rational contexts, as Nietzsche would have it<sup>36</sup>.

Beginning with Homer and continuing to Late Antiquity, lyre-playing is suggestive of erotic behaviour because it actually accompanies or precedes explicit or implicit sexual contact between individuals. In the *Iliad*, Paris' lyre-playing illustrates the concrete relationship between lyre-playing and erotic behaviour<sup>37</sup> and the lyre-playing between Achilles and Patroclus<sup>38</sup> is seen to indicate erotic intimacy from the Classical period onward<sup>39</sup>. The Archaic examples of erotic context for lyre music combine with the realities of the symposium [Figure 3] to create the semiotic register to which all erotic lyre-playing metaphors refer. Metaphors involving lyre music and sex are highly productive in Greek literature, but this is not a reason to posit a metaphorical meaning of κιθάρισμα in 22 Ziebarth.

The debate about the *kitharisma*-curse needs to incorporate the following point. If we analyze the texts adduced to establish that the metaphorical application of musical terminology to the erotic sphere is common<sup>40</sup>, we find that the opposite transference of vocabulary, from the erotic to the musical sphere – 'music is sex' in the orthography of conceptual metaphor theory<sup>41</sup> – is also common. Prauscello's argument rested in part on the notion that 'sex is music' metaphors are common and this should lead us to find one in the *kitharisma*-curse, but if 'music is sex' metaphors are equally common, this takes much of the force away from this portion of her argument. That is, could any of the sexual terms in the *kitharisma*-curse have a musical valence, such as συνουσία or περιπάτησις in the context of a πάροδος? Relying on the evidence of musico-sexual metaphors in literature, they very well could. Prauscello says we shouldn't read κιθάρισμα as musical because of the sexual content of the curse, whereas a straight-forward reading of the curse presents a

36 — "The music of Apollo was Doric architecture transmuted into sounds, but only into suggestive sounds such as those of the cithara. Care was taken to ensure that the one element held to be non-Apolline was excluded, the very element of which Dionysiac music consisted – the overwhelming power of sound, the unified flow of melody and the utterly incomparable world of harmony" (Nietzsche 1993 [1878], 20).

37 — *Il.* 3.54, with the phrase κίθαρις τὰ τε δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης. Calame states 'the gifts of Aphrodite' is "yet another way of referring to carnal love" (1999, 40).

38 — *Il.* 9.185-91.

39 — Clarke 1978, 381, 390. Selected authors and works cited by Clarke are: Aesch. (*Myrmidons* f. 135-6 Nauck); Aeschines (*Tim.* 142-50); Plato (*Sym.* 179E - 180B); Theocr. (*Id.* 29.31-4).

40 — Prauscello 2004, e.g. *Ar. Ran.*; Pherecr. *Chiron*; *AP* 5.99. Calame 1999, e.g. *Alc.* f. 27 Page.

41 — Conceptual metaphor theory is amply illustrated with numerous examples by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980, 453-86). If the subject of a passage is music and erotic vocabulary is employed to describe it, the metaphor is represented as 'music is sex'. If the subject of a passage is sex and musical vocabulary is used to describe it, the metaphor is represented as 'sex is music'.

curse that is musical and sexual. Since there are ample metaphors that render sexual vocabulary musical (including in the material adduced by Prauscello), the fact that there are also metaphors rendering musical vocabulary sexual does not suggest a sexual meaning for κιθάρισμα.

