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The Bologna *defixio(nes)* Revisited

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1. Introduction

The *defixiones* of Bologna, from an unknown archaeological context, were acquired by the Museo Archeologico Civico di Bologna[2] at the end of the nineteenth century. They were edited in 1899 by A. Olivieri[3] and then, probably because of the outbreak of the First World War, they were put into storage in the museum to keep them from deteriorating, where they were hidden for over a century, until they were rediscovered in 2009. The results of the study are shown below[4].

However, before I start, I should mention that this examination will concern itself with the first, third and fourth pieces, according to Olivieri's edition, and therefore the same numeration is used. The second lead (Bologna 2) is still being studied.

As for Bologna 1, this piece measures 9.8 × 9.9 cm and is currently broken up into four parts, almost certainly due to the deep incision made by the *defigens*. As may be seen in Olivieri's photograph, the top right-hand corner is missing. It displays vestiges of rust on a large part of the surface, which was subsequently eliminated during the restoration process. The inscription runs for 19 lines, in a script identical to the two leads that follow it.

The Bologna 3 *defixio* has been reconstructed from seven fragments that fit together. The total size of the piece is approximately 4.1 × 7.1 cm. As with the previous example, the fracture lines correspond to the deep incisions made by the *defigens*. At the time of study, Bologna 3 had rust on certain areas of its surface. Its inscription runs both vertically (five lines) and horizontally (nine lines).

Finally, Bologna 4 measures 3.6 × 5.3 cm and although it is the most complete of the *tabellae*, according to the dimensions measured by the editor, it has lost 0.7 × 0.2 cm in height and width respectively which, as far as the text is concerned, means the disappearance of some of the letters on the left-hand side as well as the last line. As for its state of conservation, close examination of Bologna 4 revealed a surface that was fully rusted and with high corrosion in some areas, which made it the piece in the poorest condition thus far. The inscription runs horizontally in twelve lines, in an analogous script to Bologna 1 and 3.

The similarity between the scripts of these three pieces had previously been noted by the publisher who, when referring to the third and fourth leads, emphasised that '… il carattere è identico alla 1ª' (Olivieri 1899: 196). From a palaeographical point of view, the Bologna curses can be dated as being from the fourth to fifth centuries CE, with clear parallels to be found not only in the Sethian *defixiones*[5], but also the one inscribed on a funeral urn (Muzzioli 1939) and some of the examples from the sanctuary of Anna Perenna[6]. The height of the letters ranges between 0.5 and 0.1 cm and they display a reasonably constant *ductus*. The text has no joins, the letters being clearly separated, and the words are separated by interpuncts consisting

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[2] Inventory number: ROM 2238-2241. Unfortunately, there is no record of them in the museum's acquisitions register.

[3] Olivieri 1899: 193–198.

[4] The first examination was carried out on 19 May 2009, the second on 9 and 10 November the same year, and the third (and final examination) on 6 October 2010.

[5] *Set. Ver.* 1, in particular.

[6] Especially the *tabella* of the snakes, dedicated to Sura. Blänsdorf 2010a: 236–241.

of a single dot[7]. These characteristics, common to the three pieces, almost certainly prove the sole author-ship of what is, in fact, just one *defixio*.

This is borne out by the fact that Bologna 1 and 3 are complementary and they fit together perfectly when the latter is turned ninety degrees to the left. Again, the line of fragmentation between the two match-es the deep incision made by the *defigens* while inscribing. As for the text, it runs continuously, giving sense to the second sign on the last line of Bologna 1, which according to the *editio princeps* was roughly like an Ƨ with a small horizontal line across it. However, when read from the bottom up, this – in principle – strange sign makes perfect sense. The resultant reading is *-icus*, in other words the perfect ending for the *med-* that precedes it on Bologna 3.

Unfortunately, although it is clear that, from a palaeographical point of view, Bologna 4 is part of the same *tabella*, it has been impossible to make the connection between this piece and the ones before it. In my opinion, this fragment would have come after Bologna 3, in what must have been a large rectangular sheet (at least 17.5 × 10 cm, with over 40 lines of text), of which only the upper and left-hand margins sur-vive. After inscription, the *tabella* was folded into at least three parts.

Before analysing the text, we need to concentrate on the iconography of the piece, a *unicum* of great interest which was almost certainly drawn before the inscription[8]. Leaving aside the *charaktêres*, there are very few Latin *defixiones* with iconography. Worthy of note is the fact that the pieces with iconography are concentrated in the Mediterranean basin, particularly in *Italia*, *Africa Proconsularis* and *Byzacena*. No parallel examples have been documented outside this area. Usually, curses with icons portray either the powers being invoked or the victim of the curse[9]. On certain, very rare, occasions, these two types are combined on the same *tabella*[10], in an attempt to create a narrative structure that is hard to interpret, in which the creativity of the *defigens* or the expert assisting him play an essential role.

The piece that we are analysing here belongs to this group, as we have two images that are closely linked. In the foreground is a standing barefoot figure, with crossed or tied hands at belly height. On his chest are a magic sign and a set of *onómata barbariká*, while in the genital area is an eight-pointed star. Three sinuous snakes emerge threateningly from the left side of his crowned head, while on the right side, with what is left of two others, one would have to imagine a third, not simply for the sake of symmetry, but because of its similarity with the iconography of Bologna 2. Below, lying down, mummified and with his hands tied, or at least crossed, is the victim of the curse, perfectly recognisable because of the inscription running down both arms, which reads: *Porcellus*[11].

Having identified the second figure, we now need to go back to the first who, in my opinion, is none other than the invoked deity. In favour of this hypothesis, based on the general layout of the piece's ico-nography, it is reminiscent of the Sethian *defixiones* numbers 16 and 20[12], in which the power carrying out the curse is shown standing, in the foreground, while on the lower part of the tablet are the victims (in this case, chariot racers) lying down with their hands and feet bound. The deity of the Bologna curse has other

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[7] The use of interpuncts is fairly uncommon in this type of epigraph, being found in only a few isolated cases, such as on a piece from Bath (*Tab. Sulis* 9), the Hispanic pieces from Alcácer do Sal (Faria 2000: 107, fig 33), Córdoba (*CIL* II²/7, 251) and Carmona (Corell 1993), the north African piece *DT* 233, and the Italian pieces from Altino (Scarfí 1972), Capua (*DT* 195), Cerveteri (*CIL* I², 2765) and Ostia (*CIL* XIV, 5306), to cite a few examples.

[8] My thanks here to Dr. Richard Gordon for his valuable comments and suggestions.

