

Love and Magic: A Social Study of Roman Erotic *Defixiones*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse a collection of forty-six erotic *defixiones* (curse tablets) found to date in Italy and the western provinces of the Roman Empire for the information they contain concerning affective relationships in Roman society. Though the nature of Roman conjugal and *de facto* unions has attracted much recent scholarly attention, and while ancient magic in general, and *defixiones* in particular, have also captured the interest of many scholars, the erotic *defixiones* of the Roman west have thus far gone largely untapped as evidence to further the understanding of Roman affective relationships, particularly those of the non-elite. The present work seeks to begin to fill this void.

Chapter One summarises the major trends of scholarship to date concerning both the study of ancient magical practices and Roman conjugal relationships. It opens with a discussion of the problems of defining “magic” as opposed to “religion” or “science” in the context of Graeco-Roman society, and ancient attitudes towards the idea of magical practice. The second half of the chapter analyses the image of Roman marriage and *de facto* unions presented by the legal sources and the elite ideology of marriage; modern attempts to deduce the realities of conjugal relations from other source evidence are summarised.

Chapter Two describes and analyses the western erotic curse tablets, the material of the study. Topics discussed include trends in chronological and geographical distribution, trends in the desired effect of the tablets, formulaic wording, and the gender ratios of practitioners and victims. The tablets are also placed within the greater context of ancient cursing tradition and ancient *defixio* usage in general.


Chapter Three examines the social significance of the tablets. A discussion of ancient attitudes towards passionate and romantic love precedes the main argument that the tablets represent difficulties which may have been commonly encountered by males and females respectively in the course of their affective relationships. The evidence of the erotic curse tablets suggests that males may have experienced difficulty and a period of powerlessness at the inception of relationships, while females may have had little real ability to maintain pre-existing relationships in the event of infidelity on the part of the males.

An inventory of the forty-six tablets follows the main text, and includes a text, a translation wherever possible, and a bibliography for each tablet, in addition to the location of its discovery, its date, and a general description of its appearance.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of the names of ancient authors and ancient works follow those used in

- i) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, second edition (N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard eds., Oxford: 1970)
- ii) H.G. Liddell and R. Scott *Greek-English Lexicon*, ninth edition (revised by H.S. Jones and R. McKenzie, Oxford: 1968)

Other abbreviations are as follows:

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année Epigraphique</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>DT</i>	A. Audollent, <i>Defixionum Tabellae</i> (Paris: 1904)
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i> (the <i>Greek Magical Papyri</i>)

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Octaviae
feli dulcissimae carissimaeque

CHAPTER ONE
LOVE AND MAGIC: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

*Inveni, germana, viam (gratare sorori)
quae mihi reddat eum vel eo me solvat amantem...
testor, cara, deos et te, germana, tuumque
dulce caput, magicas invitam accingier artis.*

Sister, I have found a way (congratulate me) which will either return him to me, or release me from loving him...I swear, my dear, by the gods, you, sister, and your sweet person, that unwillingly do I take up the magical arts.

Verg. *Aen.* 4.479 - 493

Dido, queen of Carthage and the recently spurned lover of Aeneas, informs her sister that she has but one course of action remaining to win her lover back: magic. Her sentiment is understandable, but her means has been viewed by modern scholars as questionable; in antiquity, magic was only “employed by the more ignorant classes but held in general disfavor by the more respectable and intelligent,” sniffs the commentator A.S. Pease.¹ The general feeling has been that though perhaps Dido might be forgiven a little magic since she is technically not a Roman, the practice is still not the sort of thing in which a person of Dido’s social position should be dabbling. Dido’s apologetic admission that she is unwilling to resort to such measures to achieve her purpose seems to support this easy dismissal of ancient magical practice. However, when the issue of magical practice and belief in antiquity is set within the wider context of what is known about Roman society, it becomes clear that magic is not something to be dismissed as merely backward credulity on the part of the great unwashed. References to magic are pervasive in ancient sources of all descriptions, suggesting that such belief was an important element of ancient daily life. Magic is thus an important subject for the Roman social historian, with the potential to illuminate those areas of ancient life in which it figured. It is therefore the purpose of this thesis to examine and analyse a body of evidence termed erotic *defixiones* (curse tablets) from Italy and the western Roman provinces, in the belief that a study of erotic magic in antiquity may add to knowledge of the perceptions and realities of ancient affective relations.

Defixio is the Latin term which describes a specialised form of ancient cursing involving the use of a lead tablet inscribed with a curse formula or “binding” spell -- so called because the formula aimed to “bind” or restrict the physical or mental abilities of the victim. Once

¹Pease (1967), 406 - 407.

inscribed, the tablets were then rolled or folded, often pierced with a nail, and buried in the ground or deposited in a grave or body of water.² Hundreds of curse tablets have been found thus far, coming from all corners of the Graeco-Roman world and spanning almost a millennium. The tablets are interesting to modern scholars for two main reasons: first, they are concrete examples of ancient magical practice, and second, they deal with a variety of problems which could be encountered by ancient individuals, as they contain curses directed against competitors in business, sporting, and emotional contexts.

Despite the stir of interest curse tablets have caused among scholars, however, recent scholarship has tended to neglect curse tablets found in the Roman West in favour of tablets from the Greek East. This thesis therefore seeks to begin to fill this void by analysing forty-six *defixiones* from the Roman West whose composition appears to have stemmed from situations of an erotic nature; their curses target either rivals for the affections of third parties, or slightly less often, the objects of desire themselves. Several questions are immediately raised in the consideration of this body of texts: what were the relationships of the practitioners to the victims at the time of composition? What hindered the practitioners from the attainment of their desires through normal means, causing them to resort to magical practice? Were the tablet practitioners and victims more likely to be males or females, and which social classes did they come from?

Answers to such questions may only be attempted once this body of tablets has been set within the greater context of what is already known about both ancient magical practice and ancient affective relationships. It is therefore the aim of this first chapter to provide the appropriate social and scholarly context, and accordingly, the following issues will be considered: first, the problems inherent in the study of ancient magic, by which I mean both the difficulty of accurately defining magic and the difficulties raised in evaluating the primary source evidence; second, the current state of scholarship concerning the nature of Roman personal relationships in which an erotic element is notable (either for its presence or its absence).

Defining “Magic” in Graeco-Roman Society

Magic and religion, or magic and science, are usually not considered synonyms; however, their differences are difficult to define absolutely in the context of Graeco-Roman society. Previous scholars have nevertheless endeavoured to determine firm divisions. Frazer, for example, proposed that magic in primitive societies is the precursor of religion,

²See Chapter Two’s introduction for a fuller discussion of ancient *defixiones* as a form of ancient magical practice.

which in turn is itself the precursor of science.³ Others, having noted evidence which points to the proliferation of magical thought in periods following “golden ages” of “rational” thought, have defined magic as a pseudo-science,⁴ or a degenerate form of religion.⁵ It is probably too simplistic, however, to think of Graeco-Roman society as a monolithic entity whose belief system evolved from primitive credulity to sophisticated scientific thought; it is equally incorrect to hold that ancient society as a whole reached at various times brief, inspired pinnacles of “rational” thought based on the observation of the natural rather than belief in the supernatural, only to regress to its former state of ignorance. When considering the characteristics of magic, religion, and science in Graeco-Roman society, massive areas of overlap are apparent among them, making clearly marked boundaries impossible. It is therefore probably more realistic to think of ancient society as a heterogeneous entity shot through with various strands of belief, some based on belief in the supernatural and others based on physical observation, which overlapped and intertwined constantly and consistently throughout the centuries.⁶ Thus, there can be no definition of “magic” as opposed to either “religion” or “science” which will hold true in all cases. This statement demands some illustration.

The relationship of ancient magic and science will be considered first. A modern definition of science is given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as follows: it is “a branch of knowledge conducted on objective principles involving the systematized observation of and experiment with phenomena.” Though activity consistent with this definition was undertaken in the ancient world,⁷ the technology necessary to conduct accurate experimentation and so to test the accuracy of scientific hypotheses, an integral characteristic of modern science, was lacking to the Greeks and the Romans. Areas of study currently considered pseudo-sciences at best, such as astrology, dream interpretation, daemonology, and alchemy, were therefore commonly thought of as bonafide scientific fields.⁸ Both the co-existence of magical and “scientific” thought and the lack of

³See Frazer (1951), esp. Chapter Four; Middleton (1987), 83 - 84; Luck (1985), 4.

⁴See Dodds (1951), 194 - 195, who takes such a stance on the apparent proliferation of curse tablets in fourth century Attica after the “enlightenment” of the fifth century.

⁵Beaujeu (1966), 10; Hill (1987), 90; Betz (1991), 244 - 247.

⁶Lloyd (1979), 5.

⁷For the Greeks as the “inventors” of science, see Lloyd (1979), Chapter Four: “Greek Science and Greek Society”.

⁸Betz (1987), 95.

dichotomy between them are perhaps best illustrated by the consideration of Graeco-Roman medical practice and belief.

In sixth century BC Miletus, a group of philosophers proposed the idea that occurrences in the physical world might be the result of natural forces, rather than the external will of the gods. The so-called Hippocratic writers of fifth and fourth century Greece applied the ideas of the Milesians to the illness and health of the human body, and so conceived Greek “rational” medicine, that is, the theory that health and illness depend upon physical, rather than supernatural, forces.⁹ Though medical theory based upon observation (and occasionally, experimentation)¹⁰ was a constant and influential force in Graeco-Roman medical thought, it did not supplant the traditional belief in society at large that illness was the result of supernatural will. There is sufficient archaeological and literary evidence of the continued use of healing incantations, herbal medicine, and medical amulets throughout antiquity to indicate that the popularity of traditional medicine suffered little from the growth of “rational” medicine.¹¹

Furthermore, while “rational” and traditional medicine co-existed in Graeco-Roman society, the differences between the two were not always clear.¹² In the first place, it appears that traditional healers did not usually rely on magical incantations alone to bring about a cure, but rather also stipulated correct diet and activities to avoid;¹³ secondly, though different causes for illness might be cited by a “rational” physician and a traditional healer, the sources indicate that the cures prescribed by the former were often very similar to those of the latter. I offer three examples: the first is provided by the Hippocratic corpus, which reports that some of the new strain of physicians in the fourth century BC

⁹See Lloyd (1979), 11, 32 - 37, for a full discussion of the philosophical background. For the ancient traditional belief that illness was sometimes the result of daemonic possession, see Smith (1965), 405 - 413.

¹⁰Vivisection in Alexandria is rumoured, though not substantiated (see Lloyd [1985], 5- 6, who cites Celsus [*Med.* 1.23]), note also that Aristotle talks about animal dissection (*Part. An.* 645a 26 - 37).

¹¹See Scarborough (1991). The earliest literary evidence is from Homer, who, for example, relates an anecdote in which Odysseus' wound is healed by means of incantation (*Od.* 19.455 - 58; cited in Renehan [1992], 1); in the Roman period, it might be noted that Cato the Elder confidently claims that one may cure a dislocation by chanting “haut haut istasis tarsis ardannabou dannaustra” over it while constructing an amulet from grasses (*Ag.* 160).

¹²See Lloyd (1979), 37 - 49.

¹³See Lloyd (1979), 39 - 40, who compares traditional and Hippocratic methods of treating epilepsy. Compare Evans-Pritchard (1937), 477, who in the course of his discussion why the Azande do not recognise the futility of magic, notes that “magic is seldom asked to produce a result by itself, but is associated with empirical action that does in fact produce it...”

were championing the importance of dreams in the diagnosis of an illness.¹⁴ Second, at Rome in the first century AD, Pliny the Elder, not a physician, but a meticulous observer of the natural world, expresses his disgust at those who would suck the blood as it gushed from a gladiator's wound to cure their epilepsy, or those who would eat bone marrow or infants' brains, yet he himself provides an encyclopedia full of recipes for medical amulets of all descriptions and for all sorts of ailments.¹⁵ Galen, the famous and fiercely rational doctor of the late second century AD supplies a final example, when he found himself forced to admit that a peony root, a plant surrounded by magical connotations,¹⁶ seemed to have salubrious effects for epileptics when worn around the neck as an amulet. Anxious to find a natural explanation for such an observation, he theorized that "either certain particles of the root fell out, were sucked in by inspiration [by the patient], and did thus heat the affected part -- or that the air itself was tempered and changed by the root."¹⁷

Of course Galen's ideas were no more physiologically correct than those which attributed supernatural powers to the peony; however, it would not be until the middle of the second millennium AD that the theories of the rational physicians could be truly tested.¹⁸ Traditional healing, on the other hand, which sought to appease supernatural forces, required no physical explanation or experimentation to claim efficacy;¹⁹ while scientific theories might not have been able to be proven right, traditional thought could not be proven wrong.²⁰ Though the reasoning for the cause of an occurrence differed, both

¹⁴Hippoc. *Epid.* 1.23, and *Salubr.* 4. Although, as has been noted, dream interpretation at this time and right through antiquity was considered to be a science of its own (see esp. *Salubr.* 4.87); however, this does not detract from the fact that dreams had their own place in the realm of what was indisputably irrational belief. See, for example, *PGM* 7.222 - 249 and 250 - 254 for spells to bring about a "dream oracle"; in addition, see Juvenal, who says that Jews in the marketplace sold dreams for a small fee (6.546); see also Dodds (1951), Chapter Four, for ancients' thoughts about dreams, as well as Eitrem (1991).

¹⁵*HN* 28.2.4. See, for example, Pliny's advice for the easing of menstrual pains (*HN* 28.9.41): "The first tooth of a child to fall out, provided that it does not touch the ground, if set in a bracelet and worn constantly on a woman's arm, keeps pain away from her private parts" (trans. W.H.S. Jones). *Pueri qui primus ceciderit dens, ut terram non attingat, inclusus in armillam et adsidue in brachio habitus muliebrium locorum dolores prohibet.* For Pliny's own suggestions for controlling epilepsy, which include the ingestion of bear's testes and wild-boar's urine in oxymel, see *HN* 28.42.224.

¹⁶See Ael. *NA* 14.26, and Gordon (1987), 59 - 60.

¹⁷Quoted in Temkin (1971), 25.

¹⁸Betz (1991), 247.

¹⁹See Lloyd (1985), 13, who notes that the Hippocratic doctors and traditional healers were on the same footing as far as the patient was concerned: "the puzzle is...how Hippocratic naturalism gained any credence at all, except among a few intellectuals already convinced on general grounds that some kind of naturalism must be correct."

thought processes were dependent upon belief in an unprovable theory of causation and the imperfect powers of human observation for an effective cure. Scientific and magical thought were thus inextricably intertwined, and the dividing line between them was at best hazy, if it existed at all.²¹

The next question to be asked is whether there are any real divisions to be made within the realm of ancient traditional belief in the supernatural, that is, ancient religion and magic. The evaluation is difficult, since both magic and religion depended upon belief in the same set of gods, and the belief that these gods had the power to effect change in the natural world.²² Furthermore, there is no discernible difference between the way these gods were invoked in religious prayer and in magical incantation; moreover, the religious terminology appears to have been largely interchangeable with the magical.²³ Scholars have therefore attempted to make distinctions between religion and magic within the boundaries of identical pantheon and vocabulary.²⁴

The suggestion has been made, for example, that religious prayer is a humble petition, and as such, is subject to the agreement or the refusal of the gods; magical invocation, on the other hand, is essentially coercive as practitioners seek to force the gods to bend to their will.²⁵ Others have argued that the actual requests made ought to be considered distinctive, as religious petition is conventionally made for good and helpful ends, while magical petition is normally thought to be antisocial in its purpose.²⁶ Graf has recently refuted the former argument, however, by pointing out that not all magical prayer is coercive (or at

²⁰Compare Malinowski (1954), 39, of primitive man: “[He] has not yet devised the extremely complex apparatus of modern science which enables him nowadays to fix the results of experience into imperishable molds, to test it ever anew, gradually to shape it into more adequate forms and enrich it constantly by new additions.”

²¹Luck (1985), 8 - 9.

²²See Phillips (1986) who addresses the question of whether the Roman elite actually “believed” in their own religion, or merely “went through the motions” of ritual. Phillips convincingly contends that a few snide comments made on the part of the philosophically minded of our literary sources (such as Cicero) do not imply closet-atheism on the part of the elite. See Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 7.27) for an example of supernatural belief (though not necessarily magical) on the part of an elite Roman male (cited in Ilevbare [1973], 35).