In Ar. *Ran.* 1325-8, there is clearly a 'music is sex' metaphor operating with the sexualized muse of Euripides, who is said to compose music "like the twelve positions of Cyrene". Euripides' music is said to be like the contortions of a prostitute. In Pherecr. *Chiron* (f. 155 PCG) there are several 'music is sex' and 'sex is music' metaphors<sup>42</sup>. AP 5.99 is the text adduced by Prauscello that presents an unambiguous 'sex is music' metaphor, like the one she proposes for the *kitharisma*-curse. But, the coexistence of 'music is sex' metaphors throughout Greek literature advises caution when attributing a metaphorical meaning to the curse. Alc. f. 27 asks the muse Calliope to ἀρχ' ἐρατῶν φεπέων, ἐπὶ δ' ἡμερον/ῥυμνω καὶ χαρίεντα τίθη χορόν (lines 2-3), using words related to ἔρω, 'desire' and 'charm' to describe the parts of his ῥυμος. In *h.Merc.* 449, Apollo finds the music of the lyre to contain within itself mirth, ἔρω, and sweet sleep. There is no clearer 'music is sex' metaphor than this. C. Calame however, highlights the application of musical vocabulary to the erotic without mentioning its opposite (1999, 37): "[...] it is the vast semantic field of music that most often provides the metaphorical vocabulary not only for descriptions of the youthful or springlike charm of both individuals and places but also for evocations of amorous desire". Again, despite this statement, in many of the examples adduced by Calame, the musical rendering of sexual vocabulary is also present as in the example from Alcman, and therefore we need to add to his remark that the opposite transference of vocabulary is also common. Since both types of metaphor are common, an obscure text that features both musical and sexual vocabulary is not easily interpreted using comparanda from 'sex is music' metaphors. In a situation where we have four sexual nouns or phrases, συνουσία, πυγίον, ἡδονή and περιπάτησις μοχθηρή, framing two musical nouns κιθάρισμα and πάροδος, relying on the background of literary metaphor might suggest musical meanings for one or two of the sexual terms, especially for συνουσία and περιπάτησις μοχθηρή, which could be conceived of as aspects of her troubling musical performance. I am not making such an argument, but merely pointing out what the evidence from literary music-sexual metaphors really suggests for this curse. I disagree strongly with Prauscello's comment that music and public recitation do not fit the context of the curse<sup>43</sup>; music and public performance may have motiva-

42 — Dobrov and Urios-Aparisi 1995.

43 — Prauscello 2004, 336, n. 18, and her characterization of the curse as containing "a chaotic enumeration of unrelated items" (339). Both her article and this one amply demonstrate the

ted it. The only way to attain a coherent reading of this curse is to take the words literally.

In the terms of conceptual metaphor theory, the metaphor ‘music is sex’ is just as common in ancient Greek literature as the metaphor ‘sex is music,’ and this observation should inform our analyses of texts which combine music and sexuality. That is, it is as common for erotic vocabulary to refer to music as it is for musical vocabulary to refer to sex (e.g. κιθάρισμα ‘foreplay’). The literary evidence of musico-sexual metaphors does not support a metaphorical reading of κιθάρισμα over a literal one.

Based on the texts noted above (n. 39), I do not see any reason that we should understand κιθάρισμα sexually rather than musically. To be sure, in ancient Greek culture women were more often sexualized than they were considered as musicians, but in analyzing the text of the *kitharisma*-curse, there is no reason to perceive metaphorical language considering the evidence presented above for the semantics of κιθάρισμα, the evidence for female lyre-players, and the literary evidence for musico-sexual metaphors. I reiterate, metaphor is not common in curses; it is avoided because of the exactness demanded by the ritual nature of the communication and the powers it engages<sup>44</sup>.

The texts from Old Comedy (Ar. *Ran.*, Pherecr. *Chiron*) connecting music and sexual behaviour the way they are connected at symposia with reference to musician prostitutes, and elaborating these connections to comment on the state of the New Music, are related in a general way to the *kitharisma*-curse in that they both rely on a background of regular association of lyre-playing with sexual activity. They are not, however, as directly relevant as the passages from Ach. Tat. *LC*, where lyre-playing accompanies erotic activity or desire. This passage is about erotic or intimate behaviour, and lyre music appears as part of the erotic or intimate contexts. It therefore constitutes direct evidence for the literal interpretation of words indicating ‘piece of music for the cithara’, and ‘public recital’ in the erotic context of the *kitharisma*-curse.

## Conclusion

Considering the semantics of κιθάρισμα and the cultural history of lyre-playing presented above, I suggest that the primary meaning of τὸ κιθάρισμα αὐτῆς κῆ τὴν πάροδον αὐ[τῆς] is a piece of music performed at a public recital, a performance context congruous with the other examples of female lyre performers. The *defigens* curses this musical aspect of Zoïs’ life, but the main goal seems to be to prevent her from enjoying

relationship of music and sex in ancient Greek.

44 — Faraone 1991, 4-8.

the basic pleasures of life, such as sleep, food, drink, laughter, and sex. Sexuality is marked by four terms in the curse ‘sexual intercourse’, ‘pleasure’, ‘little rump’, and ‘shameful walking about’. The other terms refer to basic physiological and mental functions, such as sight, thought, words, and actions.