[9] Regarding the powers invoked, and to cite a classic example, the north African pieces *DT* 286 and *DT* 287, with an image of a *daemon* on a boat, and also the example from *Cirta* (*CIL* VIII, 19525 = *DT* 300), with, according to Audollent 'Figura daemonis "haedi pedibus hirsutis instructi ac laqueis (?) duobus et unco armati", cum pene pendente et testiculis'. As for victims, they are represented in Jordan 1988: 129 *et seq.* (with arms and legs crossed – and bound), and perhaps also in *AE*, 1907, 165, to cite some examples.

[10] I refer here to the *Set. Ver.* 16, 19, 20, 29 and perhaps 42. No other parallels have been found, except for the one under study here.

[11] This iconography portraying the mummified victim is very common: in this regard, *Set. Ver.* 16, 17 and 43.

[12] Perhaps *Set. Ver.* 42 is also a parallel to consider.

features that characterise it, such as being barefoot and with a magic sign on the breast[13] and a series of *onómata barbariká* (Ψιαο / Βραι / ω) which are reproduced almost exactly around the figure (Βαριω) – perhaps in a play on words? The latter two characteristics are shared with the *daemon* portrayed on two curses from Susa.[14] The deity also has an eight-point star, for which I have found no parallel example in terms of its location (on the figure's genital area)[15].

As far as the snakes are concerned, they are similar to those portrayed in the curse against Sura from the sanctuary of Anna Perenna[16] and almost identical to those on Sethian *defixiones* numbers 16 and 17[17]. However, here their orientation is quite different, since instead of surrounding or attacking the victim, they emerge from the crowned head of the deity itself, perhaps reflecting the moment immediately prior to the aggression. Furthermore, their position, in the manner of hair, is astonishingly reminiscent of the extract from *PGM* IV 2800–2802, in which, invoking Selene, it is said of her: "… ἡ φοβερῶν ὀφίων χαίτην σείουσα μετώποις …"[18]. In support of this identification with Hekate–Selene would be the *onómata barbariká* which run down either side of the figure, the prayer … ΦωρΒΗ / ΦωρΒεΘ / ΦωρΒεΝ / Φωρβι / Φωρρα / Φωρρω / Φωρβι …, which is without a doubt reminiscent of the classical invocations to this goddess, since as Jordan notes, '… magical polysyllables composed of βαρ, βορ/βωρ, φορ/φωρ, and the like are often associated with Hekate–Selene'[19]. Similar invocations are attested in a large number of *defixiones*[20] and also in *PGM*[21]. However, while it is tempting to identify this figure with this deity, the absence of other characteristics, such as her trimorphism or her bearing torches, as well as the *onómata brimo* and *baubo*, traditionally associated with her, undermines this hypothesis.

Whether it is Hecate–Selene or not, it does seem that what we have here is the power that is being invoked, in view of the overall layout of the piece's iconography and the characteristics it displays. However, here we must pause to examine the most surprising and unusual of these characteristics: the position of the arms, either crossed or bound, similar to those of *Porcello*. As we know, in magical terms, this posture is equivalent to 'constriction' and usually characterises the victim of the *defixio*. Similar iconographies are attested in one of the Sethian curses[22], in which the cursed charioteers are shown with their arms and feet crossed. Similarly, on a lead tablet from Carthage[23], the object of the curse shows both sets of limbs crossed and bound with circular lines.

This pose, typical of the victims, is here documented for the first time as representing the deity[24]. Therefore I believe it should be seen as a representation of the constriction of the goddess who, bound up,

[13] This sign, made up of a small vertical line with a circle at each end, is similar to sign number 3 included in the *defixio* from Apamea (Van Rengen 1984: 216). According to Jordan, 'The straight or curved line with a circle at each end occurs frequently in magical texts (…), its commonest form is the single straight line, with a circle at each end, resembling a dumbbell' (Jordan 1996: 118).

[14] *DT* 286 and 287. In *Set. Ver.* 42, the invoked power is also barefoot.

[15] This star is similar to those documented in two Latin curses from Carthage. *Vid*. Jordan 1996: 120–122.

[16] Blänsdorf 2010a: 236–241, with the corresponding bibliography.

[17] Particularly *Set. Ver.* 16, in which the serpents not only have ears and display their forked tongue, but also a beard made up of two very characteristic tufts of hair. Also worthy of note is *Set. Ver.* 17, which shows a similar serpent, and *Set. Ver.* 49, with an interesting image of a unicorn (?) with three serpents emerging from each side of its neck.

[18] The image of Hecate crowned by serpents is also attested in the works of Sophocles (*Frag.*, 535) and Appolonius Rhodius (*Argonautica*, III, 1210–1215).

[19] Jordan 1985: 240, footnote a.

[20] To cite one example, the north African *defixio DT* 242, ll. 44–45. These invocations have also been located in other magic elements, such as a gemstone with a carving of a triple Hecate (Delatte and Derchain 1964: n° 252, *apud* Jordan 1985: 240, footnote a), and in a stucco fragment from *Tarraco* (Canós i Villena 1999).

[21] Invocations documented in *PGM* IV 1402, 1432, 2958, 2063 *et seq.*, among others.

[22] I refer here to *Set. Ver.* 20.

[23] This piece, one of the agonistic tablets, was published by Jordan 1988: 129 *et seq.*

[24] Constriction of a deity is documented in *PGM* IV 2320–30, in an invocation to Selene: '… The Moirae throw away your endless thread, unless you check my magic's winged shaft, swiftest to reach the mark. For to escape the fate of my words is impossible: happen it must (…) You'll willy-nilly do what's needed: ere useless light becomes your fate, do what I say O Maid,

Fig. 1. Bologna 1 and 3 (author's illustration)

is being subjected to the spell of the *defigens* and forced to comply with his petitions. The fact that *Porcello* appears in the same posture as she is in also suggests the magic principal of *similia similibus*[25], typical of curse formulas, here applied atypically, in that it is establishing an iconographical analogy between the deity and the victim. This comparison may be understood in two ways: either 'just as the deity is bound, so will Porcello be' or else 'until Porcello is bound, the deity will stay bound'.

ruler of Tartaros. I've bound your hair with Kronos' chains and with awesome compulsion I hold you fast. Tomorrow does not come unless my will is done.' Trans. Ronald F. Hock.