²³Graf (1991), 188 - 189, Burriss (1992); Szepes (1976), esp. 224.

²⁴The debate over the differences and similarities of magic and religion would constitute a thesis in itself; therefore, what follows is merely a brief survey of the most common arguments made and/or recently argued. For a fuller discussion, see Aune (1980), esp. 1512 - 16.

²⁵Ferguson (1980), 127; Aune (1987), 482.

²⁶Lane Fox (1986), 36: “To the ancients, magic was distinguished from respectable rites and prayers by the malevolence of its intentions and the murkiness of the materials which it used.”

least not against the gods),²⁷ but rather far more commonly merely requests the help of the deities.²⁸ As for the distinction between helpful and anti-social purpose, magic was often used for curing illness and warding off disease (as discussed above), applications which clearly cannot be termed harmful.²⁹ By way of contrast, Macrobius records a prayer offered by the Romans to the gods of Carthage when they were laying siege, a formula which only dictators and supreme commanders had the power to use:

Father Dis, Vejovis, Powers of the Dead, or whatever be the name under which it is right to invoke you, I call on you all to fill with panic, fear and terror the city of Carthage and her army which I believe myself to be naming to you; and pray that, for these men who are proposing to bring arms and weapons against our legions and our army, you will dismiss their army, these enemies, these men, their cities and temples, and all who live in those places, regions, lands and cities take from them the light of day...³⁰

Clearly this prayer, offered on behalf of the state by only the highest ranking military officials, is far from benign, and especially in view of the lack of moral code in ancient traditional religion, a division of this sort cannot be maintained.

Perhaps, then, the only difference between magical and religious practice was that one was private (magical), while the other was public (religious)³¹ -- yet even this distinction cannot hold up under scrutiny. Religious practice was quite obviously not observed only on public occasions, as the ubiquity of *lararia* in private homes clearly indicates. Although family cult was overseen by the *paterfamilias*, and so may also be considered as a communal rather than an individual activity, it was not a public event. Furthermore, oracles were regularly consulted by individuals about personal matters; the question was asked and the response given in a very private manner.³² On the other hand, there is

²⁷Although there are examples extant in the *PGM* of spells which seek to force the gods to obey the will of the practitioner; however, these are heavily influenced by Egyptian magical practice (Brashear [1995], 3391 n.6.).

²⁸Graf (1991), 194.

²⁹MacMullen (1966), 103 - 104: "Aggressive magic was only one of many kinds, and by no means the most common."

³⁰Macrob. *Sat.* 3.9.10 - 11 (trans. J. Ferguson).

³¹Thus Aune (1980), 1515 and (1987), 482. See also Burkert (1985), 55: "Religious ritual is given as a collective institution; the individual participates within the framework of social communication with the strongest motivating force being the need not to stand apart. Conscious magic is a matter for individuals, for the few..." Compare also the view of Malinowski (1954), 66 - 67, 88, that religion is a public phenomenon while magic is undertaken by the "specialist".

strong evidence that Greek states, at least, regularly bound and buried effigies of the war-god Ares in public ceremonies using sympathetic magic³³ in an attempt to restrict his destructive actions. Similar practices are known on a smaller scale in private contexts, in which the image of the victim (a mere mortal in these cases) was restrained.³⁴ As in the private realm this type of practice has always been referred to as magical, it appears that the public ritual should receive the same name.³⁵

In addition to the lack of clear division between ancient science and magic, no real distinction can be made between magic and the traditional religion on the basis of method of petition, purpose of petition, or the presence or absence of a public element. The impossibility of precise definition of magic in antiquity has led some to despair of even being able to use the term “magic” in reference to any ancient beliefs about the supernatural.³⁶ Yet this seems unwarranted; for while it is impossible to state precisely what the word includes and excludes, the ancients themselves were far from unable to recognise the presence of magic in their own society and to term it as such.³⁷ Thus, the fourth century AD commentator Servius casually remarks in reference to Dido’s magical intentions, *cum multa sacra Romani suscipere, semper magica damnarunt*.³⁸ He does not elaborate, and would have been hard pressed to do so had it occurred to anyone in his audience to ask him to. The Romans do not appear to have been overly concerned with pinning down an exact definition of magic; instead terse but inconclusive generalities are

³²Faraone (1991a), 17; see also Aune (1987) for magical oracles and revelatory magic in the *PGM*. I would like to thank Professor C.A. Faraone of the University of Chicago for his help in compiling bibliography about ancient magic, and for allowing me to read and use an as yet unpublished article.

³³Or perhaps rather “persuasive analogy” (see Faraone [1991a], 8 - 10, for a full discussion).

³⁴See Faraone (1991b); Brashear (1995), 3394.

³⁵An image provided by Vergil makes an interesting comparison, though Vergil probably did not intend to reflect magical practice: *Aen.* 1.293 - 296: *dirae ferro et compagibus artis/claudentur Belli portae; Furor impius intus/saeva sedens super arma et centum vinctus aenis/post tergum nodis fremet horridus ore cruento*. “The gates of war, grim with iron and close-fitting bars, shall be closed; within, impious Rage, sitting on savage arms, his hands fast bound behind with a hundred brazen knots, shall roar in the ghastliness of blood-stained lips” (trans. H.R. Fairclough). See also Pharr (1932), 280.

³⁶For example, C.R. Phillips III (1991) prefers to refer to magic as “unsanctioned religious activity.” See Versnel (1991), 177, as well.

³⁷Versnel (1991a), 188. The Roman legal vocabulary for malicious magical activity might be noted, though such terms are of notoriously ambiguous meaning. The main interdictions were against *venenum* (which originally might have meant herbal magic, but came to mean “poison” and “philtre” as well as “magic”), and *maleficium*. See Pharr (1932) for a full discussion of Roman laws against magical practice; legal attitudes towards magic will receive greater attention below.

³⁸“Though the Romans have acknowledged many sacred rites, they have always disapproved of magic.”

found, such as that proposed by Seneca: *religio deos colit, superstitio violat*.³⁹ Each person in Graeco-Roman society appears to have decided on a largely individual basis to which category any given action or belief should belong, based on varying measures of personal experience, observation, and innate traditional thought.

A very good example of dissent is presented by the consideration of the *hippomanes*. In describing Dido's love magic, Vergil says that among other magical ingredients, *quaeritur et nascentis equi de fronte revulsus et matri praereptus amor*.⁴⁰ The location of this remark among other magical paraphernalia indicates that Vergil, at least, regarded the *hippomanes* as belonging to the realm of magic. Pliny the Elder, however, states that it was an observable fact that this gland, when eaten by the mother, caused the mother to love her foal and suckle it.⁴¹ Furthermore, if someone else should snatch the gland away before the mother ate it, the scent of the gland would drive the gland-thief mad with love.⁴² While this is enough to convince Servius, who states *merito [Romani] suspicantur amorem creari ex carne*,⁴³ not everyone had such faith in the *hippomanes* -- Ovid reports that it did not work, and that it should not be tried.⁴⁴ Tibullus, on the other hand, says he will partake of the *hippomanes* and a number of other things besides if they will cause the object of his affections to look on him kindly.⁴⁵ The true nature of this love charm was thus open to debate.

The difficulty of deciding what to term magic is therefore a difficulty which is not exclusively modern. Definitions will vary from individual to individual, even within the same society; it does not follow, however, that a person who denies that a particular practice is magical is denying the existence of magic in general. Because magic, science,

³⁹*Clem.* 2.5.1. "Religious observance honours the gods, superstition defiles them." Compare Cicero, who contrasts *ratio* and *superstitio* (*Div.* 2.83) Cited in Grodzynski (1974), 40 - 41.

⁴⁰*Verg. Aen.* 4.515 - 516. "A love-charm, torn from the forehead of a new-born foal before its mother could get it, is sought..." Vergil is clearly referring to the *hippomanes*, although he does not use the term itself. *Hippomanes* has alternately been defined as a gland on the forehead of a foal (see Pliny *HN* 8.66.165) or a secretion from the genitals of a mare (*Tib.* 2.4.57 - 60).

⁴¹Pliny *HN* 8.66.165: *et sane equis amoris innascitur veneficium hippomanes appellatum in fronte, caricae magnitudine, colore nigro, quod statim edito partu devorat feta aut partum ad ubera non admittit.*

⁴²Pliny *HN* 8.66.165: *si quis praereptum habet, olfactu in rabiem id genus agitur.*

⁴³"The Romans are justified in thinking that love is produced by this gland."

⁴⁴*Ov. Ars Am.* 2.99 - 100: *Fallitur, Haemonias siquis decurrit ad artes, / datque quod a teneri fronte revellit equi.*

⁴⁵*Tib.* 2.4.57 - 60: *et quod, ubi indomitis gregibus Venus adflat amores, / hippomanes cupidae stillat ab inguine equae, / si modo me placido videat Nemesis mea vultu, / mille alias herbas misceat illa, bibam.*

and religion all existed concurrently in Graeco-Roman society, and since it is impossible to mark clear lines of division among them, it is probably best to consider magic as an unfixed point on the spectrum of ancient religious practice and belief.⁴⁶

Ancient Attitudes Towards Magic

Two points become immediately clear when assessing ancient attitudes towards magic: first, that the word “attitudes” should probably have the word “elite” as a preceding qualifier, and second, that the elite were remarkably ambivalent in their recognition of magic. The first point is perhaps not unexpected; though the archaeological, epigraphical, and papyrological sources for magic are not necessarily elite biased, the literary sources most assuredly are. Since the non-literary sources are for the most part expressions of magical practices, and as it is only the literary sources which contain discussion and opinions of magic, the literary sources are vital to the study at hand. The second point requires more illustration.

As previously discussed, there were two types of Graeco-Roman magic: first, activity which was called magical by some (if not all) ancient Greeks and Romans, and second, activity which members of modern western society would call magical, but which received a different name in antiquity. It has also been pointed out that these two categories are not mutually exclusive. References to activity of both kinds abound in all genres of evidence and from all periods, Greek and Roman alike. In addition to magical references in literature, magic is often present in the archaeological, papyrological, and epigraphical sources. For example, archaeology has indicated the popularity of amulets,⁴⁷ and has uncovered a number of mosaics and figurines which depict good luck symbols or averters of the evil eye.⁴⁸ Papyrus fragments containing magical formulae continue to be found, often in the form of magical handbooks dating from the second century BC to the fifth century AD from Egypt (collected under the title *Greek Magical Papyri*, or *PGM*).⁴⁹ Epigraphy has yielded numerous tombstones inscribed with curses against any who would

⁴⁶Note that Remus (1982), 142 - 143, employs a “spectrum” analogy in the course of his discussion of magic in antiquity.

⁴⁷See Kotansky (1991) for the use of amulets and lamellae in antiquity; note also that Pliny the Elder provides a great number of recipes for making medical amulets (for example, *HN* 24.22.73, 24.56.94, and 24.82.133).

⁴⁸See, for example, Dunbabin (1978), 161 - 172.

⁴⁹Betz (1986).

disturb the dead,⁵⁰ and more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, in excess of fifteen hundred tablets of lead⁵¹ inscribed with curses. The sources indicate that magic was to be found in every stratum of society and in every facet of ancient life (and death) -- in medical prescriptions, in the law courts, in the business world, at the race track, and in love affairs. In short, magic was everywhere; in the form of the *defixiones* in particular it was present in enterprises whose outcome was uncertain⁵² and often where there was an element of competition.⁵³

Despite the evident popularity of magic, whenever a literary source refers to an activity the author deems magical, the mention is almost always made in a negative context.⁵⁴ Authors are often at great pains to indicate that magical practice was a disgraceful import from the Persian east,⁵⁵ and was something only the lower, uneducated, and economically desperate classes engaged in. However, beliefs and activity which sound suspiciously magical, and which were not terribly different from the practices condemned by the authors, are often present in a positive context in the same elite literary sources. In such cases the sources are not necessarily being consciously hypocritical; the fact that modern and ancient ideas about what is magic do not always coincide is as true for the elite as it is for the lower classes.

Pliny the Elder provides an excellent example. Throughout his *Natural History* he is supremely scornful of the claims of the Magi (a “genus vanissimum”),⁵⁶ their beliefs and their superstitions about the properties of certain plants and substances; yet Pliny’s disdain of their ideas does not stop him from reporting the following about a certain plant, which he believes to be a useful curative:

Like this Sabine herb is the plant called selago. It is gathered without iron with the right hand, thrust under the tunic as though the gatherer were

⁵⁰See Stubbe (1991).

⁵¹*Defixiones* could also be made of other metals and metal alloys; in addition, scraps of papyrus, ostraka, ceramic bowls, and gemstones could be used to the same purpose (Gager [1992], 3).

⁵²Gager (1992), 78; Faraone (1985), 153.

⁵³Faraone (1991a).

⁵⁴For an example of elite attitudes to love magic, see Pliny’s refusal to discuss the properties of a certain plant because it is only used in philtres (HN 27.99.125): *Phyteuma quale sit describere supervacuum habeo, cum sit usus eius tantum ad amatoria*.

⁵⁵See Gordon (1987), 71 - 84; Pharr (1932), 294.

⁵⁶Pliny HN 23.85; see especially Book 30.

thieving. He should be clad in white, and have bare feet washed clean; before gathering he should make a sacrificial offering of bread and wine. The plant is carried in a new napkin. The Druids of Gaul have recorded that it should be kept on the person to ward off all fatalities, and that the smoke of it is good for all diseases of the eyes.⁵⁷

The whole process of gathering this plant seems steeped in lore of a magical bent, and indeed the very knowledge of the medicinal values of plants and herbs is a subject most often connected with the traditional “root cutters”, a term often synonymous with witches.⁵⁸ All the most famous female practitioners of magic were familiar with the contents of their gardens; Circe, Medea, even Dido⁵⁹ all sought to work their spells with the help of a few noxious stalks gathered by the light of the moon.

Though elite authors may perhaps be forgiven for writing of beliefs they did not themselves consider magical, it is more difficult to absolve them of their adamance that practices recognised as magic were unknown to them; they are often belied in this respect by casual references on their own pages. For example, the emperor Tiberius’ nephew, Germanicus, died in 19 AD under mysterious circumstances while on campaign in the east. Tacitus reports that Germanicus was suffering from an illness:

it was a bad attack, worsened by his conviction that Piso [his rival] had put a spell on him. Under the floor and inside the walls were found the disinterred remains of human bodies, magic formulas, curses, Germanicus’ name scratched on lead tablets, human ashes charred and soaked in blood, and other magical devices designed to devote souls to the powers below.⁶⁰

Several things may be inferred from this account. First, though of elite status, Germanicus was not immune to being attacked by magical means, and perhaps more importantly, was fully aware of this fact. Secondly, Piso’s status did not prevent him from being charged with having practiced magic.⁶¹ The prevalence of magic in the upper echelons of society is

⁵⁷Pliny *HN* 24.62.103 (trans. W.H.S. Jones). *Similis herbae huic Sabinae est selago appellata. Legitur sine ferro dextra manu per tunicam qua sinistra exuitur velut a furante, candida veste vestito pureque lautis nudis pedibus, sacro facto prius quam legatur pane vinoque. Fertur in mappa nova. Hanc contra perniciem omnem habendam prodidere Druidae Gallorum et contra omnia oculorum vitia fumum eius prodesse.* Cf. Gordon (1987), 59 for Aelian’s account of gathering peonies, a plant with many mystical usages.

⁵⁸Note, for example, Macrobius’ discussion (*Sat.* 5.19 9 - 11) of literary references to women practising herbal magic in which bronze knives (that is, not iron; compare Pliny, above) are used to cut roots.

⁵⁹See Scarborough (1991), 140.

