

Succubus—The Herdsman's Encounters In P. Berlin 3024, The Pleasures Of Fishing And Fowling, The Songs Of The Drinking Place, And The Ancient Egyptian Love.

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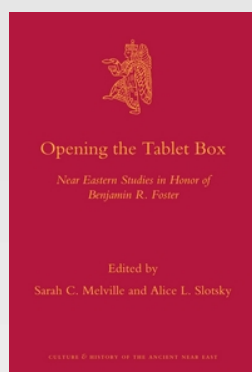
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**Source:** [Opening the Tablet Box](#), pp 99-140

**Subjects:** [Ancient Near East and Egypt](#)

**Publication Year :** 2010

**Chapter DOI:** [10.1163/ej.9789004186521.i-492.33](#)

**E-ISBN:** 9789004186569

**Imprint:** Brill

[Print and series information](#)

**Collections:** [Biblical Studies](#), [Ancient Near East and](#)

[Early Christianity E-Books Online](#), [Collection 2011](#)

**Volume:** 42

**Series:** [Culture and History of the Ancient Near East](#)

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A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S SUCCUBUS—  
THE HERDSMAN'S ENCOUNTERS IN P. BERLIN 3024,  
THE PLEASURES OF FISHING AND FOWLING,  
THE SONGS OF THE DRINKING PLACE, AND  
THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LOVE POETRY

JOHN C. DARNELL

*Yale University*

Thus we find strange bed-fellows, and  
the mortal and immortal prematurely  
make acquaintance.

J. Sheridan LeFanu, "Green Tea"

An incomplete and seemingly obscure Middle Egyptian literary text known as the Tale of the Herdsman, probably originating during the early Middle Kingdom,<sup>1</sup> relates an encounter between a man and weird woman in a marsh. The man—apparently a herdsman from what follows<sup>2</sup>—ultimately addresses a group of cattle under his charge, referring as well to a group of herdsmen and magicians accompanying the animals. The description of the female who inspires terror in the male narrator seems somewhat incomplete, and may be open to several interpretations. The brevity of the surviving portion of the story<sup>3</sup> and the unusual content of the account have attracted few studies;<sup>4</sup> those that have addressed the grammar and lexicography of the text have presented often questionable grammar and have neglected to search widely for parallels, with the exception of the well know Coffin Text mate to the herdsmen's "water spell." When one considers the place of the encounter, the fact that the narrator has gone into the marsh alone, ahead of companions whom he

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<sup>1</sup> Vernus 1990: 300; Parkinson 2002: 50. For the possible original context of the papyrus in a collection of literary texts, see Moers 2001: 158 n. 624.

<sup>2</sup> Parkinson (2002: 300 n. 7) rightly rejects the suggestion by Morenz (1996: 135) that the narrator is a deity.

<sup>3</sup> Traces of additional, erased lines of text, four at the beginning and four at the end, survive on the papyrus—Parkinson 1998: 287–288 and 295 n. 1 (he notes that the traces “are almost, but not quite, legible”); Parkinson 2009: 89.

<sup>4</sup> The most extensive are Goedicke 1970; Morenz 1996: 124–141; and Schneider 2007; important observations and references in Parkinson 2002: 300 and *passim*.

later addresses, and taking into account the description of the woman, however vague it may be—a host of texts and images present themselves to illuminate the account. In particular, in the light of a re-examination of several songs from the corpus of New Kingdom Love Poetry, along with the texts known as the Pleasures of Fishing and Fowling, the Voyage of the Libyan Goddess, the Songs of the Drinking Place from the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple, and the images and texts in the Middle Kingdom tomb of Ukhhotep at Meir, the herdsman’s encounter becomes an illustration of what might happen if the boundaries between the old year and the new, the angry and the pacified goddess of the Eye of the Sun, the transgressed, and mortal worshippers and the immortal object of their veneration—the once and future pacified but still very angry and deified goddess—were to meet prematurely.

The myth of the wandering Goddess of the Eye of the Sun is closely tied to the time of the summer solstice and the coming of the Nile Inundation.<sup>5</sup> Having fled her father Re for the far south and west, she becomes a raging lioness, seeking whom she may devour in the deserts of the south. Hunted by Onuris, enticed back to Egypt by Thoth, she returns, transforms from the wild, unpredictable Sakhmet, dangerous to Egypt and all life, and becomes the pacified, helpful Bastet, benevolent to Egypt but still capable and pleased to cast her fire against the enemies of Egypt and order. The earliest surviving clear presentation of this constellation of concepts is the Book of the Heavenly Cow, first attested on the outermost shrine of Tutankhamun, but based on concepts of which at least a few are ultimately of Middle Kingdom date, if not older.<sup>6</sup> Other t

of middle kingdom date probably allude to the revels for the returning goddess, both at temple settings and within the Western Desert.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Important discussions of the concept include Junker 1917; Inconnu-Bocquard 2001; Spiegelberg 1917b; De Cenival 1988 (with the reviews thereof by Smith and Jasnow 1991). See also Desroches-Noblecourt 1995.

<sup>6</sup> A passage in the Instruction for Merikare alludes to the so-called Destructive Mankind portion of the Book of the Heavenly Cow—“He slaughtered his enemies, destroyed his children, because they planned rebellion” (Hornung 1982: 90–95).

<sup>7</sup> See the references in Darnell 1995: 47 and 52 n. 30; for evidence of desert worship, see Darnell 2002: 66–67, 126–127, and 129–131; R. Friedman and J.C. Darnell on archaeological and epigraphic material from the Hk64 site, in Friedman et al. 1999: 2 and 27–29; Friedman 1999. Probable Old Kingdom forerunners to the desert celebrations of the returning goddess at Elkab may find allusions in the rock inscriptions of the Wadi Hilal—see Vandekerckhove and Müller-Wollermann 2001: 36–37, 43–44, 47, and a review thereof in Darnell 2004b: 154–155; for the evidence of the architectural ensemble in the Wadi Hilal, see also Darnell 1995: 92.



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