[25] There are many different examples, in both the *PGM* (X 40 *et seq.*) and actual *defixiones*, in which one can read, in one case: *Vaeraca* (or: *Uxeaca*), *sic res tua⟨s⟩: / perverse agas, comodo hoc / perverse scriptu(m) est*. The piece, from Cologne, was inscribed left to right, exceptionally transmitting the sense of *similia similibus* (in this regard, Blänsdorf–Kropp–Scholz 2010).

While it is true that this representation comes within the logic of coercion, a typical characteristic of magic, it is also true that what we have here is a completely new iconography. A *unicum* which has just one parallel: Bologna 2, a fragmentary piece which shows just the deity, in the same position and displaying the same attributes. This is why this iconography, consisting of a scene of exceptional interest, is, in my opinion, the fruit of the creativity of the professional who attended to the *defigentes* (palaeographically distinguishable) when drawing up the curse.

2. Bologna 1 and 3

2.1. Transcription

	ΦωΡΒΗ	*Ψιαο	τιωΡ
	ΦωΡΒεΘ	ΒΡαι	ΒαΡιω
	ΦωΡΒεΝ	ω	ΒαθακαΡ
	ΦωΡΒι		καμφι
5	ΦωΡΡω	*	PHO
			+++[---
	ΦωΡΒΙ	Por	ιαγαακ[---
	ΦωΡΡα	cel	CHθ · o
		lus ·	
10	Porcellu	mo	Porcel
		·lomeḍicu·	medicụ[---

molomedicu   · inṭerficite · omṇ[---
çorpus · caput · tente · oculuṣ[---
+ạ(*or* ụ?)+tas · facite · Porcellu · et ·[-c.3-]
15 rilla · usure · ịpsius · dite[---
em · corpus · omṇịs · menbra ·[---
bisc+d+ · Porcelli · qui · iceḍ[---
[-c.3-] t ·   · languạt · etru[---

(traces)

+[-c.2-]rcellu[-c.2-]   ++ ++ us medicus   Porcelluṣ

20

+[-c.2-]rcellu[-c.2-]   ++ rịḷ ịpsị moḷo   Porcelluṣ

                mulo · Porce[---
                lo · molomedico[---
interficite · eụm ·occidite eni[---
25 teprofucate · Ṛorcellu · et ·Mau
rilla · usure · ipṣ[-c.1-]us · anima · cor ·+
ṇata · epar · isi[-c.4-]ẹ+ṃr (*or* s?)
(traces) uṣ *(?)*
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*: magic sign.

Fig. 2. Photograph of Bologna 1 and 3

2.2. Reading

φωρβη	*ψιαο	τιωρ
φωρβεθ	βραι	βαριω
φωρβεν	ω	βαθακαρ
φωρβι		καμφι
φωρρω	*	ρηο
		οεβ[ρνβ]
φωρβι	Por	ιαγααϰ[ερβε]
φωρρα	cel	Cηθ · ο
	lus ·	

5 (row with φωρρω)

10 Porcellu[s]   m⌐u⌐   Porcel[lus]
                ·lom[e]ḍicu⟨s⟩·   medicụ[s]
m⌐u⌐lomedicu[s]   · inṭerficite · omṇ[e]
çorpus · caput · ⌐d⌐ente⟨s⟩ · ocul⌐o⌐ṣ
+ạ(*or* ụ?)+tas · facite · Porcellu[m] · et ·[Mau-]

15 rilla[m] · u⌐xo⌐re⟨m⟩ · ipsius · DITE [---
EM · corpus · omṇ⌐e⌐ · me⌐m⌐bra ·[---
bisc[e]d[a] · Porcelli · qui · ICEḌ[---
[cada]t ·   · languạt · et ru[at]

(vertical text column)
+[Po]ṛcellu[s et]
[au]
[am]
us
meḍicus
              (traces)
              Porcellus

20

[m]
riḷḷ
ipsi
m⌐u⌐lo
              Porcelluṣ

              mulo · Porce[llus mu-]
              lo · m⌐u⌐lomedic⌐u⌐⟨s⟩
interficite · eụm ·occidite eni[ca]-

25 te pr⌐ae⌐f⌐o⌐cate · Ṗorcellu⟨m⟩ · et ·Mau-
rilla⟨m⟩ · u⌐xo⌐re⟨m⟩ · ipṣ[i]us · anima · cor ·+
ṇata · ⟨h⟩epar · ISI[-c.4-]Ẹ+ṂR *(or* s?)
(traces) UṢ *(?)*

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*: magic sign.

2.3. Translation

'Porcello.
Porcello the veterinarian.
Porcello the physician.
The veterinarian.
Destroy his entire body, his head, teeth, eyes …
Let Porcello and his wife, Maurilla, be … (?)
May all Porcello's body, limbs, entrails … disintegrate, languish and collapse.
Porcello the veterinarian and Maurilla his (wife).
Porcello.
Porcello.
Veterinarian (?) Porcello the veterinarian.
Destroy, crush, kill, strangle Porcello and his wife Maurilla. Their soul, heart, buttocks, liver …'

Fig. 3. Detail of Bologna 1

Fig. 4. Detail of Bologna 3

2.4. Critical Apparatus

l. **1** (Olivieri 1899: 194) Ọ̅YIAA; l. **5** (Olivieri 1899: 194) ΡΗΘ; l. **6** omitted (Olivieri 1899: 194, Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/1); l. **7** (Olivieri 1899: 194) AYAAK; l. **8** (Olivieri 1899: 194) ΘΗΘω; l. **10** (Olivieri 1899: 194) *Porcellu*; l. **12** (Olivieri 1899: 194) *om*; l. **13** (Olivieri 1899: 194) *oculu*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/1) *ten⟨e⟩te*, *oculu⟨m⟩*(!); l. **14** (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/1) *[mor*(?)*]t⟨u⟩os, Porcellu⟨m⟩*(!); l. **15** (Olivieri 1899: 194) *silla*, +*ite*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/1) *Silla, [-]ite*; l. **16** omitted (Olivieri 1899: 194; Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/1); l. **17** (Olivieri 1899: 194, Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/1) *bis et octo*, (Olivieri 1899: 194) *ice.d*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/1) *ice d*; l. **19** (Olivieri 1899: 194) *t ᴢ Lar ++ ut*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/1) *t Lar[---] ut*; l. **21** (Olivieri 1899: 196) *Porcel*; l. **25** (Olivieri 1899: 196) *mall*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/2) *mala⟨m⟩*(!)(?); l. **25–26** (Sabbadini *apud* Niedermann 1910: 52) *Mallsillam*, (Niedermann 1910: 52) *Malisillam*; l. **26** (Olivieri 1899: 196) *silla*, *ipsius*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/2) *Silla⟨m⟩, ipsius*; l. **27** (Olivieri 1899: 196) *atu . epar[---*; l. **27–28** (Sabbadini *apud* Niedermann 1910: 52) *coratu*, (Niedermann 1910: 52, García Ruiz 1967: 230, Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/2) *cor/atu⟨m⟩*, l. **28** (Olivieri 1899: 196) *tius*.