Who should have cursed Zois in this way remains a mystery. Perhaps it was someone, male or female, in love with Kabeiras<sup>45</sup>. Alternatively, a person, likely female, saw herself in direct competition with Zois in some aspect of life and wished her harm in the senses prescribed in the curse; in this case the curse may be part of the rivalry among siblings or peers<sup>46</sup>. Another possibility, that the curse was commissioned by the husband Kabeiras, is rendered unlikely by him being named in the third person without any indication that he is the subject of παρατίθωμαι<sup>47</sup>. The possibility that the *defigens* is a male or female relative of Kabeiras, however, is compelling, for such people may be concerned that Zois is impugning the family honour with all her attractive charms. Maybe a relative or friend is concerned that Kabeiras has been cuckolded by Zois, and wishes to curtail her charms<sup>48</sup>. Possibly Kabeiras’ family fears that she will be unfaithful in the future because her charms are attracting the attention of other men, and they wish to hinder her attractive capabilities, which are conceived of as a combination of sex appeal and the public performance of lyre music<sup>49</sup>.

### ***Bibliography***

- Audollent A., (1967), *Defixionum Tabellae Quotquot Innotuerunt Tam in Graecis Orientis Quam in Totius Occidentis Partibus Praeter Atticas in Corpore Inscriptionum Atticarum*, Frankfurt, Minerva.
- Beckby H., (1965), *Anthologia Graeca*, Munich, Heimeran.
- Calame C., (1999), *The Poetics of Erōs in Ancient Greece*, Tr. Janet Lloyd, Princeton.

45 — As suggested by Ogden (2009, 229) and Prauscello (2004, 339). A similar love triangle is found in Voutiras 1998, 8.

46 — In rivalries of various kinds, the things identified for binding/cursing are not always directly related to the competition, as in the curse against shopkeepers, where their “soul, work, life, hands, and feet” are cursed (*IG iii.3 Appendix*, 87a; Ogden 2009, 215). We do not therefore have to assume that the *defigens* must have been in erotic competition with Zois.

47 — The interested party, when named, is often the speaker in the curse; see *Suppl. Mag.* 38.

48 — In this case, Zois would be similar to the “women who show off” in *IG iii.3 Appendix* 78 (Ogden 2009, 228).

49 — Sexuality and lyre-playing are combined also on *PGM LXVI* (third-fourth century CE), where the lyre-player, Philoxenus, is compelled to have a fight with his friend, Gennadios. The curse is obviously erotic because of the drawings of men with erections on the tablet (Ogden 2009, 229).

- Chandezon C., (1998), *La base de Satyros à Delphes: Le Théâtre Classique et son Public à L'époque Hellénistique*, CGITA 11, 33-58.
- SEG 54 = Chaniotis A., Corsten T., Stroud R. S. and Tybout R. A. (eds.), (2004), *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 54, Leiden, Brill.
- Clarke W. M., (1978), *Achilles and Patroclus in Love*, *Hermes* 106, 381-396.
- Coulon V. and Van Daele M., (1967), *Aristophane*, vol. 4, Paris, Les Belles Lettres.
- Csapo E., (2004), *The Politics of the New Music*, in: Murray P. and Wilson P. (eds.), *Music and the Muses: The Culture of 'Mousikē' in the Classical Athenian City*, New York, Oxford, 207-48.
- Dobrov G. and Urios-Aparisi E., (1995), *The Maculate Music: Gender, Genre, and the Chiron of Pherecrates*, in: Dobrov G. (ed.), *Beyond Aristophanes: Transition and Diversity in Greek Comedy*, Atlanta, Scholar's, 139-74.
- Dubois L. and Jouanna J., (2000), *Bulletin Épigraphique 2000*, REG 113, 435-84.
- Faraone C. A., (1991), *The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells*, in: Faraone C. A. and Obbink D. (eds.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York, Oxford, 3-32.
- FD III = Daux G. and Salac A., (1932-43), *Fouilles de Delphes III, Épigraphie, Fasc. 3, Inscriptions depuis le trésor des Athéniens jusqu'aux bases de Gélon*, 2 vols., Paris, De Brocard.
- Gager J. G., (1992), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York, Oxford.
- IG iii.3 Appendix = Wunsch R., (1897), *Defixionum Tabellae*, Berlin, G. Reimerum.
- I. Kourion = Mitford T. B., (1971), *The Inscriptions of Kourion*, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society.
- Kassel R. and Austin C. (eds.), (1989), *Poetae Comici Graeci*, vol. 7, Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Kilmer M. F., (1993), *Greek Erotica on Attic Red-Figure Vases*, London, Duckworth.
- Koch-Harnack G., (1989), *Erotische Symbole: Lotosblüte und gemeinsamer Mantel auf antiken Vasen*, Berlin, Gebr. Mann.
- Lakoff G. and Johnson M., (1980), *Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language*, JPh 77, 453-86.
- LSJ = Liddel H. G., Scott R., Jones H. S. and McKensie R., (1996), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., Oxford.
- Martin R. P., (2003), *The Pipes are Brawling: Conceptualizing Musical Performance in Athens*, in: Dougherty C. and Kurke L. (eds.), *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration*, Cambridge, 153-180.
- Moulton C., (1979), *Homeric Metaphor*, CP 74, 279-93.