⁶⁰Tac. *Ann.* 2.69 (trans. J. Ferguson): *Saevam vim morbi augebat persuasio veneni a Pisone accepti; et reperiebantur solo ac parietibus erutae humanorum corporum reliquiae, carmina et devotiones et nomen Germanici plumbeis tabulis insculptum, semusti cineres ac tabo obliti aliaque malefica quis creditur animas numinibus infernis sacrari.* Dio (57.18) gives a similar account of Germanicus’ demise.

also implicit in the invectives periodically launched against it by elite authors, as their audience was presumably mostly drawn from the elite classes and were thus the very people the author wished to convince.⁶² Sometimes these attacks are not very subtle; for example, Pliny the Elder at one point argues for the uselessness of magic on the basis that the emperor Nero should have been a great magician if there was anything to the art, since he had studied with the best of them.⁶³

At this point it might be questioned if the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire had any effect on public attitudes towards magic and on the prevalence of magic in society. Christianity, with its strongly moralistic element and monotheistic outlook, could be expected to provide a sharp contrast with traditional Graeco-Roman religion, and one might therefore expect a decline in magical practice and belief. This, however, is not the case. As members of Graeco-Roman society, the early Christians brought elements of traditional belief to their new religion.⁶⁴ The existence of the old, traditional gods was not denied by the Christians; these deities were simply down-graded to the status of evil demons, and were credited with the responsibility for anti-social mystical occurrences.⁶⁵ Since the Church did not distinguish between “paganism” and “magic”, it took a harsh view of any magical activity which required the invocation of a traditional deity, no matter what the purpose.⁶⁶

Christianity itself was not lacking activity of a magical nature, however, though of course this is not what it was called. Many practices which characterised traditional magic were present in Christian practice, differing only in that Christian saints and the Christian God were invoked instead of the traditional deities. Furthermore, non-antisocial mystical

⁶¹See also Tac. *Ann.* 3.13 for the charges facing Piso upon his return: “*postremo ipsum [ie. Germanicum] devotionibus et veneno peremisse.*” Note also that Apuleius was charged with practising love magic.

⁶²In Graeco-Roman society as a whole, the Hippocratic work *περὶ λεπῆς νόσου* (*The Sacred Disease*) is the first of such literary attacks which we have, and is also among the most well-known.

⁶³Pliny *HN* 30.5 - 6. Cited in Luck (1985), 38. See also Bonner (1992), 9, who discusses the attitude of Libanius (who was both himself accused of magical practice and claimed to have been the victim of it) towards magic (that is, he calls magic a harmful practice).

⁶⁴Barb (1963), 104.

⁶⁵Lane Fox (1986), 137. See Budge (1970), 65, who notes that the reason for Christian iconoclasm of the effigies of the traditional gods was to neutralize the power of the gods by denying them a place to live. See also Aune (1980), 1520 - 1521.

⁶⁶See Pharr (1932), 294, who notes that in Christian times “magic became identified with heresy.” Kieckhefer (1990), 37, compares Christian and “pagan” views of magic; both disapproved of it, but for different reasons: the traditional view was that magic was antisocial; the Christian view was that it was venerating daemons, and was therefore bad no matter what one asked them to do. Barb (1963), 106, notes John Chrysostom’s approval of the mother who would let her child die before using a traditional amulet.

occurrences within a Christian context were now called miracles.⁶⁷ For example, Jesus himself was credited with a number of miraculous acts, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, walking on water, and even foretelling his own betrayal by Judas, all of which might be found on a magician's resumé.⁶⁸ It appears that only the attitude of the audience determined which name, magic or miracle, any occurrence or feat would receive rather than any real objective distinction.⁶⁹ Not only did traditional magic survive, but ancient magical belief was even augmented by the arrival of Christianity; a new religion meant a new opportunity for magic.⁷⁰

It is clear, then, that while magical practice by any other name might be favourably received by the ancient Greeks and Romans, the term "magic" was one of very negative connotation. In spite of the criticism it received from the literary sources, magic cannot be dismissed as a merely lower class phenomenon in which the upper classes have little interest and no belief; nor can it be set aside as only belonging to the realm of traditional religious belief. There is a real danger for the modern scholar of imposing modern perceptions of magic upon the educated elite of ancient society, and thus assuming that negativity towards magic equals disbelief. For us, the general consensus about those who believe in magic is that such people are ill-informed about the workings of the natural world and that they are unwilling to accept the limitations imposed upon them by reality.⁷¹ For the ancients, however, for whom a true and full scientific understanding of the natural world was impossible, the limitations imposed upon them by reality were much less strict. In short, the ancients simply did not know what they could not do. In reference to magic,

⁶⁷See Aune (1980), 1520 - 1521, who argues that magical beliefs in Christianity were innate from its Jewish origins, and that it "absorbed" others through its existence in the Graeco-Roman world and (1987), in which Aune provides a discussion of similarities to be found between some formulae for revelatory magic in the *PGM* and the Bible; see also Betz (1987) and Vikan (1984) who note the widespread use of amulets, relics and symbols in Christian rituals and medical beliefs.

⁶⁸See Aune (1980), 1523 - 1524, for a full account of the references to be found to Jesus' wondrous feats; note also that Jesus is referred to as a magician by Jewish and pagan sources (1525ff). See also Remus (1982), esp. 135 - 141. See especially Smith (1978) for a particularly good comparison of Jesus and contemporary magicians.

⁶⁹Versnel (1991a), 189 - 190; Middleton (1987), 82; Aune (1980), 1521; see also Phillips (1986), 2724, for mystical feats performed by non-Christians and termed miracles by non-Christian sources.

⁷⁰Gager (1992), 13, notes the increase of Christian elements on the *defixiones* of the Christian period; see Kieckhefer (1990), 2 - 4, for medieval Christian magic as a combination of pseudo Greek and Latin nonsense in combination with Christian elements; Kieckhefer also notes (5) the similarities between medieval magic and non-magical ancient authors (for example, Pliny).

⁷¹Though see Tambiah (1968), 180 - 181, who notes the continued use of "mystical" speech (that is, language unintelligible to the average person) in modern religious observance (for example, the use of Latin in Catholicism).

then, the ancients differed from us in that while we feel logically bound to deny the efficacy of magic, they felt no such limitation. Rather, to deny magic was to deny religion, as both grew from the same stem and worked by the same process.⁷² The most probable explanation for the literary sources' hostility towards magic is that they felt it would work.⁷³ This statement, however, requires some qualification.

Faraone has recently argued that it is not magic *per se* to which the sources are hostile, but rather the purpose to which it was put; he thus calls magic a "morally neutral technology".⁷⁴ Magical practice under Greek law was therefore not illegal.⁷⁵ However, if one performed an act by means of magic which *was* illegal, one could expect to be prosecuted for the crime allegedly committed. At Rome, the situation was slightly different. The Twelve Tables explicitly outlawed the use of "evil" magic, or the use of magic to entice one's neighbour's produce from his garden,⁷⁶ which would technically constitute theft;⁷⁷ but it is probable that it was again the end result which was punishable, not the means -- presumably the thief would have suffered much the same punishment had he carted his neighbour's vegetables away in a wheelbarrow.⁷⁸ Furthermore, supernatural rites directed at making one's own crops flourish were not outlawed; indeed, Cato the Elder, upholder of all things noble and traditional, helpfully suggested invocations for such a purpose in his agricultural handbook.⁷⁹ Romans simply were not brought to court and

⁷²Gordon (1987), 61.

⁷³Barb (1963), 115, notes that with very few exceptions, everyone in antiquity believed in the efficacy of magic. Though of course not everyone who claimed to be a magician was believed; references to "fakes" abound. See Lucian *Alex.* for a lengthy and particularly interesting description.

⁷⁴Faraone (forthcoming), 1. See also Benedict (1937), 43.

⁷⁵Though one could be charged with *asebeia* (Phillips [1992], 262).

⁷⁶Pliny *HN* 28.4.18: "Again, in the actual laws of the Twelve Tables we also find these words: 'whoever shall have bewitched the crops,' and in another place: 'whoever shall have cast an evil spell.'" (trans. W.H.S. Jones): *Non et legum ipsarum in duodecim tabulis verba sunt: qui fruges excantassit, et alibi: qui malum carmen incantassit?* Further anti-magical legislation occasionally survives, for example that concerning the Bacchanalia of 187 and Sulla's legislation of 81 (in which philtres were also outlawed (MacMullen [1966], 124). See Pharr (1932), 281 - 294, for an account of such legislation from the time of the Twelve Tables through the imperial period.

⁷⁷Cited in Faraone (forthcoming), 1. See Gordon (1987), 67, for a second century BC story of a peasant (C. Furius Cresimus) who was thus accused.

⁷⁸Pharr (1932), 278 - 280, notes that magic (before the Christian emperors) was accepted as long as it did not bother the neighbours, that is, while malicious magic was always condemned, benevolent magic "was usually tolerated and encouraged when officially and publicly employed."

⁷⁹Cato *Ag.* 139 - 141.

charged with practising magic unless the eventual outcome (or allegedly intended outcome) was one customarily regarded as illegal.⁸⁰

For example, at Rome divination *per se* was not illegal; on the contrary, it was a vital element of Roman political and public life -- the auspices had to be taken before elections and the passing of bills, and the engagement of battle.⁸¹ Divination was also employed on a private basis for individual concerns.⁸² However, divination used to predict the demise of the emperor was illegal and was punishable by death.⁸³ In the reign of Nero, for example, Tacitus tells of a woman who was charged with consulting astrologers about the emperor. She tearfully denied the accusation; she admitted that she had gone to see the astrologers and had paid them for their services, but had sought information about her father and her husband, not the emperor. She was condemned to death anyway, but was allowed to choose the method of execution.⁸⁴

This example provides the key to understanding elite attitudes towards magic -- it was a means by which power could be provided to the normally powerless, and control transferred from those who usually have it to those who usually did not.⁸⁵ The "powerless" could be (but were not necessarily) the lower classes; in the imperial period, most of those we know of who were charged with witchcraft were members of the ruling class,⁸⁶ and indeed were very often close to the emperor himself.⁸⁷ Magic appears to have

⁸⁰See MacMullen (1966), 125 - 126, for a discussion of Roman anti-magic legislation from the Twelve Tables to Constantine: *mala carmina* and *venenum* (evil incantations and philtres/poisons) were always illegal; MacMullen notes that "Constantine upheld the traditional ban on 'magic arts' used either to hurt people or seduce to love (adding that there was nothing wrong about medicinal magic or spells to prevent bad weather)."

⁸¹Onasander 10.25 - 28 discusses the importance of divination before battle. See Suetonius' account of the future dictator Julius Caesar's exasperation with his colleague, who blocked his legislation by announcing the omens were inauspicious (*Iul.* 20.1). See also Therasse (1980), 287, for references to omens and portents in the political arena as reported by the various historians and biographers.

⁸²See Juv. 6.565.

⁸³Luck (1985), 46; Tupet (1984), 206; Brown (1970), 23, has suggested that accusations made on the pretence of conspiring against the emperor were actually needed to enhance his image; that is, the emperor had to be seen as the subject of such conspiracy, but to have survived it.

⁸⁴Tac. *Ann.* 16.30 - 31. Discussed in MacMullen (1966), 137.

⁸⁵Gordon (1987), 60.

⁸⁶Though it was, of course, the practice of the literary sources, as members of the elite, to bias their information towards their own class: see Amm. Marc. 28.1.15 (cited in Phillips [1991], 263): "not everything which has taken place among persons of the lowest class is worth narrating; and if this were necessary to be done, even the arrays of facts to be gained from the public records themselves would not

been a vital element in the struggles for power and position, real or imagined, which characterised imperial elite society. As magic provided a means by which to surmount social structures and laws,⁸⁸ and since these structures and laws were generally created by the elite for their own benefit, they had the most to lose by the existence of magical practice. Thus purges of astrologers are reported periodically throughout the empire,⁸⁹ as are burnings of magical books,⁹⁰ and harsh punishments for those who were found guilty of sorcery.⁹¹ Two conclusions can be drawn: first, that none of these measures ever managed to wipe out the practice of magic, and second, that the elite holders of power and makers of law feared the practice enough to keep trying.

The perceptions of magic held by the members of ancient society can be summed up, then, roughly as follows: magic was a way to divine the future,⁹² a tool by which to construct a defence against ill fortune and illness,⁹³ a healer of disease, a weapon to use against one's enemies or one's competition,⁹⁴ an excuse for failure,⁹⁵ an explanation for

suffice." (trans. J.C. Rolfe). *Non omnia narratu sunt digna, quae per squalidas transiere personas, nec si fieri fuisset necesse, instructiones vel ex ipsis tabulariis suppeterent publicis...*

⁸⁷Brown (1970), 22 - 23.

⁸⁸Even natural laws; it is the usual characteristic of a witch that she is able to make streams run backward, pull the moon from the sky, or make the stars turn back their direction (see, for example, Ov. *Met.* 7.199 - 200 and Verg. *Aen.* 4.489 - 490).

⁸⁹See Annequin (1973), Table One for a list of punishments prescribed and laws passed against magical practice in the first three centuries of our era.

⁹⁰MacMullen (1966), 132 - 134; Tupet (1984), 212 - 222; Betz (1986), introduction xli; Ritner (1995), 3335. Note also that Juvenal says that the skills of those astrologers who had been subject to persecution gained the most popular credence (6.562).

⁹¹Though again likely only those accused of practising "antisocial" magic or sorcery potentially detrimental to the emperor would ever be brought to trial; see Paulus *Sent.* 5.23.15 - 18: "Whoever performs or commissions unlawful nocturnal rites, in order to cast a spell, to curse or to bind someone, will be crucified or thrown to the beasts...It is the prevailing legal opinion that participants in the magical arts should be subject to the extreme punishment, that is, thrown to the beasts or crucified. But the magicians themselves should be burned alive. It is not permitted for anyone to have in his possession books of the magical art. If they are found in anyone's possession, after his property has been expropriated and the books burned publicly, he is to be deported to an island or, if he is of the lower class, beheaded. Not only the practice of this art, but even knowledge of it, is prohibited" (cited in Gager [1992], 258 - 259).

⁹²Aune (1987) discusses two forms of revelatory magic in the *PGM*: divination and oracular.

⁹³"The most widespread genre" of magical practice, according to Brashear (1995), 3393, but compare Betz (1987), 94 - 95, who claims that in the magical handbooks, spells "designed to attract a lover, harm an enemy, or restrain anger are the most numerous."

⁹⁴Especially the *defixiones*; see Aune (1987), 482; Faraone (1991a).

exhibitions of unseemly behaviour,⁹⁶ and a means by which to secure one's heart's desire, provided it was performed correctly.⁹⁷ Though it appears that not all magic was necessarily performed under the guidance of a "professional",⁹⁸ magical formulae and recipes tended to become more complex and involved over time;⁹⁹ therefore, it was probably highly advisable to visit a magician in order to obtain the correct formula and to make sure that all its requisites were strictly adhered to, thus ensuring the success of the spell.¹⁰⁰

This raises the question modern scholars find rather uncomfortable: did magic work for the ancients? Logically, we cannot accept that it did; yet there is no time in antiquity for which records indicate an absence of magic.¹⁰¹ It can only be concluded that it did indeed work or was at least earnestly believed to, which was perhaps the same thing¹⁰² -- for example, it might be noted that Soranus advised doctors to allow the use of amulets, as they had a positive psychological effect on the patient.¹⁰³ Philostratus makes it clear that in the event that the magic did not have the desired effect, the magic itself would not be faulted, but the way in which the practitioner performed it:

while if the experiment does not come off, [the practitioner] is as ready as ever to lay the blame on some omission, for he will say that he forgot to

⁹⁵See, for example, Cic. *Brut.* 217 (about Curio): "Again in a private suit of great importance, when I had finished my plea in behalf of Cotta's client Titinia, and he [Curio] was speaking in rebuttal for Servius Naevius, he suddenly forgot the whole case, and could only say in explanation that the potions and incantations of Titinia were the cause of it..." *In iudicio privato vel meximo, cum ego pro Titinia Cottae peroravisset, ille contra me pro Ser. Naevio diceret, subito totam causam oblitus est idque veneficiis et cantionibus Titinae factum esse dicebat.* See also *Orat.* 129. Both cited in Faraone (1991a), n. 69; see also Faraone (1989), in which he persuasively argues that Thucydides, Pericles' opponent, might have claimed to have been the subject of binding spells hindering his performance in court.

⁹⁶Faraone (forthcoming), 10; Winkler (1991), 218.

⁹⁷Brashear (1995), 3393. Note that while magic was regularly used in important areas of ancient life, it could also be frivolous; see, for example, *PGM* 11b.1 - 5 for a spell designed "to make men who have [been] drinking at a symposium appear to have donkey snouts to outsiders, from afar."

⁹⁸Gordon (1987), 64, notes that magical knowledge was a marketable skill for male and female alike in antiquity.

⁹⁹Betz (1986), introduction xlvi - xlvi; Faraone (1991a), 4 - 5; Gager (1992), 4 - 5.

¹⁰⁰See Betz (1986), introduction xlvi: "The magician served as a power and communications expert, crisis manager, miracle healer and inflicter of damages, and all-purpose therapist and agent of worried, troubled, and troublesome souls."