The interpuncts, to be found throughout the text, have been largely omitted by the above editors (except Olivieri 1899: 194, l. 14–16; *id*. 1899: 196, l. 23; *id*. 1899: 197, l. 4), so they do not figure in the critical apparatus.

2.5. Commentary

ll. 1–8: The column to the left of the figure reads: … ΦωρΒΗ / ΦωρΒεΘ / ΦωρΒεΝ / Φ̣ωρΒι / Φωρρα / Φ̣ωρρω / Φ̣ωρΒι …, in what appear to be invocations to Hecate–Selene, fully documented in the *PGM* (in which respect, *vid*. introduction and notes 19–21). The same invocations are attested in Bologna 2 (presently under study), albeit with small variations in position. As far as the column to the right of the figure is concerned, it is made up of a series of *onómata barbariká* which have just one parallel, Bologna 2. In that piece, the *onómata* are – with slight variations – the same as the ones found here, even following a similar order. Thus it has been possible to reconstruct l. 6–7, which read OEBPNB and ιαγααк[ερβε], respectively.

ll. 7–9: The *cognomen **Porcellus***, according to Kajanto (1982: 328) is a diminutive of *porculus*[26]. It is mentioned ten times in the curse (ll. 7–9; l. 10, with the loss of the final *s*; l. 14, without the final *m*; l. 17; l. 20–22 and 25, with the disappearance of the *m* at the end and over the head of the figure), almost certainly calling on the power which, in line with magic principals, conferred knowledge of the victim's name on the figure (*pars pro toto*).

ll. 10–11: ***mulomedicus*** is the profession of *Porcellus*, the victim of the curse. The term is documented in the Edict of Diocletian, III–IV, 7, 20 (… *mulomedico tonsurae et aptaturae pedum in capite uno* …), and extensively in Vegetius' *Mulomedicina*. There are also various epigraphical mentions of the term from, among other places, Rome (*AE*, 2001, 524 and also *CIL* VI, 9611). According to García Ruiz (1967: 67) and Kropp (2008: 258), the *ū* in vulgar Latin was equivalent to the opening in *o*, in a change that seemed to become widespread in the fourth century. This opening and the loss of the final *s* are repeatedly attested in the piece (ll. 11, 12 and 23).

l. 12: ***interficite*** was, according to Väänänen, a term used in the written language, replaced in spoken language by *occidere* 'strike down' and, as he says, 'Las *defixionum tabellae*, Petronio y los autores tardíos, no conocían, por así decir, más que este último verbo en el sentido de "matar" ' (Väänänen 2003: 135). In the Latin curses from the western part of the Empire, just one parallel is documented, from Arezzo, where the *Aquae Ferventes* are invoked to … *interficiates / intra ann/um istum* (*DT* 129, side B, ll. 11–13).

ll. 13–14: In these lines are listed the various parts of *Porcellus'* body to be cursed. The *defigens* begins with a whole, ***omṇ[e] / corpus***, also mentioned in other curses (such as the one found in Susa, transcribed

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[26] Attested particularly in the African provinces (*Numidia*: *CIL* VIII, 18068 and 5469, *Africa Proconsularis*: *ILAfr* 38, 61; *CIL* VIII, 22644, 263 a, b and d, *Mauretania Sifitensis*: *AE*, 1985, 890), also in *Gallia Belgica* (*CIL*, XIII, 4166) and *Latium et Campania* (*CIL*, IV, 9919, 9922 and 9925).

in Greek, which reads … ομνια μεμ/βρα θοθιους χορπορις … (*DT* 270, ll. 19–20); or the one from Rome, against *Caecilia Prima*, calling for … *adimas illae sanguinem de venis, corpus, calorem* … [Bevilacqua–Colaccichi 2009, side A, l. 11] to cite some parallels).

After the body, the *defigens* begins with the details: firstly, the victim's head (*caput*) is mentioned, not unusual for those times. One only has to look at the five pieces from Rome, to be found in Johns Hopkins University (Fox 1912, against *Plotius*, l. 18), in which the head is repeatedly handed over to Proserpina Salvia '… *Do tibi cap[ut]* …', or those collected by Audollent (*DT* 134, side A, l. 7; *DT* 135, side A, l. 3 [Mentana]; and *DT* 190, l. 6 [Minturno]), the Hispanic piece found in Carmona (Corell 1993, l. 2), in which … *caput · cor · co(n)s[i]lio(m)* … is offered to the infernal deities, or the curse from Groß-Gerau: … *ut illius manus, caput, (…) interet* … (Blänsdorf 2007, l. 9).

The next to be cursed are the *tente* and *oculu*. As far as the former are concerned, if we heed García Ruiz's reading (1967: 74) the term **tente** would have been instead of ⌜d⌝*ente⟨s⟩*, with the final *s* missing. According to this author, the *t/d* similarity noted for other positions (intervocalic, at the end of a word), the weakened *t*, which at times led to back-spellings such as *retere* (= *reddere*) and the context (lisiting of parts of the body) would all back up the hypothesis. Furthermore, it should be emphasised that the *dentes* are a part of the body that had previously been attested in other curses, such as the one from Mentana (*DT* 135, side A, l. 5 and side B, l. 1) and in the five Baltimore pieces (Fox 1912, against *Plotius*, l. 26).

As far as the victim's **oculu** are concerned, that is to say, the *ocul⌜o⌝[s]* – in a vulgarisation that displays the closing of *o* to *u* – it should be pointed out that they are a part of the body that is only rarely documented. Exceptions include curse tablets from Mentana (*DT* 134; side A, l. 8 … *(o)cilos* …, and *DT* 135, side A, l. 1 and 6, and side B l. 2 … *oc⟨u⟩los* …), Rome (Blänsdorf 2010a: 236–241, twice, l. 4 and l. 10 … *tollite oculus* …), and those found in Bath (*Tab. Sulis* 5, l. 7 … *oculoṣ sụ[o]ṣ* …, and *Tab. Sulis* 45, side B, l. 3 … *non illị permittas nec / oculos* …). They are also mentioned in a piece placed in the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz (Blänsdorf 2010b: 166–168; side A, l. 10), in which the *defigens* calls for the victim to suffer a terrible disease in the entire body, except for the eyes, so that he can be a first-hand witness of his own death.