- Nietzsche F., (1993 [1878]), *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, M. Tanner (ed.), S. Whiteside (trans.), London, Penguin.
- Ogden D., (2009), *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York, Oxford.
- Page D. L., (1967), *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford, Clarendon.
- PGM = Preisendanz K. and Henrichs A., (1973-4), *Papyri Graeci Magicae. Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Stuttgart, Teubner.
- Pottier A. E., (1913), *Il ceramografo Skythes*, Mon.Piot 20, 101-145.
- Prauscello L., (2004), *A Note on Tabula Defixionis 22(A).5-7 Ziebarth: When a Musical Performance Enacts Love*, CQ 54, 333-339.
- Suppl. Mag.* = Daniel R. W. and Maltomini F. (eds.), (1990-2), *Supplementum Magicum*, Cologne, Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Voutiras E., (1998), Διονυσοφῶντος γάμοι: Marital Life and Magic in Fourth-Century Pella, Amsterdam, Gieben.
- Voutiras E., (1999), *Euphemistic Names for the Powers of the Nether World*, in: Jordan D., Montgomery H. and Thomassen E. (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic*, Bergen, The Norwegian Institute at Athens, 73-82.
- Wilson P., (1999), *The aulos in Athens*, in: Goldhill S. and Osborne R. (eds.), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*, Cambridge, 58-95.
- Wünsch R., (1900), *Neue Fluchtafeln*, RhM 55, 62-85.
- Ziebarth E., (1934), *Neue Verfluchungstafeln aus Attika, Boiotien und Euboia*, SPAW 33, 1022-1050.



Figure 1 : A cup from Nola by Douris (500-460 BCE), once in East Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 2305, see Kilmer 1993, R595.1.



Figure 2 : A kylix by the Pedieus Painter (520-505 BCE), in Paris, Louvre, G 13, see Pottier 1913, 129, Fig. 9.

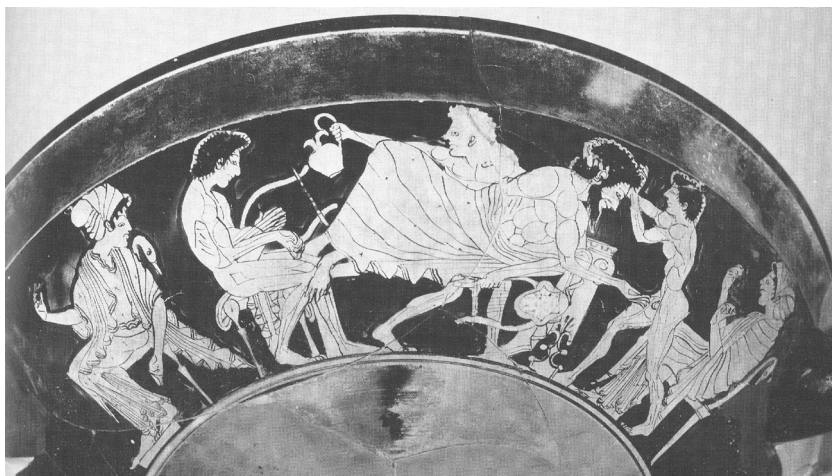


Figure 3 : A cup by Paseas (520-510 BCE), in New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 07.286.47, see Kilmer 1993, R295.