¹⁰¹Gager (1992), 22 - 23.

¹⁰²Betz (1986), introduction xlvi, quotes the Roman aphorism *mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur.*

¹⁰³Sor. *Gyn.* 3.42.

burn this spice, or to sacrifice or melt that, and that everything turned upon that and it was impossible to do without it.¹⁰⁴

It has also been suggested that one practising magic against another might let the victim know that a spell had been cast against him, and this knowledge might make the victim more inclined to succumb to the desired effect;¹⁰⁵ it need only be recalled, for example, that Germanicus' conviction that he had been targeted by malevolent magic only served to intensify his illness.¹⁰⁶ However, magic practiced openly would expose the practitioner to a counter-spell, and would thus be risky.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps it is closer to reality, since everyone in ancient society would have been well aware of the presence of magic, that those who were in areas of public life, or situations in private life, in which they could reasonably expect to be the object of magic tended to betray the effects of this consciousness;¹⁰⁸ for as Pliny the Elder said, *defigi quidem diris deprecationibus nemo non metuit*.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, perhaps the usefulness of magic should not be judged on the basis of the effects brought about on the victim, but rather on the benefits gained by the practitioner. Whether or not the spell would achieve the desired effect, practitioners would at least have had solace in the knowledge that they had done something, and thus magical practice could be viewed as a sort of therapy.¹¹⁰

To sum up, magic was an integral part of all aspects of daily life for all members of Graeco-Roman society. It appears that "good" or "white" magic, that is, magic which was used for beneficial purposes, or at least was not harmful for someone else, was tolerated,

¹⁰⁴Philostr. VA 7.39 (trans. F.C. Conybeare). *εἰ δ' ἀποτυγχάνοι ἡ πείρα, ἐς τὸ ἐλλειφθῆν ἢ ἀναφορὰ μὴ γὰρ τὸ δεῖνα θυμᾶσαι, μηδὲ θῦσαι ἢ τῆξαι, τοῦτ' δὲ μέγα εἶναι καὶ ἀπορον.* Compare Evans-Pritchard (1937), 330 - 332, for similar excuses made by the Azande when their poison-oracles turn out contradictory.

¹⁰⁵Gager (1992), 21.

¹⁰⁶Tac. Ann. 2.69. See also Gager (1992), 21, with particular respect to *defixiones*: "One suspects that the perpetrators (if not the client, at least the scribe or *magos*) were less than totally discreet about their business, perhaps intentionally so..."

¹⁰⁷Faraone (1991a), 17; see also Luck (1985), 19, who says that if one suspected that one was under curse, he or she could curse the curser and let it be known. Brashear (1995), 3445, and Smith (1983), 253, note that some *defixiones* were nailed to the walls of the temples of chthonic deities. However, the *defigens* hardly ever identifies himself (or herself) on the tablet; Versnel (1991b), 63, notes that magic used for harmful purposes was usually anonymous, as it was socially despicable. It is more often the case that *defixiones* were cast down wells or buried in graves.

¹⁰⁸Gager (1992), 120 - 121; Benedict (1937), 43.

¹⁰⁹HN 28.4.19. "There is indeed nobody who does not fear to be spell-bound by imprecations," (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

¹¹⁰Gager (1992), 22 - 23.

while antisocial or “black” magic was thought to be a social evil, and was thus abhorred, feared, and punished. To which category does erotic magic belong?¹¹¹ For us, falling in love is not usually thought of as detrimental, and so “love magic” has rather a quaint and charming ring; however, let us recall Dido’s apology to her sister for planning to use magic to call Aeneas back to her. It is evident that the elite knew of, used, and were targeted by magical practice in its various forms; thus, the argument that Dido was doing something to which only the lower classes would stoop is not very persuasive. Rather, she seems to be apologetic because she intends to practice a type of magic abhorred by all social classes, that is, antisocial and detrimental magic, in this case, erotic magic.¹¹² The next question is of course why falling in love might be seen in negative terms in ancient society, or more specifically, why the aims sought by the practice of erotic magic might be detrimental to the victim should the magic be effective. To answer this question the legal boundaries must be explored, as well as the social norms and structures which governed Roman personal relationships in which the presence of an erotic element might be expected.

Roman Marriage, *de facto* Unions, and Illicit Sexual Relations

The amount of recent scholarship on Roman marriage, *de facto* unions, and extra-legal sexual relationships is immense; what follows, therefore, can only be a summary of the arguments and currently prevailing opinions. The best sources of information come from the upper elite male segment of the population, allowing but a fragmentary and skewed image of Roman life. However, several scholars have attempted to reconstruct female experience and the experience of the numerically huge lower classes.

To begin with a brief review of the sorts of relationships which were punishable by law, *stuprum* is the general heading under which all illicit sexual acts fall. Sex with a citizen virgin, widow, or divorcée constituted *stuprum*, as did some homosexual relationships.¹¹³ Sex with a married citizen woman was defined as adultery, a particular kind of *stuprum*. While any married woman having sex with anyone besides her husband was said to be committing adultery, a man, married or unmarried, was only an adulterer if he had sex with someone else’s wife; he suffered no legal penalty for having sexual relations with a slave

¹¹¹See note 112, below.

¹¹²Since the Sullan legislation of 81 BC the use of philtres was a capital offence (MacMullen [1966], 124; Pharr (1932), 289).

¹¹³Treggiari (1991a), 264. Homosexuality *per se* was not illegal, but was regarded with some distaste by many of our literary sources. See MacMullen (1982) for a full discussion.

woman (unless the woman concerned was not his slave and her owner objected),¹¹⁴ prostitutes, or women who had already been convicted of adultery. Prior to 18 BC adultery was dealt with by family tribunal and was considered a private matter; Augustus was the first to place it in the public arena. By law, an adulterous couple caught in *flagrante delicto* could be killed, but only if caught by the woman's *paterfamilias*, and provided that he killed them both at the same time with his own hand. Otherwise the woman, if convicted, was divorced by her husband (under the force of law), lost up to half her dowry and one third of her property, was reduced to the status of a prostitute, and could be exiled to an island; the man lost half of his property and would be exiled to a different island.¹¹⁵ If the pair were caught by the woman's husband, he might exact harsher physical punishments upon the adulterer than were allowed by law,¹¹⁶ but for which he would probably receive no penalty, barring homicide (unless the adulterer was of "a disreputable social class").¹¹⁷ In the Christian period, the Church attempted to curb adulterous affairs (or for that matter any sex which was not strictly for procreation) for both men and women, but without widespread success; the law, on the other hand, exacted even harsher punishments from adultresses than before.¹¹⁸

Since marriage was largely a question of intent rather than ritual as far as Roman law was concerned, there is sometimes difficulty in deciding what the difference was between *stuprum*, concubinage, or marriage. Concubinage, while not recognized as legal marriage by Roman law, was not a punishable offence as *stuprum* was. It resembled marriage and differed from *stuprum* in that the pair were expected to be monogamous and probably cohabiting, but differed from marriage in that at least one of the parties lacked the capacity to marry (that is, *conubium*)¹¹⁹, or the intent to marry (usually the male partner).¹²⁰

¹¹⁴Clark (1993), 28; McGinn (1991), 353, notes that it was considered dishonourable to take up with someone else's slave woman.

¹¹⁵Gardner (1986), 127 - 130.

¹¹⁶Juv. 10.314 - 16: *exigit autem interdum ille dolor plus quam / lex ulla dolori concessit*. See Richlin (1981), 389 - 394, for a full account of punishments an adulterer might expect to suffer.

¹¹⁷Fantham (1991), 267; Treggiari (1991a), 272 - 274.

¹¹⁸Clark (1993), 38; Treggiari (1991b), 31. See also Dixon (1992), 82, who notes that the Christian imperial law came to demand public humiliation for condemned adultresses.

¹¹⁹Note that *de facto* unions between slaves, who did not have *conubium*, was termed *contubernium* (Dixon [1992], 90).

¹²⁰Treggiari (1981), 59; McGinn (1991), 371; Rawson (1974).

Concubinage appears to have existed most often in relationships in which the male partner was of status superior to that of the female.¹²¹ In addition, soldiers, who were denied *conubium* during their term of service (prior to the reign of Septimius Severus), might have engaged in concubinage with local women.¹²²

Legal Roman marriage may now be considered. To begin with the picture presented by the legal sources, Roman marriage had three requirements: first, capacity to marry, or *conubium*, as prescribed by law; second, a minimum age for the two people involved; and third, the consent of the parties concerned. All Roman citizens had *conubium*, and in the Republic it was granted to certain allies and peregrines¹²³ as well; in 212 AD the emperor Caracalla granted Roman citizenship to all free subjects of the empire.¹²⁴ After the Augustan laws of 18 BC, men of the senatorial class were not allowed to marry freedwomen, nor were their descendants to the third degree.¹²⁵ These same people were not allowed to marry women in the theatrical profession, procuresses, or women found guilty of adultery. Incestuous unions, while not infrequent in Roman Egypt, were not tolerated in the rest of the empire.¹²⁶ Furthermore, in the second half of the second century AD a law was passed forbidding marriage between a girl and her tutor, his son, or his grandson. In the fourth century AD a law was passed forbidding legal union between a Christian and a Jew.¹²⁷ A girl had to be twelve years old and a boy fourteen for a marriage to be legal,¹²⁸ and the consent of both the bride and the groom, and their respective *patresfamilias* was also required. A marriage which took place without a formal betrothal

¹²¹Treggiari (1981), 59; McGinn (1991), 371; but compare Crook (1967), 102, who holds the opposite opinion. Dixon (1992), 93, suggests that concubinage was perhaps considered a more honourable sort of relationship for a widower to be in than remarriage.

¹²²See Garnsey (1970) and Campbell (1978) for the debate over whether or not soldiers were granted the right to marry by Septimius Severus.

¹²³That is, foreigners living in Rome.

¹²⁴Treggiari (1991a), 43 - 49; Corbett (1930), 24, 28, 29.

¹²⁵Treggiari (1991a), 44; Corbett (1930), 31; the *lex Papia* of 9 AD made the same prohibition.

¹²⁶See Hopkins (1980) for brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt in general; Bagnall and Frier (1994), 127, tell us that approximately one-sixth of marriages in Egypt were incestuous; see also Dixon (1992), 82, who notes that marriage between first cousins was allowed in the rest of the empire.

¹²⁷Treggiari (1991a), 44; Corbett (1930), 29 - 30, 34, 44.

¹²⁸Treggiari (1991a), 39 - 43.

and against the wishes of the girl's father could incur the charge of *raptus*, for which the penalties were severe in the later Empire, particularly under Constantine.¹²⁹

The picture of Roman marriage as presented by the legal sources is as follows. Marriage was undertaken, according to the law, for the procreation of legitimate heirs. As it was through legitimate children that the family line continued and the ancestral property passed, marriage by the legal definition was a family concern, not something to be undertaken autonomously by an individual on a romantic whim.¹³⁰ As a family affair, arrangements for marriage fell under the jurisdiction of the *paterfamilias*, for whom all matters which affected the *familia*¹³¹ were a concern.¹³² It was up to this man, then, to arrange marriages for his descendants with partners who would bring the most advantage to his *familia* in terms of economic or political benefit, or social prestige.¹³³ The *patresfamilias* of both the bride and groom met, discussed the dowry settlement, and if an agreement could be reached, their two descendants were informed of their forthcoming nuptials and formally betrothed. Soon the bride, perhaps just twelve years old, was delivered to the door of her groom's home, the two were escorted to their bedchamber where they were exhorted to do their duty to the *respublica*, the door shut behind them, and the dowry payments began.¹³⁴ While there was no law against the couple enjoying each other's company, the feelings of the couple apparently did not enter the negotiations, and as far as the law was concerned, their conjugal happiness in terms of emotional fulfilment was a merely incidental bonus should it occur. Therefore, if only the scenario presented by the legal sources is considered, it appears that Roman marriages were extremely impersonal, cool and potentially unhappy affairs.

While the above situation is certainly possible, it may be questioned if it was indeed the norm. Scholars have recently tried to assess the reality of Roman marriage as opposed to the legal sketch in a number of ways; for example, the strength and nature of *patria potestas* in the arrangement of marriages has been investigated, as has the role of the mother in

¹²⁹See Clark (1993), 30 - 37; Evans-Grubbs (1989).

¹³⁰Clark (1981), 202.

¹³¹The difference between the English word "family" and the Latin "*familia*" has been discussed by many scholars in many contexts. Basically, the *familia* did not only include blood relations, but also slaves and even inanimate property.

¹³²Dixon (1985), 366.

¹³³Dixon (1992), 62; Treggiari (1991a), 85 - 100.

¹³⁴See Treggiari (1991a), 343, for the possible procedures and schedules for dowry payments.

matchmaking, the degree of input on the part of the child in the choice of partner, and age at first marriage; in addition, the frequency of divorce and remarriage has been considered for indication of the right to exercise freedom of choice in conjugal partnerships. Each heading will be considered in turn.

According to the law and Roman ideology, the power of the *paterfamilias* was absolute over the members of his *familia*. However, a father never had the right to force his son to marry against his will. On the other hand, Aulus Gellius says that a son was morally bound to comply with his father's wishes, unless the father had chosen a bride of morally bad character for his son.¹³⁵ A daughter's consent was also required,¹³⁶ though it was assumed unless she explicitly withheld it, and then she could only refuse her father's choice if she could prove her prospective bridegroom was also of bad character.¹³⁷ On the other hand, though the consent of the father on both sides was required for the marriage to be legal, his consent too was assumed unless he explicitly expressed his disapproval.¹³⁸ It should also be noted that despite the troop of stern fathers in Roman legend, references abound in the sources to kind, concerned, loving fathers who wished their children to be happy,¹³⁹ and would therefore probably not arrange marriages for their children with prospective spouses they felt would be entirely incompatible.¹⁴⁰

As for the amount of input allowed by the prospective couple itself, age at first marriage must be considered, as it is unlikely that a girl of twelve years, or a boy of fourteen, would have much say in the matter. The issue of age at first marriage has been hotly debated. Scholars have put forth various proposals, varying from early teens for girls and early twenties plus for boys¹⁴¹ to later teens and early twenties for females, and late twenties and

¹³⁵NA 2.7.20; Treggiari (1991a), 170 - 180.

¹³⁶Dig. 23.1.11: *ideo sicut nuptiis, ita sponsalibus filiam familias consentire oportet.* Treggiari (1991a), 147.

¹³⁷Dig. 23.1.12: *sed quae patris voluntati non repugnat, consentire intelligitur. Tunc autem solum dissentienti a patre licentia filiae conceditur, si indignum moribus vel turpem sponsum ei pater eligat* (cited in Crook [1967], 108).

¹³⁸Dig. 23.1.7.1: *In sponsalibus etiam consensus eorum exigendus est, quorum in nuptiis desideratur. Intellegi tamen semper filiae patrem consentire, nisi evidentiter dissentiat, Iulianus scribit* (cited in Treggiari [1985], 337 n.37).

¹³⁹Cicero and his "Tulliola" are probably the most famous pair; see Eyben (1991), 120, for examples of fond fathers; see also Saller (1994), 142 - 146 for fathers' and sons' relationships.

¹⁴⁰See Treggiari (1991a), 100 - 108, for things to look for in a potential son or daughter-in-law, including good looks and a compatible character.

¹⁴¹Hopkins (1965), 327.

early thirties for males (this last being the most recent view proposed by Saller).¹⁴² The children of the elite classes may have tended to marry somewhat earlier, and the members of the imperial family certainly did;¹⁴³ but as the lifestyle of the imperial family did not reflect that of the average Roman there is no reason not to suppose that in this case too the habits of the imperial family were an aberration rather than the norm.

Furthermore, Saller has recently shown that probably only half of the girls of the Roman upper class and even fewer upper class males would have a father living at the age of their first marriage.¹⁴⁴ For the fatherless man, this would mean complete legal independence and free agency in the arrangement of his marriage. The fatherless woman, on the other hand, would be under the protection and guidance of a tutor (or tutors).¹⁴⁵ However, the tutor did not have absolute control over his ward's marriage arrangements; rather, there is strong evidence that a girl's mother played a large part in the matchmaking process. For example, Livy relates a tale in which a girl's mother disagreed with the girl's tutors over the choice of suitor for her daughter to marry; the case was brought to court, and was decided in favour of the mother, on the basis that this sort of decision was more in the mother's realm of influence.¹⁴⁶ However, even when the child's father was alive, there is evidence that the mother expected to play a significant role in choosing partners for her children, particularly her daughters, as both Livy and Plutarch record mothers' rage when their husbands betrothed their daughters without consulting them first.¹⁴⁷ A daughter in upper class society, fatherless or not, might perhaps discuss potential partners with her mother; however, there seems to be little evidence of daughters orchestrating their own marriages entirely autonomously, or at least their first marriages, though there is evidence that females had a greater hand in bringing about their subsequent marriages.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴²Saller (1994), 120 - 121.