We also need to underline the presence of the term *lumen*, which in poetic language is a synonym of *oculos*, a meaning with which it has been attested in a curse from Bath (… *ut sanguine ẹt liminibus ẹṭ / omnibus membris configatur* …, *Tab. Sulis* 97, side A, l. 4) and another from Rome (… *lumina eius C[a]e[c]ilia P[ri]mae / aripiatis* …, Bevilacqua–Colaccichi 2009, side A, ll. 15 and 17). Finally there is the detailed description of this organ in the Johns Hopkins University *defixiones* (Fox 1912, against *Plotius*, ll. 20–24), which read: … *Proserpina Saluia, / do [ti]b[i] su[percilia] Ploti. Proserpin[a] / Saluia, do [tibi palpebra]s Plo[ti]. / Proserpina Sa[luia, do tibi pupillas] / Ploti* …

l. 14: Here the lead tablet has a small fracture, leading to the loss and also folding of the material. Thus the transcription reads **+ạ**(or **ụ?**)**+tas**. Interpreting this as *[p](l)a[n]tas* would seem reasonable in view of the context of 'anatomical' curse (with parallels attested in the Minturno *defixio* [*DT* 190, l. 12], or in the Baltimore curse [Fox 1912, against *Plotius*, l. 36]). Another interesting option might be to reconstruct *[r]u[p]tas* here, in an allusion to the illness mentioned by both Pliny (*NH*, XXIX, 122, 4 … *anguium adeps aerugini mixtus ruptas oculorum partes sanat* …, and also *NH*, XXIX, 124, 3 … *adiuvat mirifice et ruptas oculorum tuniculas admixtis schisto et haematite lapidibus* …) and Q. Serenus Sammonicus (*Liber Medic-inalis*, 13, 219 … *anguibus ereptos adipes aerugine misce: hi poterunt ruptas oculorum iungere partes* …). However, in view of the poor state of conservation of this section, I feel it is best to respect the transcription.

Facio, as well as *interficio* (l. 12) is used in a clear invocation to the authors of the *defixio*. *Facio* is a recurrent verb in other curses, such as the one dedicated to *Caecilia Prima* (Bevilacqua–Colaccichi 2009, side A, l. 9 … *tu facias illam Caeciliam Primam* … *uti* …) or the one in the Paul Getty Museum (Jentoft-Nilsen 1980, col. II, l. 6–9, which reads: … *Ilo/rum dicta facta / ad inferos*…). To cite some further examples, the verb *facio* features in a number of north African *defixiones*, such those from Carthage: *DT* 250, side B, l. 4 … *[e]t faciatis pallidum*; *DT* 219, ll. 8–9 … *facias illos mut/uos* …; *DT* 253, l. 54 … *facite*

Vinc{c}etζ[u Tζaritζoni …; Constantina: *DT* 300, l. 9 *… ut facias illum sine sensum …*; Susa: *DT* 265, side A, l. 4 *…faciatis Victoria / quem peperit Sua/vulva amante fu/rente pre amore / meo …*

l. 14–15: *Porcellus*' wife, called **Maurilla**, not *Silla* as previous editors had proposed, unmistakably appears twice in the text. In these lines (14–15) the name is reconstructed based on the second mention, in ll. 25–26, which reads: *mau/rilla*. *Maurilla* probably reappears around the head of the figure of *Porcellus*, where her name can be reconstructed from the transcription *rilḷ*. The similarity between *s* and *r*, hard to distinguish at a graphic level, has given rise to the confusion over the ending *-rilla* and *silla* among the previous editors. According to Kajanto (1982: 206), the *cognomen Maurilla* is Christian, derived from *Maurillio*[27].

l. 15: **usure** is a vulgarisation of *uxorem*, repeated in l. 26, with the disappearance of the final *m*, as well as a reduction of *x* to *s*. This form can be assimilated to the vulgarisation attested in Bath (*Tab. Sulis* 9, side A, l. 6 and l. 8; and *Tab. Sulis* 30, l. 3), which reads *ussor* instead of *uxor*.

As far as **dite** is concerned, the various possibilities suggested are unsatisfactory: *[occi]dite* (as documented in Carthage, *DT* 247, l. 2–3, although in view of the fact that there is no room for its reconstruction it should perhaps be understood as a copying error), *Dite* for *Dis Pater*, or *dite* instead of *date*, also seem unlikely to me. I therefore feel that the soundest solution is to respect the transcription of the text.

l. 16: This line was, surprisingly, omitted by the editor and has therefore remained unpublished until this study. Here, the *defigens* once more curses different parts of the body, beginning with **corpus omn⸢e⸣** (Could it be a change from neuter in *-us* to masculine gender? Regarding this, *vid*. Väänänen 2003[3]: 185, for further examples *vid*. note to l. 13), and **me⸢m⸣bra**, with the usual dissimilation, as noted by García Ruiz (1968: 83). The execration of the victim's limbs would thus have complemented the *corpus omnis* at the beginning (ll. 12–13), thereby emphasising the 'whole' as the object of the curse. This expression has a number of parallels, including: … ομνια μεμ/βρα θοθιους χορποριϛ … (Susa, *DT* 270, l. 19–20); … *omnibus membris …* (*Tab. Sulis*. 97, side B, l. 5); … *mem(b)ra omnia …* (Mentana, *DT* 134, side B, l. 1); … *membra omnia …* (Carmona, Corell 1993, l. 3, and Rome, Bevilacqua–Colaccichi 2009, side A, l. 18); or simply …*membra …* (in Minturno, *DT* 190, l. 5).

l. 17: The term **bisc+d+** is probably a vulgarisation of the term ⸢v⸣*isc[e]*⸢r⸣*[a]*, which includes two features: a clear betacism and the frequent *d/r* interchange. Furthermore, the logic of the context, in which different parts of the body are cursed once again, merely serves to reinforce this hypothesis. Parallels are to be found not only in the Bologna 2 curse (currently under study, ll. 17–18), which reads: … *disuluite (…) omnis viscida …*, but also in the one directed towards *Caecilia Prima* (Bevilacqua–Colaccichi 2009, side A, l. 14), cursing: … *viscera, membra, medullas, / eius diripiatis …*, and the Carthage curse *DT* 250 (side A, ll. 24–25), which reads: … *consu/[m]a[t]is cor membra viscera …*

