

Love Charms In Their Social Context

Love Charms

Technical Aids

Restraining Spell – *katadesmos*

Obtaining Spell – *agoge*

Retaining Spell – *philtron*

Philia – love, liking, friendship

"That unalterable relation, far deeper than fondness and compatible with all changes of mood, which unites a normal man to his wife, his home, or his own body – the tie of mutual 'belonging' which is there even when he dislikes them."

C. S. Lewis (Preface to *Paradise Lost*, 1942, p. 23)

Eros – passionate desire, madness, disease

Like a blacksmith the Love God has hammered me and crushed me on his anvil, and has plunged me into a winter torrent (Anacreon 413)

Let me only glance where you are, the voice dies, I can say nothing, but my lips are stricken to silence, underneath my skin the tenuous flame suffuses; nothing shows in front of my eyes, my ears are muted in thunder. And the sweat breaks running upon me, fever shakes my body, paler I turn than grass is; I can feel that I have been changed, I feel that death has come near me. (Sappho 2)

Eros, god of love, distilling liquid desire down upon the eyes, bringing sweet pleasure to the souls of those against whom you make war, never to me may you show yourself to my hurt nor ever come but in due measure and harmony. For the shafts neither of fire nor of the stars exceed the shaft of Aphrodite, which Eros, Zeus's son, hurls forth from his hand.

"Tis folly, folly, that the land of Greece makes great the slaughter of cattle by the banks of the Alpheus and in the Pythian house of Apollo if we pay no honor to Eros, mankind's despot, who holds the keys to the sweet chambers of Aphrodite! He ruins mortals and sets them upon all manner of disaster when he visits them. (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 525-541)

Gender Issues

Gender of Agent vs. Gender of Victim

83% of published erotic spells have male agent and female victim

Gender and Society in the Ancient Mediterranean World

male dominion vs. female submission

male guardian of female (*kurios*, *paterfamilias*) – father vs. husband

public stance vs. private reality

status of women and status of family

pattern of female development – from father's house to house of husband

Gender and Society in the Ancient Mediterranean World

male anxiety and female desire

restricted access – world of men and world of women

violence and disruption of restrictions

abduction marriage

agoge spells

Obtaining Spells - *Aggai*
Torments of eros
burning
torture
iunx

And the queen of sharpest arrows brought the dappled wryneck from Olympus, bound to the four spokes of the indissoluble wheel: Aphrodite of Cyprus brought the maddening bird to men for the first time, and she taught the son of Aeson skill in prayerful incantations, so that he could rob Medea of reverence for her parents, and a longing for Greece would lash her, her mind on fire, with the whip of Persuasion. And she quickly revealed the means of performing the labors set by her father; and she mixed drugs with olive oil as a remedy for hard pains, and gave it to him to anoint himself. They agreed to be united with each other in sweet wedlock. (Pindar, Pythian 4.213-224)

Fiction of male control vs. female desire
Apples and Aphrodisiacs

Supplementum Magicum 72 col. i.5-14

Incantation over an apple (*mēlon*). [Say it] three times: I shall strike with apples ... I shall give this *pharmakon* – always timely and edible – to mortal men and to immortal gods. To whichever woman I give or at whichever woman I throw the apple or hit with it, setting everything aside, may she be mad for my love – whether she takes it in her hand and eats it or sets it in her bosom – and may she not stop loving me. O Lady Cyprogeneia, bring to perfection this perfect incantation.

Lucian, *Dial. Hetairae*, 12.

"I didn't mind your kissing Cymbalium half-a-dozen times, you only disgraced yourself; but -- to be always winking at Pyrallis, never to drink without lifting the cup to her, and then to whisper to the boy, when you handed it to him, not to fill it for anyone but her -- that was too much! And then -- to bite a piece off an apple, and when you saw that Duphilus was busy talking to Thraso, to lean forward and throw it right into her lap, without caring whether I saw it or not; and she kissed it and put it into her bosom under her girdle! It was scandalous! Why do you treat me like this?"

Exceptions to the male agent-female victim pattern
homoeroticism
female agents
literary figures – witches
prostitutes and widows

Retaining Spells – promoting *philia*
retaining and restraining
maintaining favor and affection
Stable relationships and vulnerable women
Love potions – *philtrea*
female agents and male victims
thumokatoxon – restraining male *thumos*
potions and poison – problem of overdose
other devices to strengthen *philia*
Aphrodite's *kestos*
male agents and male victims – manipulating the social hierarchy
charitesion spells – to win favor and restrain anger (*thumos*)

Issues for discussion:

- types of love
- violence in the love charms
- *pharmaka* as magic and poison
- gender roles and types of magic
- invocation, adjuration, and coercion in love spells
- restraining anger and retaining affection
- female desire and male anxiety
- mechanics of *agoge* and *philttron*
- heterosexual and homosexual love magic
- literary fantasy and archaeological evidence
- handbooks and actual examples