¹⁴³Shaw (1987), 33; Weaver (1991), 176.

¹⁴⁴Saller (1994), 120 - 121.

¹⁴⁵Gardner (1986), 5, 14.

¹⁴⁶Livy 4.9.5 - 6 (cited in Saller [1994], 194). See also Dixon (1988), 62.

¹⁴⁷Both stories deal with the betrothal to Ti. Sempronius Gracchus: Livy 38.57.6 - 8 and Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 4.2 - 3 (both cited in Philips [1978], 71). See also Plut. *Pomp.* 9 for Sulla and Metella's schemes to have Pompey marry Metella's daughter (Sulla's step-daughter), and Cicero's report of the women folk of a family refusing a *filiafamilias'* suitor because of the leanness of his bank account (cited in Dixon [1988], 215).

¹⁴⁸For example, Tullia arranged her third marriage to Dolabella with the help of her mother Terentia; it ought to be noted, however, that her father Cicero, though away from Rome for the whole proceedings, was busy trying to find a suitable husband for his daughter when she presented him with a *fait accompli*. See

This raises the question of divorce. Some have seen Roman divorce as merely another manifestation of the absolute power of the *paterfamilias*, claiming that it was usual practice for him to marry his descendants off, force them to divorce, and then marry them off again in his constant scheming to increase the power, wealth, and prestige of the family name;¹⁴⁹ this model, of course, cannot stand up to the evidence that few *patresfamilias* would live to see even the first, let alone the second or third marriage of their children.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, though a *paterfamilias* (if alive) could force a *filiusfamilias* or a *filiafamilias* to divorce against his or her will, he could not prevent the couple from continuing to cohabit.¹⁵¹ Roman divorce originally only required one partner to desire it and to deliver notice to the other informing him or her of the action.¹⁵² In the Christian period, the rules governing divorce varied; Constantine forbade divorce unless the husband was “a murderer, sorcerer, or destroyer of tombs,” or the wife was “an adultress, a sorceress, or a procuress”;¹⁵³ however, the divorce law was later changed by the pagan emperor Julian to allow divorce at will, only to be changed again later to a modified version of the law of Constantine in 421.¹⁵⁴

Some have claimed that ease of divorce before the time of Constantine and declining Roman morals led to an incredibly high divorce rate amidst a general atmosphere of sexual licence.¹⁵⁵ Alternatively, there is the argument that the increased divorce rate of the late

Balsdon (1962), 179; see also Treggiari (1985). We might also note Tiberius’ reply to Sejanus’ request for Livia’s hand in marriage -- “that Livia could determine for herself whether she ought to marry after Drusus or rest content with her old home, and that she had a mother and grandmother who were more natural advisers” (Tac. *Ann.* 4.40; cited in Philips [1978], 71).

¹⁴⁹Gratwick (1984), 43.

¹⁵⁰See Saller (1994), 121, who hypothesizes that among the Roman upper class, between one-third and one-half of females and approximately two-thirds of males would be fatherless at first marriage. The lower classes’ statistics were probably even higher; Saller suggests that one-half of females and three-quarters of males would have been fatherless at the time of first marriage.

¹⁵¹Treggiari (1982), 39; Crook (1967), 108.

¹⁵²In the Twelve Tables the divorce formula is *res tuas tibi habeto* (“take your things and go”); later written notice was required. See Balsdon (1967), 216. Treggiari (1991b), 38, notes that no grounds for divorce were legally required, but that it was dishonourable to divorce without a serious reason. She also notes (41) that divorced women were regarded with some suspicion by prospective future partners, citing Apuleius (*Apol.* 92).

¹⁵³*Cod. Theod.* 3.16.1 (cited in Clark [1993], 21)

¹⁵⁴The law continued to be modified until 566 AD, when the emperor Justin II reinstated the law allowing divorce by consent (Clark [1993], 23 - 26). Clark notes (27) that so many changes took place because a population which was only “nominally” Christian could not be forced to live by Christian standards.

Republic and earlier Empire indicates instead a growing sense of individualism and a greater focus on the attainment of emotional fulfilment among Romans.¹⁵⁶ However, Treggiari and Raepsaet-Charlier have questioned just how “high” the divorce rate of this period really was, pointing out that such an assessment is only relative. Their conclusion, based on literary references and inscriptional evidence respectively, is that approximately one in six Roman elite marriages ended in divorce -- a high rate in comparison with that of strict Roman Catholic countries of previous centuries, perhaps, but low in comparison to that of present day North America.¹⁵⁷ Others have disagreed with such a conclusion, stating that the overall impressionistic sense of high divorce rates supplied by the sources is superior to that of a small selection of evidence which has survived only by chance.¹⁵⁸

To sum up the state of scholarship concerning Roman marriage up to this point, it appears that elite children, particularly male children, had a higher degree of autonomy in the choice of marriage partner than the legal sources would suggest. Indeed, it seems probable that Roman males quite often chose their partners themselves, and that females had greater freedom of choice in their later marriages than in their first.¹⁵⁹ We might expect that this would indicate that marriages of the Roman elite were often love matches. But is this a defensible assumption? To answer this question two points must be considered: the Roman ideal of marriage and the seemingly high incidence of adultery in Roman elite society.

Roman Attitudes Towards Marriage

Scholars, most notably Dixon and Treggiari,¹⁶⁰ have constructed the Roman ideal of marriage from philosophical treatises on the subject and from tombstone inscriptions. The ideal can be summed up briefly as follows: marriage was a warm, friendly, and harmonious relationship built on a genuine feeling of companionship;¹⁶¹ in short, the couple was expected to experience *concordia*.¹⁶² Claims of having lived together for

¹⁵⁵This view is discussed in Treggiari (1991b), 41 - 44.

¹⁵⁶Treggiari (1991a), 120 - 121, (1991b) 41.

¹⁵⁷Treggiari (1991b), 44 - 45; Raepsaet-Charlier (1981 - 82), 164, 168 - 169.

¹⁵⁸Bradley (1991), 170 - 171.

¹⁵⁹Dixon (1985), 366 - 367.

¹⁶⁰See Treggiari (1991a), Chapter Eight, Dixon (1992), 83 - 90 and (1991), 99, 104 - 105.

¹⁶¹See also Balsdon (1962, 207) for the most popular tombstone epitaphs.

several decades without a fight are ubiquitous on tombstones; though the absence of protestations of passion is not surprising in such a context, the fact that negative terminology is used to define a successful marriage has led some scholars to the conclusion that Roman marriage was not expected to be happy by modern western standards.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, whether this companionable standard was met or not, there can be little question that this warm but passionless union was something to strive for.

What is meant here by “passion” is strong sexual desire in combination with an emotion we might term romantic love, that is, the feeling on the basis of which modern western marriages are expected to be formed. Indeed it appears that “passion” was not only something not expected in Roman marriage, it was not to be advertised if by some accident it made its presence felt in one’s relations with one’s spouse. This does not mean that marriage should not have a sexual element; by all means it should, for how else were legitimate children to be produced?¹⁶⁴ But the responsible and the wise should avoid the overriding emotion which accompanied the sexual desire -- the all consuming passionate love described by Apuleius as *saevum atque ferum vipereumque malum*,¹⁶⁵ the sort of love which is continually connected in literature with the inability to control one’s emotions or actions, or allow anyone to do anything except languish about, thinking only of the object of his desire.¹⁶⁶ For example, the poet Lucretius advised men to forget love -- just have sex.¹⁶⁷

The ideal of passionless marriage might be best demonstrated by Plutarch’s account of the events leading up to the marriage of the dictator Sulla and the beautiful, aristocratic, and newly-divorced Valeria; Valeria managed to get the dictator’s attention at the gladiatorial games by picking a piece of lint off of his toga:

When Sulla looked at her in astonishment, she said: ‘It’s nothing of importance, Dictator, but I too wish to partake a little in thy felicity.’ Sulla was not displeased at hearing this, nay, it was at once clear that his fancy

¹⁶²See Bradley (1991), 6 - 8 for *concordia* as the Roman ideal of marriage.

¹⁶³Bradley (1991), 8; compare Dixon (1992), 86.

¹⁶⁴Dixon (1988), 88. See also Pliny, who in the course of his contemptuous summary of the postulations of the Magi, notes that they claim that hyena genitals taken in honey stimulate men to desire sex with women, even if they are homosexual; furthermore, the *concordia* of the household may be maintained by keeping such an item handy (*HN* 28.27.99).

¹⁶⁵Apul. *Met.* 4.33.

¹⁶⁶Bradley (1991), 127. This sort of emotion is a usual topos in comedy; see Rosivach (1986) for a full discussion.

¹⁶⁷Lucr. 4.1052 - 1072, especially 1070 - 1072 (cited in Rudd [1981], 157 n.50).

was tickled, for he secretly sent and asked her name, and inquired about her family and history. Then followed mutual glances, continual turnings of the face to gaze, interchanges of smiles, and at last a formal compact of marriage. All this was perhaps blameless on her part, but Sulla, even though she was ever so chaste and reputable, did not marry her from any chaste and worthy motive; he was led away, like a young man, by looks and languishing airs, through which the most disgraceful and shameless passions are naturally excited.¹⁶⁸

Clearly the match had the potential to meet the ideal -- Valeria was “chaste and reputable”, the very stuff of tombstone inscriptions, and would doubtlessly be a wonderful companion, when Sulla had to ruin this picture of wedded beatitude with his foul passion. Passion was decidedly un-Roman,¹⁶⁹ and while this sort of behaviour might be excused, and perhaps even expected, in a callow youth who might take up with prostitutes or perhaps even keep a concubine in his bachelor days,¹⁷⁰ it was not desirable in a man about to take his place in the public eye, as we can clearly see from Cicero’s defence of the young rake Caelius:

Lastly, when he has listened to the voice of pleasure and given some time to love-affairs and these empty desires of youth, let him at length turn to the interests of home life, to activity at the bar and in public affairs, so that all those pursuits the vanity of which reason had previously failed to reveal, he may show that he has abandoned from satiety and found contemptible through experience.¹⁷¹

A young man of the Roman upper class, even if he were left to make a match entirely based on his own will and judgement, would therefore probably not have sought out passionate attachment in his marital partnership more than political, social, or economic gain, with an eye to companionship.

¹⁶⁸Plut. *Sull.* 35.3 - 5 (trans. B.Perrin; cited in Bradley [1991], 126): ἐμβλέψαντος δὲ τοῦ Σύλλα καὶ θαυμάσαντος, “Οὐδεν,” ἔφη, “δεινόν, αὐτόκρατορ, ἀλλὰ βούλομαι τῆς σῆς κἀγὼ μικρὸν εὐτυχίας μεταλαβεῖν.” τοῦτο ἤκουσεν οὐκ ἀηδῶς ὁ Σύλλας, ἀλλὰ καὶ δηλοσ εὐθύς ἢ ὑποκεκνισμένος: ἠρώτα γὰρ ὑποπέμπων αὐτῆς ὄνομα, καὶ γένος καὶ βίον ἐμάνθανεν. ἐκ δὲ τούτων ῥίψεις ὀμμάτων ἐπ’ ἀλλήλους ἐγίνοντο καὶ παρεπιστροφαὶ συνεχεῖς προσώπων καὶ μειδιαμάτων διαδόσεις, τέλος δὲ ὁμολογίαι καὶ συνθέσεις περὶ γάμων, ἐκείνη μὲν ἴσως ἄμεμπροι, Σύλλας δέ, εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα σώφρονα καὶ γενναῖαν, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐκ σώφρονος καὶ καλῆς ἔγχευεν ἀρχῆς, ὅψει καὶ λαμυρίᾳ μειρακίου δίκην παραβληθείς, ὑφ’ ὧν τὰ αἰσχίστα καὶ ἀναιδέστατα πάθη κινεῖσθαι πέφυκεν.

¹⁶⁹See Green (1982), 39, who notes that in literature, “passionate love” was regarded as “something worse than infatuation, as a dangerous lapse from reason...”

¹⁷⁰McGinn (1991), 338. See also Rosivach (1986), 180 - 181, and Konstan (1972), 102.

¹⁷¹*Cael.* 42 (cited in Konstan [1972], 102 n.6; trans. R. Gardner): *Postremo, cum paruerit voluptatibus, dederit aliquid temporis ad ludum aetatis atque ad inanes hasce adulescentiae cupiditates, revocet se aliquando ad curam rei domesticae, rei forensis reique publicae, ut ea, quae ratione antea non perspexerat, satietate abiecisse, experiendo contempsisse videatur.*

Wives were probably not supposed to be consumed by passion for their husbands either, to judge by the praise wives receive on tombstones for their chastity. Of course chastity meant not having sex with anyone but one's husband, not failing to have sex at all;¹⁷² yet a wife consumed by passion might perhaps be more likely to commit adultery, one of the greatest wrongs she could ever commit, though it should be noted that husbands probably took offence at their wives' indiscretions less on account of jealousy than because of concern that their children's paternity could be in question.¹⁷³ This is not to say that all elite Roman marriages were passionless affairs, for clearly all were not,¹⁷⁴ much less loveless¹⁷⁵ (if we take "love" to mean a warm and compassionate emotion), but passion was not high on the list of qualities to be sought in elite marriage, if it was considered at all; when it did occur, it was probably incidental.¹⁷⁶ The seemingly high incidence of adultery appears to support this, and so it is to adultery that the discussion must now turn.

Social ideals aside, it appears to be an indisputable fact of human nature that people fall romantically and passionately in love. In elite Roman society, where this quality was at best a far subordinate purpose for marriage, this tendency would rather naturally result in passionate and romantic affairs between people not necessarily married to each other, and quite possibly married to other people. Although adultery was never openly socially encouraged and was legally punishable from the time of Augustus onward, there is never a period in Roman history when adultery is not heard of,¹⁷⁷ either in casual anecdote,¹⁷⁸ satire,¹⁷⁹ love poetry,¹⁸⁰ law,¹⁸¹ or injunctions made against it by the Church.¹⁸²

¹⁷²Fantham (1991), 271.

¹⁷³Treggiari (1991a), 312.

¹⁷⁴Dixon (1992), 86 - 88.

¹⁷⁵Rudd (1981), 155; but compare Allen (1992), 70: "the married state is the antithesis and frustration of the enjoyment of true love..."

¹⁷⁶See Bradley (1991), 128: romantic marriage was "a departure from conventional standards."

¹⁷⁷Barring, of course, the very earliest days of Rome which exist only in legend; we might note that even then some women, such as Virginia, were subject to the attentions of lecherous men. See Treggiari (1991a), Chapter Nine, for a full discussion of adultery.

¹⁷⁸See, for example, Val. Max. 6.1.13, Suet. *Iul.* 48, *Aug.* 45.4, 67.2. See also Bechtle (1995) for a recent discussion of adulterous wives in Apul. *Met.* Book 9.

¹⁷⁹See especially Juv. 6.

¹⁸⁰Balsdon (1962), 215. See also Ov. *Am.* 3.4 and Prop. 3.3.47 - 50 for husbands who have their wives guarded in order to make adultery difficult for them. Note, however, that Rawson (1986), 29, contends that

Furthermore, it was entirely legal and acceptable for Roman males to have sexual relations with any of their slavewomen (or prostitutes)¹⁸³, though Roman women were not allowed the same impunity in their relations with their male slaves.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, the Roman ideal of compassionate yet calm relations between husband and wife were sometimes met and sometimes surpassed within wedlock, and sometimes a married Roman would find another outlet for his or her passion. This alternative route in the form of adultery or even *stuprum* was not encouraged, and in fact was often violently discouraged, especially for married women, but was probably for the most part accepted as a permanent fact of life among the elite.