At the end of the line, the reading of **iced[---**, as a vulgarisation of the verb *i(n)ce(n)d[at]*, produced by the simplification of the complex consonant group, is in my opinion too convoluted a solution (for which, in any case, there would be no parallels), and so I feel the transcription of the text should be respected.

l. 18: In this line appears a series of three verbs which, crescendo-like, increases the degree of violence to be wrought on Porcellus and his wife. Applying this logic and in view of the fact that, for semantic reasons, the first one cannot be *pereat*, it is reconstructed as **cadat**. In the photograph taken by Olivieri (1899: 195) there seems to be an anepigraphic space but, in view of the poor quality of the image and the loss of the fragment, this cannot be verified. With regard to **languat**, this form has just one parallel in the second Bologna piece, currently still under study (l. 16 … *Fistus diffluat languat …*) and it might be a vulgarisation of *languescat*. Finally, the suggested reconstruction of the form **ruat**, based on the reading of *ru[---. Ruat*, derived from the verb *ruo*, is documented in two north African pieces: … *in circo ruant …* (*DT* 295, l. 25) and … *in omni certamine evanescat ṛuat …* (*DT* 250, side B, l. 6).

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[27] Attested particularly in *Hispania* (with nine cases: *AE*, 1967, 159; *AE*, 1981, 558; *CIL* II, 3257; *CIL* II, 5, 617; *CIL* II, 7, 160; *CILA*, II-2, 461; *EE*-08-02, 69a; *HEp* 6, 102 = *AE*, 1994, 859 and *HEp* 12, 99 = *AE*, 2002, 731), although there are also three examples in Italy (Etruria: *AE*, 1980, 470; Transpadana *CIL* V, 6225 and Rome *ICUR*-02, 5264) and two in *Gallia Narbonense* (*CIL* XII, 1207 and *CIL* XII, 4979).

The text is then laid out vertically both inside and around the figure of a mummy which almost certainly portrays the victim of the curse. Its name is inscribed on the head, around which one can also read **++ / ++ / ṛill / ++ / ipsi / us**, which suggests the presence of *[Mau]ṛill[am]*. The *ipsi/us* which follows it almost certainly suggests the familiar *uxorem*, following the formula used by the *defigens* in both ll. 14–15 and ll. 25–26, although there is no room for the recostruction. Split by the mummy's neck appears the term *mulo medicus* again (*vid*. commentary for ll. 10–11).

ll. 20–21: On the mummy's arms is inscribed the name of the victim in the nominative, **Porcellus**.

ll. 22–23: Around the mummy's body appear once more the victim's profession as well as his name (*vid*. notes to ll. 7–9; 10–11).

l. 24: In this line, the *defigens* exhorts the invoked powers, first through the previously-used **interficite** (l. 12, with commentary), and then with a sequence of three verbs which, crescendo-like, complete the execution of the victims. This device had previously been used in l. 18, with another trio of verbs (*[cada]t, lan[g]u[a]t, ṛu[at]*) aimed exclusively at Porcellus.

On this occasion, the sequence begins with the verb **occidite**, which has a number of parallels in the north African curses from Carthage (*DT* 229, l. 1 … ọccid[as] …; *DT* 247, l. 2 … [occi]/dite / exter/minate …; *DT* 250, side B, l. 20 … *occidere possit* …, also attested in *DT* 253, l. 20) and Susa (*DT*, 286, side B, l. 6 and l. 8 … *ut equos (…) ocidas, et agitatore(s) (…) ocidas* …; and *DT* 287, side A, l. 6 … *ocidas ex oc die* …), as well as the interesting *peroccido* documented in Rome (*Set. Ver.* 1, l. 17 … *vince peroccide filium mares* …).

The second verb in this sequence is *eni[--- / ---]te*, reconstructed here as **eni[ca]te**, as proposed by Jeanneret (1916: 14) and García Ruiz (1968: 61), who maintain that there may be two possibilities to explain this term: either the survival of the old form (*enicare*) in vulgar speech through apophony, or else the reduction of *e* to *i* in a '… cambio debido al acento de intensidad que sucedió al musical (*enecare*)' (García Ruiz 1968: 62). Leaving aside both options, I have to say that I have found no parallels for the verb *eneco/enico* in the *corpus* of Latin *defixiones*. For information on the exhortation formulae to the divine powers, see Kropp 2008: 149–155, particularly 151–153.

l. 25: **profucate**, which would be equivalent to *profocate*, would have come from *praefocate* (strangle). Jeanneret (1916: 21) explains this form via two hypotheses: it was either case of apophony (through the etymology of the verb, *fauces*, and applying the internal *au > ū* rule), or else an evolution of *ō > u*, which García Ruiz (1968: 66) was to call ultracorrection. There is just one parallel for this form among the rest of the Latin curses, documented in one of the Sethian *defixiones*, which reads … *et si forte occansione invenerit praefocato* … (*Set. Ver.* 1, l. 13).

After this verbal sequence, the *defigens* once more mentions his victims: Porcellus, who appears for the tenth and last time; and *Mau/rilla⟨m⟩ uˈxoˈre⟨m⟩ ipṣius*, attested here for the third time (for their names, *vid*. notes to ll. 7–9 and 14–15, respectively).

l. 26: Next, the *defigens* returns to cursing the parts of the body, beginning this time with the double-barrelled **anima–cor**, previously attested in other *tabellae*. It is documented in the same order in the piece from Carthage (*DT* 270, l. 11), which reads: … ανιμα ετ χορ ουραθουρ … However, the **anima** appears separately in numerous 'anatomical curse' cases, such as in a Hispanic piece from ancient Salacia, where one can read: … *anima do dono* … (Faria 2000: 107, side A, l. 7). From Italy come numerous examples: in the curse against *Caecilia Prima*: … *animi illae Caecilia Primae eripias* … (Bevilacqua–Colaccichi 2009, side A, l. 13), in a piece from Rome … *quomodo ec anima* … (Muzzioli 1939, col. I, l. 2 and 5), in the five Johns Hopkins University tablets (Fox 1912, against *Vesonia*, l. 9); … *usque dum anima[m] / e[ius] eripiant* …, and finally, in a curse written on a piece of marble from Sperlonga which reads: … *subberte domum et animam* … (Guarducci 1960, l. 3). Similarly, in the sanctuary of Sulis–Minerva in Bath, the *anima* is a common offering: *ut aṇ[imam] / su⟨u⟩a(m) in teṃ/plo deponat* … (*Tab. Sulis* 31, ll. 4–6); … *illorum anima / ḷạṣet[ur* … (*Tab. Sulis* 37, side A, l. 1); … *deus faci(a)t ani(m)am pe(r)d(e)re sui* … (*Tab. Sulis* 103, ll. 2–3), attested also in other formulae that are harder to reconstruct (*Tab. Sulis* 6 and 39). In the African provinces just three cases in which the *anima* is explicitly cursed are attested: the first of these, cited previously,

corresponds to *DT* 270 (l. 11); the second comes from Carthage, and reads: … *pertrasseas hanimam et ispiri/tum* … (*DT* 250, side A, l. 17), while the third was found in Susa: … *ne anima e[---* (*DT* 253, l. 63).