The focus may now be turned to the non-elite classes to see what, if anything, might be gathered about the nature of their unions. Roman citizens of all economic and social levels were subject to the same requirements for legal marriage, and as far as the law was concerned, undertook this union with the same intent, that is, for the procreation of legitimate children. However, for members of the lower classes, for whom political life and power were not concerns, prestige often not applicable, and economic gain somewhat unlikely, the ranking of qualities to be sought in a partner might well have been quite different. For those members of society lacking *conubium* (usually slaves), this could have been even more true, as there was no benefit to be gained by the formation of a conjugal-type union besides emotional, for even children born of such unions would not be legitimate anyway.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, it is these classes of people, far more numerous than the Roman elite class, which were more probable candidates to form unions, be they legal or not recognized by law, which were based on romantic or passionate emotion.¹⁸⁶ The scant

there was less adultery on the part of women in the empire, arguing from the lack of love poetry in this period. Given the terribly low rate and haphazard survival of evidence, this argument is not compelling.

¹⁸¹The *lex Iulia de adulteriis* is the most famous; see Cohen (1991), 123 - 126 for a discussion of it. See also Treggiari (1991a), Appendices One and Two for summaries of alleged adulterers (gathered from the accounts of ancient historians and biographers) and adultery prosecutions and sentences under the Julio-Claudians.

¹⁸²Clark (1993), 38, notes the lack of success of such attempts on the part of the church.

¹⁸³Clark (1993), 28.

¹⁸⁴Rawson (1986), 27 - 28.

¹⁸⁵In the case of a slave couple, the children would legally be the owner's property; Treggiari (1991a), 124, notes that we do not know if slaves were able to choose their mates; certainly the continuation of any slave union depended upon the whim of the owner.

¹⁸⁶Finley (1965), 63; Rawson (1986), 7; Hallet (1984), 64; Pomeroy (1975), 204.

amount of information which remains from the lower classes must be examined to see if such a theory is tenable.

In order for romantic marriage to exist among the lower classes certain assumptions must be proved valid. The first is that the concept of romantic love, and emotion presently taken for granted in affective relationships, is not an anachronism for the ancient world. This issue will receive detailed discussion in Chapter Three;¹⁸⁷ for the moment it is enough to assume that romantic love could exist in Roman times. The second is that non-elites would have had no other overriding reason for matrimony besides emotional attachment. More specifically, is it true that a member of the lower class could not expect to gain economic advantage through marriage? The short answer is that apparently males could not, while females could and often did. If Martial and Juvenal can be trusted, it appears that a poor man's chances of marrying a wealthy man's daughter were practically non-existent; furthermore, there was a social prejudice against a patroness marrying her freedman, whether she was freeborn or of freed status herself.¹⁸⁸ Such a union actually became illegal under Septimius Severus.¹⁸⁹ A freeborn woman who engaged in a *de facto* union with a slave would have her status lowered to freedwoman if the union existed with the consent of the "husband's" owner, but she became a slave herself if the owner did not consent.¹⁹⁰ On the other hand, freedwomen often appear to have married their patrons without social stigma attaching to either, much less penalty, provided the man was not of senatorial rank.¹⁹¹ Therefore, while economic advantage through matrimony was possible for members of the lower classes, it seems that it was unlikely for marriages between disparate economic groups to be formed solely for such a purpose as it was always the man who "married down" and it was also the man whose intent defined what type of relationship existed.¹⁹² However, within the same economic level, Treggiari has pointed out that members of the lower classes might have purposefully sought out mates who were

¹⁸⁷See Chapter Three, under the section entitled "Erotic Curse Tablets: A Contradiction in Terms?"

¹⁸⁸See Juv. 3.160 and Mart. 5.81 and 6.8 (cited in Balsdon (1962), 174), though compare Sullivan (1980), 55 - 56, who argues that affairs between upper class women and lower class men were common.

¹⁸⁹Weaver (1991), 180; Gardener (1986), 33.

¹⁹⁰Tac. *Ann.* 12.53 (cited in Weaver (1972), 163).

¹⁹¹Though there was a prejudice against having someone else's freedwoman as a concubine, as the assumption was that the owner would have taken sexual advantage of her (McGinn [1991], 353). See also Treggiari (1981), 66.

¹⁹²Treggiari (1981), 59.

in the same sort of business or trade for the purpose of ensuring the continuation or success of their source of income.¹⁹³

The next consideration is the amount of autonomy a freeborn lower class individual could expect to exercise in his or her choice of marriage partner. Saller has shown that members of the lower class would be even more likely to be fatherless at the age of first marriage than their elite counterparts, both due to the fact that non-elites tended to marry at a slightly more advanced age and the fact that non-elites died at a younger age.¹⁹⁴ The results presented by Bagnall and Frier from their examination of the census returns from Roman Egypt roughly correspond to this picture, though incestuous unions tended to take place at a younger age, and were more likely to end in divorce.¹⁹⁵

It appears, therefore, that it was certainly possible for love matches to exist in the lower orders; however, does this mean that lower class unions could be expected to be passionate? The tombstone inscriptions give no indication that they were. Instead, the feelings which existed between husband and wife appear to have echoed the upper class ideal of warmth and friendliness, that is, *concordia*, but nothing more.¹⁹⁶ It is possible that the lower classes expected only companionship in a spouse; on the other hand, it is also possible that the funerary inscriptions are merely mimicking the values of the upper classes.¹⁹⁷ As for the incidence of adultery among the lower classes, not much is known, beyond the fact that courts to hear lower class adultery cases existed.¹⁹⁸ In order to attempt to understand the nature of lower class unions better, alternative sources of evidence must be sought. Ancient Greek and Latin novels perhaps provide a clue; the few which remain deal with non-elite unions which can be called nothing if not passionate and romantic. However, the audience for whom this genre was written is not known, nor are the reasons why such stories were found compelling -- was it because they reflected reality, or because they reflected something which was unattainable in real life?¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³Treggiari (1991a), 123.

¹⁹⁴Saller (1994), 120 - 121.

¹⁹⁵Bagnall and Frier (1994), 112 - 116, 124, 130.

¹⁹⁶ Though again, expressions of passion may be generally held to be incongruous with and indecorous for epitaphs for all levels of Roman social classes; still, the tombstone inscriptions are one of the rare sources of evidence which survive by which to gauge affective relationships of the non-elite, and therefore cannot be ignored.

¹⁹⁷ See Rawson (1991), 29, who notes that "ideals and values often trickle downwards..."

¹⁹⁸ Gamsey (1967).

There is another source which can be drawn on, however -- the erotic *defixiones*. While references to the practice of erotic magic abound in the literary sources,²⁰⁰ in the papyrological sources, and in the archeological record, these tablets contain information of a different calibre. First, unlike the literary sources, they potentially provide direct information from a cross-section of society, since magical practice in antiquity was not the prerogative of any one social class alone. Second, unlike the magical handbooks which survive, the *defixiones* provide concrete, physical evidence of erotic magic practiced by an individual in a particular place at a particular time. Finally, unlike the archaeological evidence which survives in the form of love amulets, the *defixiones* often give an indication of whom the spell is directed against, and what the desired effect is. The erotic *defixiones* therefore provide a rare glimpse into a very personal dilemma of an ordinary person; each tablet appears to be a recording of an earnest wish on the part of an individual who for some reason is unable to achieve his or her heart's desire through ordinary means. By studying this small collection of crystallized longing in an attempt to determine the scenarios in which erotic magic was felt to be necessary and effective, the sorts of people it was directed against, and the outcome desired by the practitioner, more can perhaps be learned about the true nature and expectations of conjugal and *de facto* unions in all levels of Roman society. It is to this purpose that the rest of this thesis will be devoted.

¹⁹⁹For further discussion of these and other points concerning ancient novels, their authors, and readership, see Chapter Three, under the section entitled "The Source Evidence: The Difficulties of Not Being Greek".

²⁰⁰For erotic magic as a favourite literary topos, see Faraone (forthcoming), 7 and Betz (1987), 95.

CHAPTER TWO

ROMAN *DEFIXIONES*: DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The very idea of erotic curse tablets is vaguely disconcerting to modern sensibilities. For us, eroticism and love do not seem to be compatible with the malevolent connotations of cursing. For the ancient Romans, however, there existed no paradox. The reason for this can only be understood through a detailed examination of the actual tablets themselves. It is therefore the primary goal of this chapter to bring together and compare the erotic tablets of Italy and the western provinces of the Roman Empire to determine themes and motives, and to consider the geographical area and time frame in which they were used; a secondary aim is to attempt to place this body of tablets within the wider contexts of cursing, erotic magic, and curse tablet use in antiquity in general.

The main body of evidence on which this thesis is based is a new collection of all the western erotic curse tablets currently available in printed sources.¹ My collection, complete as far as I am aware, is catalogued in the Appendix, and it is to the texts contained there that I shall constantly be referring in what follows (by appropriate serial number(s)). In the appendix, I have grouped the tablets by geographical location, that is, the provinces in which they were found; under each geographical heading, I have listed the tablets in chronological order (from earliest to latest). Each tablet's entry includes a brief description of its appearance, the exact location where it was found (whenever possible), and a bibliography of publications in which it has appeared. In addition, the text inscribed on each tablet is provided; some tablets have been read more than once, however, and in the event that successive readings have produced different results from the first publications, I have chosen the reading which appears to have taken the least liberties. Whenever possible, I have produced an English translation of the texts; if a text is too fragmentary to make a translation possible, a summary of the main points of the text is given instead.

A description of curse tablets in general will be useful before narrowing the focus of the discussion to those tablets concerned with erotic matters alone. Known as *defixiones* in Latin, *κατάδεσμοι* in Greek, and "binding" curse tablets in English, just what were these little packets of ill-will? In the most general terms, a curse tablet was a thin, smallish

¹There are several general collections of Graeco-Roman *defixiones*; Wuensch compiled the first corpus of Greek *defixiones* in 1897 (a collection often abbreviated to *DTA*), which Audollent's 1904 corpus of Latin and Greek *defixiones* was meant to supplement (often abbreviated to *DT*). Several scholars have attempted to update the two main corpora in subsequent years, the main contributions being Besnier (1920), Garcia-Ruiz (1967), Solin (1968), and most recently, Jordan (1985).

rectangle of lead,² originally inscribed only with the name(s) of the victim(s), but later with a curse, or “binding” formula as well.³ The tablet was then folded or rolled, often pierced with a nail of bronze or iron, and tossed down a graveshaft,⁴ deposited in a well or cistern, or buried⁵ -- the point being to get the tablet where the underworld deities, daemons, and spirits of the dead could read it. This folding and burying process has allowed in excess of fifteen hundred curse tablets to survive to be read, if not by the dwellers of the underworld, at least by modern scholars. Tablets have been found in all corners of the Roman world; approximately two-thirds derive from the Greek East, though future finds, such as those recently made at Bath in Britain, could conceivably even the scale in the time to come.⁶

The earliest lead curse tablets come from fifth century Attica, Sicily, and Olbia.⁷ From that time right through to the sixth century AD *defixiones* are a constant in the archaeological record in an ever-widening geographical expanse;⁸ by the second century AD, it appears that no corner of the Roman Empire was unfamiliar with the convention of the curse tablet.⁹ In the western Empire, the largest numbers of tablets date to the first century AD and beyond, with particular concentration around the second and third centuries; the evidence is perhaps skewed by the plethora of British tablets, most of which date to the Severan period, which comprise a full half of the total number found in the

²Though not exclusively of lead; curse tablets have been made from pottery sherds, limestone, gemstones, papyrus, wax, ceramic bowls, and from alloys of lead and other metals, most notably tin, from which great numbers of curse tablets in Britain were made (Gager [1992], 3 - 4).

³In the Roman period, this formula often included complex series of *voces magicae* or *ephesia grammata*, words of uncertain significance now, but then believed to contain untold power; vowel series, palindromes, words or letters placed in geometrical patterns, and *characteres* (magical symbols and pictures) were also commonly included. (Gager [1992], 6 - 9; Faraone [1991a], 6; Brashear [1995], 3429 - 3438). See Tambiah (1968), 177 - 178, for an anthropological discussion of “demon-language” in magical invocation.

⁴The ideal placement of a *defixio* appears to have been in the hand of a corpse untimely dead or struck down by a violent death, the idea being that the spirit would be restless and therefore only too pleased to do one’s bidding (Gager [1992], 18 - 20; Faraone [1991a], 3); however, Graf (1994), 152 - 153, has recently pointed out that many *defixio* users were interested only in finding a corpse and were unconcerned with the circumstances of its death.

⁵Or perhaps on occasion nailed to the wall of a chthonic temple (Brashear [1995], 3445; Smith [1983], 253).

⁶Tomlin (1988), 59 n. 1; for recent finds at Bath, see Tomlin (1988).

⁷Faraone (1991a), 3.

⁸Jordan (1985), 206 n.2.

⁹Faraone (1991a), 3.

West.¹⁰ The tablets were used for a variety of purposes -- by businessmen, actors, and athletes against their competitors (including race horses in the circus), ordinary people against enemies and thieves,¹¹ and lovers against their rivals and even their loved ones themselves. It is this last category of *defixio* which is of interest here. Forty-six curse tablets of erotic concern have been discovered to date in the western Roman world.

Erotic *Defixiones*

In order to assess the contents of this body of tablets as responsibly as possible, a few words of warning must be given. As is always the case with evidence from the ancient world, we do not have, nor will we ever have, everything which once existed. This is because the tablets which have survived have done so only by chance; therefore, the regions of the Roman world with climatic conditions conducive to the preservation of the material of the tablets will yield greater numbers, particularly if these regions receive more attention from archaeologists than others. A greater concentration of finds in one area as opposed to another will then not necessarily indicate a higher instance of *defixio* usage in that area in antiquity.

The second problem is that the surviving tablets are often fragmentary. In most cases their editors have struggled heroically to restore the texts to their original state, but with varied results. Some of the tablets are so fragmentary that reconstruction (let alone translation) is impossible. In such cases, the editors have classified the tablets as erotic because the remains appear to resemble other erotic texts in formula and intent.¹² The fragmentary nature of some of the tablets also leaves open the occasional possibility that two tablets are actually just pieces of the same text; such is the case with tablets numbers 34 and 35 from third century AD Hadrumentum. If these two are indeed from the same tablet, then the total number of tablets in this particular body of evidence should be reduced from 46 to 45. Even if the two fragments are separate tablets, they should perhaps nevertheless

¹⁰Audollent (1904), 556; Tomlin (1988), 60.

¹¹Curses against thieves are the largest sub-category of western *defixiones*, again due to the British tablets, which are concerned almost without exception with thievery (Tomlin [1988], 60).

¹²In an attempt to provide a catalogue of texts as comprehensive as possible, I have included all western curse tablets which have been termed erotic by at least one previous scholar (in most cases by their original publisher or editor, or at the discretion of a successive reader). Some tablets included here are not universally recognized as erotic, however. For example, number 24, from Britain, has been called erotic by Garcia-Ruiz (1967), 59, but not by Tomlin (1988), 60. On the other hand, Tomlin has suggested that number 25, also from Britain, could possibly be interpreted as erotic, though I have not found reference to it termed as such elsewhere. Number 26, from Spain, is the only tablet which has not been previously categorised as erotic or otherwise; as its editor (Corell [1993]) has not made a suggestion as to its nature, I have decided to include it due to its resemblance to other erotic texts.

be considered as a single entity, as they both target the same victim and are probably the work of the same practitioner. The same holds true for four tablets from fourth or fifth century AD northern Italy, in the region of Cisalpine Gaul (numbers 14 through 17); though these are undoubtedly four individual tablets, one Porcellus and his wife Silla are the victims on all four, probably of the same practitioner.

With these difficulties kept in mind, the full body of evidence may be confronted as it currently exists. The tablets range in date from the second century BC to the fourth or fifth century AD. Every western province has produced at least one erotic tablet, with the exceptions of Gaul, Illyricum, and Mauretania. It becomes immediately clear that the full body of evidence ought to be subdivided into two discrete categories based upon the practitioner's relationship to the victim, and the desired effect of the curse; one group of tablets seeks to inhibit love, the other to encourage it. Twenty-seven of the forty-six tablets may be gathered together under the heading of erotic rivalry. In general, one must infer that the tablets are the result of a love triangle, in which the practitioner is vying with a rival for the affections of a third party.¹³ It is the rival who is the target of the curse, which aims to make the victim ineffectual with the mutual object of desire. The remaining nineteen tablets may be termed as "attraction" spells; these target not a rival, but rather the object of desire.¹⁴ As the title suggests, these tablets seek to attract the victim to the practitioner. Each category will be considered separately.