As for **cor**, this appears on the Minturno lead (*DT* 190, l. 9 … *i[e]cur, ⟨h⟩umeros, cor, [p]ulmones …*), on the Baltimore *defixiones* (Fox 1912, against *Plotius*, ll. 29–30 … *[pe]c[tus, io]cinera, cor, / pulmones …*) and the one published by Bevilacqua–Colaccichi (2009, side A, l. 14 … *cor cum venis …*, l. 17: …*cor eius, pulmones …*, and side B, l. 8: … *exeditis c̣ọ[r]* …). It is also found in the curse from Este (…*ut eripia(nt) / capita cogitat(iones?) cor …*, in *Sup. It*. 15. 7, col. III, l. 4). Two pieces of an agonistic nature are attested in Africa: *DT* 250 (side A, l. 24: … *consu/[m]at[i]s cor membra viscera …*) and the one published by Jordan (1988: 129 *et seq.*, l. 5 …*ligat bracia / cor, sensu …*). The heart is a part of the body that is also cursed in the *defixio* from Carmona (Corell 1993, l. 2 …*recipiates (…) caput · cor · co(n)s[i]lio(m) …*), in the petition for justice from Ratcliffe on Soar (Turner 1963, side A, l. 5 … *exigat (…) per cor …*), and in the Mogontiacum curse (Blänsdorf 2010b: 177–179, side B, l. 2 … *memori/am cor cogita/tum …*), to cite just a few examples.

l. **27**: This line seems to continue with the cursing of different parts of the bodies of Porcellus and Maurilla. Thus, firstly we read **nata**, which from the logic of the context might be instead of *nates* (*natis, is*), which is how it appears in a piece from Mentana (*DT* 135, side A, l. 4 … *nat[es] um⟨bi⟩licu[m] …*) and in the Johns Hopkins *tabellae defixionum* (Fox 1912, against *Plotius*, ll. 34–35 … *nei possit urinam facere: / natis, anum …*). A different option for *nata* seems doubtful: could it be referring to the descendants of the victims? In the *Tab. Sulis* 10 (side B, l. 1–2) we read: … *nec natos nec nascentes*, albeit without any known parallels in other curses since, as Tomlin writes 'It is quasi-legal: *cf. CIL* VI 8063, XII 3702, a *patronus* provides a burial place for himself and his freedmen present and future (*natis nascentibus*)' (*Tab. Sulis* p. 123). Similarly, another British tablet found at Pagans Hill reads: … *[nec nat]os sanos habe[a]nt …* (Hassall–Tomlin 1984: 339, l. 9). In addition, in reference to the victim's matronym, one can read in the *defixio* against Sura: … *qui natu(s) est de uulua maledicta* (Blänsdorf 2010a: 236–241, ll. 14–16; the same idea in ll. 5–6). This being so, the soundest solution seems to be that *nata* would be instead of *nates*.

Finally, in my opinion, the term ⟨*h*⟩*epar* would be referring to the Greek ἧπαρ from which comes the more usual *hepar, heparis*, although it is true that *(h)epar, (h)eparis* is documented in Irenaeus 2, 24, 4, where we read: '… *in nostris sunt visceribus, cor et epar*' (in connection with this, *TLL* s.v. 2610). Among Latin curses as a whole, this term is attested for the first time here, and it is more common to use the form *iecur* to denote this organ, as in a piece from Minturno where we read: … *i[e]cur, ⟨h⟩umeros, cor …* (*DT* 190, l. 9), or in the Baltimore *defixiones* (Fox 1912, against *Plotius*, l. 28): … *[pe]c[tus, io]cinera, cor …*, or else in the curse against *Caecilia Prima* (Bevilacqua–Colaccichi 2009, side A, l. 13 … *exedit[is] iocinera …*, and 23 …*iocinera pulmones dirimant …*). It also appears in a lead tablet from London: … *[e]t iocine/ra pulmones inter⟨x⟩ix⟨i⟩ / ta …* (*RIB* I, 7, ll. 3–4).

As for the transcription of the sequence **Ẹ+ṂR[---**, this suggests *men(b)ra*, although reconstruction is not possible.
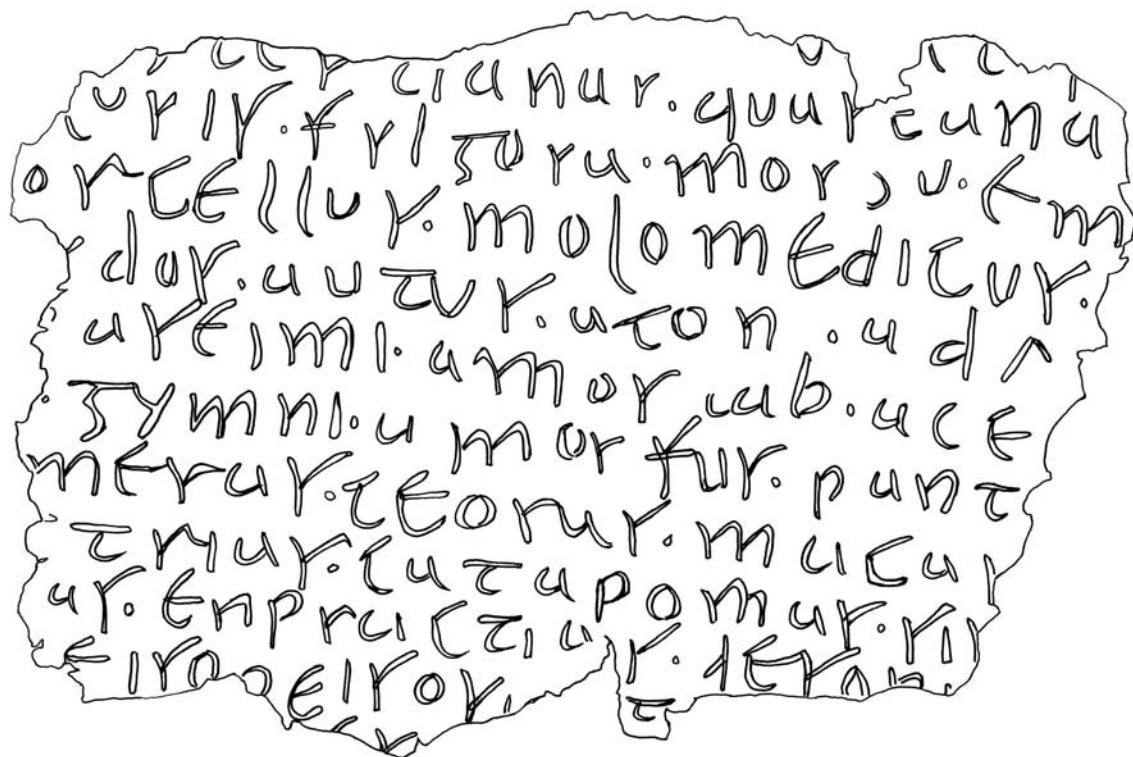
Fig. 5. Bologna 4 (author's illustration)