The Erotic Rivalry *Defixiones*

Just as the corpse who is buried here is unable to speak or make conversation, thus may Rhodine be corpse-like and be neither able to speak nor make conversation with M. Licinius Faustus. Just as (this) corpse is unwelcome among gods and humans, thus may Rhodine be unwelcome to M. Licinius and may she fare just as well as this corpse who is buried here does. Father Dis, I commit Rhodine to you, so that she might always be hated by M. Licinius Faustus.

Quomodo mortuos, qui istic sepultus est, nec loqui nec sermone potest, seic Rhodine apud M. Licinium Faustum mortua sit nec loqui nec sermone possit. Ita uti mortuos nec ad deos nec ad homines acceptus est, seic Rhodine apud M. Licinium accepta sit et tantum valeat, quantum ille

¹³Faraone (1991a), 13; Gager (1992), 80.

¹⁴Petropoulos (1988), 216, would subdivide this category further into *ἀγωγή* and *φιλητροκατὰδεσμοι*, the former being a true spell of attraction, the later in effect being a *defixio*, as it binds the victim with a view to forcing him or her to fall in love with the practitioner -- "for all practical purposes the distinction between the two 'types' is not easily formulated."

mortuos, quei isitc sepultus est. Dite Pater, Rhodine(m) tibi commendo, uti semper odio sit M. Licinio Fausto.

-- Tablet 7 (partial), Republican/Augustan Rome

The above is an example of the sort of curse which may be found on a rivalry *defixio*. To begin with the geographical and chronological distribution of these twenty-seven tablets, more than half (seventeen) come from Italy (though it must be kept in mind that four target the same victims). The remaining ten are distributed fairly evenly among the remaining provinces: Pannonia, Germany, Britain and Spain each have two, while Noricum and the province of Africa have each yielded one. In addition to the four tablets from Cisalpine Gaul, five more of the Italian tablets (numbers 2 through 6) appear to have come from a single find, and date to between 75 and 40 BC, though they all target different victims.¹⁵ This group of tablets, due to its relatively large number, tends to weight the chronological distribution of the entire group of rivalry tablets to the first century BC and the Augustan era. However, if the chronological distribution is considered without these five late Republican examples, the remainder are fairly evenly distributed from the first century BC through to the fourth or fifth century AD, each century yielding at least three examples (see Table A). Tablet 1, from second century BC Italy, is the only example of an erotic tablet pre-dating the first century BC in the West. Italy and Spain generally provide the examples from the earlier centuries of this time frame, with the later examples often coming from the more northerly provinces (with the exception of tablet 43, from third century AD Africa).

All of the tablets are made of lead except two, one of which is a pottery vase from first or second century Germany, the other a terracotta plaque from fourth or fifth century Pannonia. This plaque, its curse inscribed in Greek, is also one of the two only examples of western erotic rivalry *defixiones* whose curses are not written in Latin, the other being number 13, from second or third century Italy. Two of the four tablets from fourth or fifth century Italy (tablets 14 and 15), however, bear *voces magicae* inscribed in part in Greek letters. Several tablets' texts are inscribed in part or in total from right to left, upside down, or both;¹⁶ in addition, the "curse vase" from Germany (tablet 23) bears the letters of the

¹⁵Their exact find spot is unknown; see Sherwood-Fox (1912) for a full discussion of the work done to locate and date these tablets.

¹⁶For example, number 3, from first century BC Italy, number 18, from second century AD Pannonia, and number 20, from third century AD Noricum.

TABLE A

Chronological and Geographical Distribution of the
 Erotic Rivalry *Defixiones*

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOTAL #</u>	<u>TABLET #</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
2nd C BC	1	1	Italy
1st C BC	5	2	Italy
		3	Italy
		4	Italy
		5	Italy
		6	Italy
Augustan era	3	7	Italy
		8	Italy
		26	Spain
1st C AD	3	9	Italy
		22	Germany
		27	Spain
1st/2nd C AD	1	23	Germany
2nd C AD	3	10	Italy
		11	Italy
		18	Pannonia
2nd/3rd C AD	4	12	Italy
		13	Italy
		24	Britain
		25	Britain
3rd C AD	2	20	Noricum
		43	Africa
4th/5th C AD	5	14	Italy
		15	Italy
		16	Italy
		17	Italy
		19	Pannonia
TOTAL	27		

alphabet inscribed backward about the neck of the vessel. Also remarkable is tablet 9 from first century AD Italy -- its curse is inscribed in phrases written at right angles to each other, while the tablet is itself in the shape of a phallus.

The texts of the erotic rivalry tablets are of varying lengths and degrees of literacy,¹⁷ and it may be questioned if these facts are of any significance. To suppose that the lengthier spells indicate more heart-felt desire for success of the magic on the part of the practitioner would be entirely speculative; however, perhaps something might be conjectured about the economic situation of the practitioner. Scholars have debated whether curse tablets were the work of hired magicians.¹⁸ The diversity of literacy and style found among the curse tablets suggests that amateurs and professionals alike composed the tablets. Presumably, in an ideal situation a client would have commissioned a magician with the appropriate expertise to compose the curse tablet, but as this would have no doubt required a fee, it may have been a service not everyone could have afforded. A would-be practitioner of limited economic means might then have attempted to compose his or her own tablet, probably resulting in a *defixio* of amateurish quality.¹⁹ On the other hand, all hired magicians need not have necessarily been highly literate, only literate enough (or tricky enough) to persuade their clients (who may not have been literate at all) that they held knowledge of the supernatural.²⁰

The ultimate goal of the rivalry tablets, was, as mentioned above, generally to make the victim ineffectual with and/or separated from a third party. However, the methods by which the tablets express their curses vary. Fifteen of the twenty-seven tablets include some mention of the gods of the underworld or the "shades below", either invoking them to carry out the curse, or dedicating the victim to them.²¹ An additional six tablets do not

¹⁷Compare, for example, the lengths of tablets 2 - 6 with the lengths of tablets 23 and 27; furthermore, the degree of literacy present on tablets 2 - 6 is far superior to that of tablet 1, for example.

¹⁸See Gager (1992), 5; Tomlin (1988), 100.

¹⁹Gager (1992), 5, notes that the later tablets in particular appear to have required the expertise of a magician due to the increasing intricacy of the spells. See tablets 112 - 116 in Tomlin's collection from Bath (1988) for examples of curse tablets with only illiterate scribbles on them.

²⁰One might suspect a scenario similar to this in the consideration of some of the tablets of erotic attraction from the Roman province of Africa; five of the tablets are inscribed with Latin words written in Greek letters (see below, under "Attraction *defixiones*"). It seems possible that some magicians sought to impress their uneducated clients with a knowledge of Greek, or perhaps of the mysterious language of magic.

²¹"Gods below": tablets 10, 26; "shades": tablets 11, 22, 43; Proserpina: tablets 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ("infernal Juno") 20; Jove: tablet 20; Athene: tablet 19; Mercury: tablet 25; Iao: tablet 13. These figures may be compared with Gager's enumeration of the gods/daemons mentioned most often on Latin curse tablets; they

specifically name gods or daemons, but prevail upon an unspecified “you” to carry out the practitioner’s curse.²² Seven of these tablets promise the deities a reward²³ if they do the practitioner’s bidding.²⁴ The remaining six tablets make no mention of deities, but simply employ direct binding formulas (“In this tablet I bind...”) ²⁵, wish formulas (“may [the name of the victim] be...”) ²⁶, or analogical wish formulas (“may [the name of the victim] be like...”).²⁷

The immediate desired effect of the tablets also varies. Four tablets simply dedicate the victims to the gods below,²⁸ while one desires the victim to be pursued by “Gorgon-slaying Athene”.²⁹ Six tablets seek to make the victim hated by the practitioner’s object of desire, or at least separated from him or her.³⁰ More popular are the tablets which bind the victim’s body parts (often in great detail) and mental capabilities. Twelve such tablets exist, with an additional two which simply bind the victim’s person as a whole.³¹ Tablet 7, from Augustan Italy, is also similar in intent, as it desires to make the victim “corpse-like” where a certain M. Licinius Faustus is concerned, that is, unable to speak and unwelcome in general, but not actually herself dead. There are, however, some tablets which cross the line between wishing the victim to be “corpse-like” and an actual corpse; of the nine examples which exist,³² seven express this death-wish in conjunction with a body-part binding formula. But as Gager points out, we do not always mean what we say literally:

are, in order of frequency, Manes, Jupiter, Pluto, Nemesis, Mercury, various Nymphs (ex. Sulis Minerva at Bath). It would appear that Proserpina is an uncommonly popular deity among the erotic tablets, though Hecate and Kore (two of Proserpina/Persephone’s alter-egos) are the second and third most frequently invoked deities on the Greek tablets (Hermes is the most popular; Gager [1992], 12 - 13).

²²Tablets 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18.

²³For example, the practitioners of tablets 2 - 6 promise dates, figs, and a black pig; tablet 10 appears to offer “property”, and 26 is not specific.

²⁴Tablets 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, and 26.

²⁵See tablets 1, 12, 23, 24.

²⁶See tablet number 27.

²⁷See tablet number 7; note that this tablet does contain mention of “Father Dis” as well.

²⁸Tablets 9, 20, 22, and 43.

²⁹Tablet 19, from fourth or fifth century AD Pannonia.

³⁰Tablets 1, 7, 13, 18, 20, and 27.

³¹Tablets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15, 24, and 26; 23 and 25.

What do we mean when we blurt out, “Screw you!”? Is this an expression of our desire for sexual intercourse? When we hear teammates or sports fans shout, “Kill the bum!”, do we load our rifles?³³

He does, of course, have a point. Faraone has argued that on Greek *defixiones*, the comparison of the victim to a corpse was meant to restrain the victim by means of persuasive analogy, not to bring about the death of the victim.³⁴ However, it is difficult to believe that the practitioners of these nine texts, which contain such phrases as “badly, badly, badly may she perish, may she die badly, may she expire badly...”³⁵ and “kill him, slay him, strangle him...”³⁶ meant to be metaphorical.

Let us now move on to determine just who the victims of these tablets were. Fourteen of the twenty-seven tablets mention only one victim;³⁷ two more seem to curse a single victim, but “piggyback” one or more names on to the end of the curse.³⁸ Of these sixteen tablets, thirteen of the intended victims are female, and apparently come from a variety of social classes. For example, tablet 8 and tablet 3, rough contemporaries from first century BC Italy, curse a slave woman and a slave owner respectively. However, there appears to be a rather high incidence of victims with Greek names, which may indicate that the victims were often of slave or freed status. As for the three men who are cursed, one is a slave (Plotius of tablet 2, who is incidentally the slave of the woman cursed in tablet 3), while the status of the remaining two is unknown. Three tablets³⁹ are notable for the fact that they indicate the name of the person from whom the victim is to be separated, though this person is not himself or herself a direct victim of the curse.⁴⁰ These differ from six other

³²Tablets 2 through 6, from first century BC Italy, number 8, from Augustan era Italy, number 11, from second century Italy, and numbers 14 and 15 from fourth or fifth century from northern Italy in the region of Cisalpine Gaul.

³³Gager (1992), 22.

³⁴See Faraone (1991a).

³⁵Tablet number four; compare tablets 2, 3, 5, and 6.

³⁶Tablet number 16.

³⁷Tablets 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 13, 18, 19, 24, 26, 27, and 43.

³⁸Tablet 7 from Augustan era Italy and tablet 23, the “curse vase” from Germany.

³⁹Tablets 1 (from second century BC Italy), 20 (from third century AD Noricum) and 27 (from first century AD Spain).

⁴⁰Tablet 25 from Britain may be included: the female is cursed and the male is mentioned, but not malevolently, just so that he will feel no jealousy of the practitioner.

tablets in which two people are named and are clearly both intended victims of the curse. In all six the pair comprise one male and one female; tablet 9 from first century AD Italy clearly indicates that the cursed couple were sexually involved, while tablet 13 and 14 through 17 from Italy all target a husband and wife team. The relationships of the couples of the remaining two tablets are not clearly stated, but it can perhaps be presumed that they too were sexually involved and/or married.

The final two tablets contain the names of several victims. Number 11, from second century Italy, bears the names of many women and three men, all of whom could be of freed status, or in the case of the men, slaves;⁴¹ number 22, from first century AD Germany, names two or three men and one woman, who is possibly the object of the practitioner's desire. The practice of cursing one, two, or several victims does not seem to be peculiar to one region or one specific period; rather, the tablets appear to be randomly distributed.

The identities of the various practitioners are far more difficult to determine. Very few of the texts could possibly be interpreted as containing the name of the practitioner; for example, tablet 9, from first century AD Italy, may have been used by Quarta against her former partner and his new lover, while tablet 22, from first century AD Germany, could be interpreted as a certain Secundus cursing two other men to improve his chances with a certain Silonia. As for the rest of the tablets, the identity of the practitioners cannot be known. Even guessing their gender is risky and open to debate. However, with regard to the rivalry tablets which target just one victim, it might be thought that the practitioner was of the same sex as the victim, assuming the relationships were heterosexual. Therefore, since five tablets indicate the desire to separate from other people,⁴² while eleven seek to make the victim generally ineffective,⁴³ and one wishes the victim to be pursued by Athene for her sexual habits,⁴⁴ it seems probable that this corpus represents as many as thirteen female practitioners to just four male.

It is generally more difficult to determine the gender of the practitioners of the tablets which target pairs of victims, as it seems that one has a fifty-fifty chance of being correct.

⁴¹See Solin (1968), 14.

⁴²Tablet 1 from second century BC Italy, tablet 7, from Augustan era Italy, tablet 18, from second century AD Pannonia, tablet 20, from third century AD Noricum, and tablet 27, from first century AD Spain.

⁴³Tablets 2 through 6 (from first century BC Italy), tablet 8 (from first century AD Italy), tablet 10 (from second century AD Italy), tablet 24 (from second or third century AD Britain), tablet 26 (from first century AD Spain), tablet 23 (from first century AD Germany), and tablet 43 (from third century AD Africa).

⁴⁴Tablet 19 (from fourth or fifth century Pannonia).

It could conceivably be the case that such tablets had more than one practitioner, perhaps a male and a female, who each hoped to catch a member of the pair, newly parted by their respective admirers' curses. In any case, in tablet 12 (from second or third century Italy), and tablets 14 through 17 from fourth or fifth century Italy), the sex(es) of the practitioner(s) cannot even be guessed. Tablet 9 (from first century AD Italy), 13 (from second or third century AD Italy), and 25 (from second or third century Britain) allow some room for speculation; as mentioned above, number 9 could be interpreted as Quarta cursing her ex-husband or lover and his current lover, while tablet 13, which wishes a certain Quadrilla to be hated and forgotten by her husband Felix, will probably also have been commissioned by a female.⁴⁵ Number 25 curses a certain Timotneus that he "feel no jealousy of me", which suggests that the practitioner is a male. As for the two tablets which mention many victims, it is most likely the case for tablet 22 (from first century AD Germany, mentioned above) that the practitioner is a male, as he possibly names himself and seems to be pursuing a woman, who is also mentioned on the tablet. Tablet 11, from second century AD Italy, contains the names of twelve or thirteen women (at least) and three men. It is possible that this is a "group" *defixio*, composed by a single magician at the request of several different people.⁴⁶ If this is the case, it would appear that again women are the main consumers of this type of magic.

The next question to address is where these curse tablets fit into Roman traditions of cursing. Central to Roman cursing tradition is the idea that the spoken word, whether for good or for bad, is powerful -- *quid enim non carmina possint?* asks Ovid.⁴⁷ The earliest example of the credence given to a verbalized formula used for nefarious purposes is found in the Twelve Tables. As mentioned previously, it was forbidden to use magic to lure a neighbour's produce from his garden. The exact wording, as Pliny the Elder reports it, *qui fruges excantassit*, makes it clear that the magic whose use was forbidden was a sung charm,⁴⁸ or *carmen*.⁴⁹ This is supported by what follows: *et alibi: qui malum carmen*

⁴⁵Though see below for another possible interpretation of this text.

⁴⁶It is also possible that this was commissioned by a single person for a non-erotic purpose; the text is terribly fragmentary.

⁴⁷*Ov. Met.* 7.161. Compare Pliny *HN* 28.3.10. See Tambiah (1968) for an anthropological study of the magical power of words.

⁴⁸Szepes (1976), 206, notes that magical incantations were often in the form of hexametrical verse.