Fig. 6. Photograph of Bologna 4

3. Bologna 4

3. 1. Transcription

---] *(traces)*
---]+ṭerçianas · quarṭana[---
---]ḷuris · frigora · morḅu · em[---
---]orcellus · molomeḍicus · [---
5 ---]ṛdor · autus · ạton · ad+[---
---]+aseimi · amor+ab ·ace[---
---]·gymni · amorḟus · pant[---
---]meras · ceoras · macaṣ+[---
---]çtrias · catapomas · si+[---
10 ---]as · enpractiạs lesoṇ+[---
---]eisopeisos[-c.1-]t[---
---]e (*or* c*?*)ṣ[---

3. 2. Reading:

---] *(traces)*
-febres*?*]+ṭerçianas · quarṭana[s---
pal*?*]ḷ⌜o⌝ris · frigora · morḅ⌜os⌝ · em[---
--P]orcellus · m⌜u⌝lomeḍicus ·[---
--a*?*]ṛdor · autus · aton · ad+[---
---]+aseimi · amor+ab ·ace[---
---]·gymni · amorḟus · pant[---
---]meras · ceoras · macaṣ+[---
---]çtrias · catapomas · si+[---
---]as · enpractias lesoṇ+[---
---]eisopeisos[-c.1-]t[---
---] e (*or* c*?*) ṣ[---

3. 3. Translation

'… tertian, quartan, (fevers?) …
pallor (?), cold, disease …
Porcello the veterinarian …
Fire (?) …'

3.4. Critical Apparatus

l. **2** (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *ter⟨t=C⟩iana{s} quartana*; l. **3** (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *Luris, morbu⟨s⟩*; l. **5** (Olivieri 1899: 197) *erdos, autur, ++++a++*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *erdos autur aton[---]*; l. **6** (Olivieri 1899: 197) *arcimi, aliace*; (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *arcimi, alace*; l. **7** (Olivieri 1899: 197) *part*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *morbus part*; l. **8** (Olivieri 1899: 197) *ceos++*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *ceos*; l. **10** (Olivieri 1899: 197) *e+ fructus ierom*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *⟨h⟩as(?) e [---] fructus ierom*; l. **11** (Olivieri 1899: 197, Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *podisos*; l. **12** (Olivieri 1899: 197, Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *n . tos os* ; l. **13** (Olivieri 1899: 197) *[Por]cellu*, (Kropp 2008: dfx 1.1.2/4) *[Por]cellu[s---]*.

3.5. Commentary

l. 1: This line has been entirely lost, except for a few traces at the end.

l. 2: Here the classical *febres* are being sent to the curse victim: *tertiana, quartana*, – and perhaps *cotidiana*? –, following a common formula. Similar cases are documented in the Sethian *defixiones*: … *patiatur febris* … (*Set. Ver.* 1, l. 8), in those at Johns Hopkins University: … *Febri quartan[a]e, t[ertian]ae, cottidia[n]ae* … (Fox 1912, against *Plotius*, l. 6); and also in the curse against *Caecilia Prima*: … *febres cotidianas, tertianas, / quartanas* … (Bevilacqua–Colaccichi 2009, side B, l. 10–11). Celsus describes fevers the same way: … *ex his una cotidiana, altera tertiana, altera quartana est* … (*De Medicina*, III, 3, 1, 4).

l. 3: Next, after the fevers, there is a request for the victims to suffer ***luris, frigora*** and ***morbus***. In view of the absence of parallels, I feel that it should read *palluris* instead of *luris*, with the closing of the *o* to *u*. *Pallor* is merely the sallow colour or paleness of the corpse, which is, of course, also defined by coldness, or the *frigora* that are to accompany Porcellus and Maurilla. This formula is similar to the one documented in the first of the Sethian *defixiones* (*Set. Ver.* 1, l. 8–9), where we read: … *patiatur febris frigus tortionis*

palloris sudores …, and somewhat similar to the Carthaginian *DT* 250 (side B, l. 4), which reads: …*faciatis pallidum mextum tristem* … Finally, the victim is to undergo various *morbos*, in a device previously documented in an example from Carmona: … *accedat · morbo · cotidea* … (Corell 1993: 261–268, l. 3), as well as in a piece found in Kreuznach, which reads: … *sic te morbo a(d)icant* … (*DT* 101, l. 12).

l. 4: Once again, the victim's name, documented here for the eleventh and final time in the piece (in this regard, *vid*. commentary to l. 7–9 in Bologna 1 and 3). Olivieri's reading had one more line, which has not survived, and in it he reconstructed the word ⟨*Por*⟩*cellu*.

ll. 5–12: From the fifth line onwards, the *defigens* or his expert aide decided to use his own 'magic language', in which I feel he was using a particularly distinctive code-switching scheme. In this coded text appear transcriptions of some Greek terms in the Latin alphabet[28], such as *gymni* (l. 7), which would have been for γυμνοί, and in the same line *amorfus*, related to ἄ-μορφος, or shapeless. However, it is hard to isolate Latin terms, except for the reconstructed *[a]ṛdor* (l. 5), bearing in mind the constant separation of words by interpuncts.

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[28] Similar cases are documented in the north of Africa, such as the Greek curse transcribed into Latin *DT* 271 (l. 1 and 5) and vice versa (Latin curses transcribed into Greek): *DT* 267, 270 and 304.

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