⁴⁹Porphyryon, the third century commentator of Horace, informs us that the Twelve Tables forbade anyone to write a spell against anyone (2.1.152ff; cited in Tupet [1976], 167 n.1); however, Pliny's report of an

*incantassit?*⁵⁰ A *carmen* to a Roman, however, could be good or bad, depending on the intentions of the one who chanted it.⁵¹ For example, a *carmen* heals a dislocation for Cato the Elder, when sung in conjunction with an appropriate gesture.⁵² On the other hand, a *malum carmen* was something to be feared.⁵³

Vocalized and formulaic curses are a common theme throughout Republican history, sometimes called *carmina*, sometimes called *dirae*, and sometimes called *devotiones*.⁵⁴ For example, Livy records examples of curses pronounced by generals against the enemy on the eve of battle.⁵⁵ Plutarch and Seneca both record the story of a tribune who invoked a curse against Crassus as he set out from Rome to fight the Parthians -- the curse was of such incredible power that it destroyed even the one who uttered it.⁵⁶ Catullus, recklessly in love, claims to have no fear of bewitchment by the *mala lingua* of the jealous.⁵⁷ Pliny the Elder confronts the question of how much credence the power of the word should be given; in view of numerous examples of times in the past when the gods appear to have heeded the prayers and curses of mortals, he finds himself forced to admit that the traditional belief is justified.⁵⁸

Thus the oral curse was a great power in Roman mentality -- but what about the written curse? Do the *defixiones* of the West have a local ancestry, or are they an imported form of magic? The written curse is certainly not unexampled in the Roman tradition. The very act

interdiction of vocalized spell appears to be more probable for 450 BC, while Porphyrio is perhaps reflecting a more common practice of his own day.

⁵⁰Pliny *HN* 28.4.19.

⁵¹Graf (1994), 56 - 57.

⁵²Cato *Agr.* 160.

⁵³For a discussion of the distinction between *mala carmina* and *carmina* in general, see Graf (1994), 52 - 57.

⁵⁴Note, for example, Tacitus' (*Ann.* 6.24) report of the death-bed imprecations voiced by Asinius Gallus against Tiberius (*meditas compositasque diras*). Ovid also mentions the ancient sung charms of the Marsians, the *neniae*; see *Fast.* 6.141, *Met.* 8.452, *Ars Am.* 2.102. See Tupet (1976), 176.

⁵⁵Something which the Decii are particularly famous for; see 8.9.4, 9.10.3, 9.17; 8.10.11 - 14 gives the specifics and protocol for such a curse. See also Macrobius *Sat.* 3.9.

⁵⁶Plut. *Crass.* 6.4 - 6; Sen. *QNat.* 5.18.10.

⁵⁷Catull. 7.9 - 12. "To kiss you with so many kisses, Lesbia, is enough and more than enough for your mad Catullus; kisses, which neither curious eyes shall count up nor an evil tongue bewitch" (trans. F.W. Cornish). *Tam te basia multa basiare /vesano satis et super Catullost, /quae nec pernumerare curiosi /possint nec mala fascinare lingua.*

⁵⁸Pliny *HN* 28.3.10.

of writing, that is, conveying of a message through mysterious symbols, may have appeared magical in itself to the illiterate majority.⁵⁹ Perhaps the act of writing the curse down was thought to lend the malediction extra power,⁶⁰ and thus the oral and written curse would be used in conjunction, as in fact appears to have been usual practice with the curse tablets.⁶¹ In a public and military context from the fourth century BC, Livy records a ritual inscribing of a wax tablet, which contained a provisional self-curse against the Roman army, should it be the first to renege on a treaty.⁶² This tablet was accompanied by an oral component and the slaying of a pig, to show what would happen to the army should it act so as to fall victim to the curse. Also in a public context, funereal inscriptions found in the vicinity of Rome offer a blessing or a curse to wayfarers depending upon their intentions towards the tombs; anyone treating the tomb with respect and dignity is wished well, while anyone defiling or disrupting the tomb earns a curse.⁶³ More interesting than these conditional and generic curses are the tombstones which contain a malediction directed against a specific person still living; one particularly noteworthy inscription provides a detailed and involved curse against the freedwoman and ex-wife of the corpse, who ran off with another man.⁶⁴ Furthermore, again in an erotic context, graffiti from the walls of Pompeii provide provisional curses against anyone who sought to steal away the author's girlfriend: *Crescens, quisque meam futuet rivalis amicam, illum secretis montibus*

⁵⁹Merrifield (1987), 137. The "illiterate" *defixiones* (that is, tablets with scribbling on them) found at Bath seem to support this idea (see Tomlin [1988], nos. 112 - 116).

⁶⁰Betz (1991), 248, cites *PGM* 4.2081 - 2087, however, which indicates that some, at least, regarded purely oral magical practice as superior to that which used "instruments".

⁶¹Faraone argues that the curse tablet ritual developed as an oral formula uttered in conjunction with an appropriate gesture, that is, the twisting and/or piercing of a piece of lead; eventually the oral formula came to be inscribed on the lead tablet itself, though the oral element was not lost. (Faraone [1991a], 4 - 5).

⁶²Livy 1.24.7 - 9. Tambiah (1968), 176, notes that the gestures which accompany magical words are sometimes thought to allow the words to have power.

⁶³Lattimore (1962), 121.

⁶⁴Lattimore (1962), 124: *Hic stigmata aeterna Acte libertae scripta sunt/ venenariae et perfidae dolosae duri pectoris:/ clavom et restem sparteam, ut sibi collum alliget,/ et picem candentem, pectus malum commurat suum./ manumissa gratis secuta adulterum/ patronum circum scripsit et ministros ancillam et puerum lecto/ iacenti patrono abduxit,/ ut animo desponderet solus relictus spoliatus senex. e[t] Hymno, [et] eadem stimata secutis Zosimum.* (CE 95). "Here are inscribed the marks of eternal shame of Acte, a freedwoman, a treacherous, tricky, hard-hearted poisoner. (I leave her) a nail and a hempen rope to fasten about her neck, and burning pitch to sear her evil heart. Manumitted gratis, she went off with an adulterer, cheated her patron and took away his servants, a maid and a boy, as he lay in bed, leaving him an old, lonely, despoiled man, broken-hearted. And the same curse (is laid upon) Humnus and those who went away with Zosimus." (trans. Lattimore).

ursus edat (“Crescens, may a bear eat in the wilderness any rival who fucks my girlfriend”).⁶⁵

Finally, we come to what may be the closest Italian ancestor of the western *defixio*. Found in Rome is a small pottery vase inscribed with the following curse:

May the gods, Jove, Vejove, and Saturn (grant) that Proserpine, to whom they suffer this vase to be despatched, show thee no favour unless indeed thou art willing to make peace with ⁶⁶ Ops Toitesia. Duenos made me (as a curse) against Manus, and let not evil fall to Duenos from me.⁶⁷

This “curse vase” dates to the fourth century BC and provides the earliest example of what could be termed a *defixio* on the Italian mainland. However, what is its relation to the western *defixiones* of later centuries? Is it an exception or a missing link? In spite of Livy’s wax tablet and the Roman curse vase, both of which provide fourth century BC examples of inscribed Latin curses, the western *defixiones* are probably more a product of Greek influence combined in varying doses with Roman tradition, than a direct descendant of purely Roman tradition.⁶⁸

Most telling is the fact that the very word *defixio* is not found in any extant Latin sources. It is rather a word derived from the Latin verb *defigere*, which is synonymous with the verbs *incantare*, *execrari*, and *devovere*, and which was assigned by Latin grammarians as a gloss for the Greek term meaning curse tablet, *κατάδεσμος*.⁶⁹ The use of lead as the preferred medium of *defixiones* is also fundamental in tracing the Greek element. Lead, though admittedly not the only medium used for curse tablets, was undoubtedly the most popular. Its cold, dull, heavy nature lent it to convenient comparisons with the intended victim, such as “just as this lead is cold and dull, so may x be cold and dull...”.⁷⁰ Lead was also associated with the unlucky planet Saturn.⁷¹ In

⁶⁵Diehl (1910), 36 #601; see also #600: *si quis forte meam cupiet vio[lare] puellam, illum in desertis montibus urat amor*. Cited in Richlin (1983), 81.

⁶⁶Or perhaps “make atonement to” or “be appeased towards”.

⁶⁷Audollent (1904), 193 - 194 (#136). Translated by Conway.

⁶⁸That the western *defixiones* have such mixed lineage is consistent with the paradoxical nature of magic in general, for magic is at once both intensely traditional and marvellously flexible; rites and formulae survive through the ages, scrupulously and exactly observed, yet at the same time, “foreign” magic would have always had the air of power about it (for the Greeks and the Romans alike fondly believed “magic” to be a foreign technology; see Gordon [1987], 73 - 84).

⁶⁹As discussed in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*.

⁷⁰Faraone (1991a), 7.

addition, it is malleable and easy to inscribe; thus, in all aspects lead seems to be the ideal cursing medium, and it is therefore not impossible that both the Greeks and the Romans independently chose to use it as such. However, lead is not a metal readily available on mainland Italy,⁷² while the activity of the Laureion mine in Attica in the fifth century BC, the period when lead *defixiones* first appeared in Attica, produced lead in great quantity as a by-product of silver mining. Therefore, it is most probable that lead began to be used in curse tablets not because it was cold, dull, heavy, and connected with Saturn, but rather because it was cheap and there was a lot of it around.⁷³ The comparisons to be made between the lead and the victim were recognised later.⁷⁴

That the use of lead tablets indicates Greek influence is suggested by the earliest examples of *defixiones* in mainland Italy; besides the “curse vase” of the fourth century BC, no other tablet of any description has come to light from this period in the archaeological record. Audollent records three tablets from the third century BC: two are of lead, one is of bronze, and all are in Greek.⁷⁵ By the second century, *defixiones* in Italy were beginning to be inscribed in Latin, but lead was the preferred medium -- as it was to be for the next seven centuries (see Table B). Indeed, only two of the forty-six erotic western tablets are not of lead. Thus, with the increased contact with the Greeks throughout the Republican period, either through Greek colonies in the West, or later, Roman military activity in the East and an increased influx of Greek slaves to the West, the Roman cursing tradition, which was mainly, though not entirely oral in character, adopted Greek conventions.

⁷¹Though it is possible this association arose from the fact that lead was often used as a cursing medium. Merrifield (1987), 142; Martinez (1991), 4 - 5.

⁷²Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain were major suppliers of it for construction (White [1986], 238). See Pliny *HN* 33.106, who mentions the importation of lead for a factory at Puteoli (cited in White [1986], 238).

⁷³Faraone (1991a), 7. It ought to be noted that there it is still debated whether or not *defixiones* were in their earliest form letters to the underworld gods, as lead had been used since the Archaic period as a writing medium. See Faraone (1991a), 4, Graf (1994), 152, and Preisendanz (1969), 19.

⁷⁴Martinez (1991), 5. The same probably holds true for the common *defixio* convention of writing from right to left on the tablet. Faraone has suggested that in the fifth and fourth centuries BC in Greece, writing from left to right as opposed to whichever way one felt was not yet thoroughly ingrained. When left to right had become the accepted direction of writing, the practice of backward writing on *defixiones* had become traditional, as had the use of lead, and lent itself to comparisons such as “just as this tablet is backward, so may x be backward...” (Faraone [1991a], 8; though compare Gager [1992], 5, who claims that the backward writing was always done with symbolic significance). Compare also tablet number 20.

⁷⁵Audollent (1904), numbers 123 from Liguria, 212 from Brutium, and 302 from Cumae. See also Preisendanz (1969), 18.

TABLE B

Defixiones in Italy Prior to the First Century BC
in Audollent's *DT* (1904)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NUMBER⁷⁶</u>	<u>MATERIAL</u>	<u>LANGUAGE</u>
4th C BC	136	pottery vase	Latin
3rd C BC	123	lead tablet	Greek
	212	bronze tablet	Greek
	302	lead tablet	Greek
2nd C BC	193	lead tablet	Oscan
	194	lead tablet	? fragmentary
uncertain BCs	200 - 7	ostraka	Greek
	127	gold tablet	Etruscan?

⁷⁶As assigned by Audollent.

This is not to say that with increased exposure to Greek magic the Romans discarded their own traditions entirely in favour of Greek conventions. Purely oral cursing did not vanish from Roman practice; on occasion, however, the oral curse was accompanied by a lead curse tablet.⁷⁷ It is often difficult to determine in the literary evidence just when a purely oral curse is meant as opposed to a curse made in conjunction with a lead *defixio*; the word often used of curses is *devotio*, which could indicate the presence of a *defixio*, though not necessarily.⁷⁸ For example, in describing the circumstances of Germanicus' death, Tacitus reports that *carmina et devotiones et nomen Germanici* were found scratched on lead tablets.⁷⁹ In this case, the *devotiones* seem to be the spell formulae, not the actual tablets themselves.⁸⁰ Pure words without tablets also had the power to bind; for example, Cicero reports a case in which Curio claimed to have stumbled over his courtroom delivery because he had been bewitched by the *veneficiis et cantionibus* of his opponent;⁸¹ a tombstone inscription from Africa commemorates a woman ostensibly cursed and killed by charms.⁸² Thus, though claims of having been bound by curses are certainly to be found in our sources, we are often left unsure of whether or not curse tablets were involved.

Furthermore, in an erotic context, magical papyri indicate that a jealous third party seeking to separate a happy couple need not have used curse tablets as his or her sole magical recourse. Rather, numerous magical recipes for such a purpose survive which did not require lead tablets. For example, *PGM* 3.1-164 is a spell for separating lovers involving a dead cat, three pieces of papyrus, and a spoken formula -- one was to vocalize a detailed formula while drowning the cat, and then write another formula and draw

⁷⁷Annequin (1973), 57, notes that Roman magical practice of all kinds always required an oral element.

⁷⁸Note that Gager (1992) in his section entitled "Testamonia" freely translates *devotio* as "curse tablet", and says that the verb *defigo* is a technical term for binding one by means of a curse tablet (253 n.30); he does not elaborate, and in view of the context of the terms, while I agree that both terms refer to a binding formula, I do not agree that a lead tablet was always involved. Annequin (1973), 61, and Graf (1994), 150, have both tried to find a distinction between *devotiones* and *defixiones*; the former favours the idea that a *defixio* was simply a written *devotio* (which would give the curse more lasting power), while the latter argues that *devotiones* were public *defixiones*.

⁷⁹Tac. *Ann.* 2.69. See also Tomlin (1988), 122 (#10, line 5).

⁸⁰Indeed, *devotio* seems to be more often interchangeable with *carmen*. See Livy 9.10.3, 9.17.13, 10.28; Pliny *HN* 28.3.10 - 13.

⁸¹Cic. *Brut.* 217, also *Orat.* 129, in which *venenis* are blamed (Cited in Faraone [1991a], 15; see also for Greek courtroom examples).

⁸²*CIL* 8.2756 (*carminibus defixa*). Cf. *CIL* 6.3.19747.

magical pictures on the papyrus pieces, which would then be inserted into the cat's various orifices. The animal would then be buried and the water in which it was drowned sprinkled, again with an accompanying spoken formula.⁸³

Furthermore, when Romans used tablets to bind their rivals for the affections of others, they were not always direct copies of Greek tablets. While they resemble their Greek counterparts in many aspects, they also bear some unique marks. Let us now attempt to place these tablets in the context of *defixio* use in antiquity in general.

To begin, the fact that the majority of the western erotic rivalry *defixiones* are made of lead indicates that they do have a place in the continuum of ancient *defixio* use; furthermore, most have been found in or near burial sites, a common resting place for such tablets.⁸⁴ Most of the tablets express wishes which are similar enough to each other to appear formulaic. In general, the purposes and methods of binding have counterparts in the Greek curse tablet tradition.⁸⁵ Faraone has carefully studied Greek curse tablets, and has divided the formulas into four categories. They are 1. direct binding formula ("I bind [the name of the victim]"), 2. prayer formula, in which the gods are invoked and urged to restrain the victim, 3. wish formula, in which the wish is expressed that the victim will be unsuccessful, or bound, and 4. *similia similibus* formula, in which the victim is compared to an object, and the wish is made that he or she will take on certain aspects of that object (this is also called persuasive analogy).⁸⁶ The western rivalry tablets all fall into these categories; the favourite formulas are those which bind the victim directly⁸⁷ (deities may be mentioned, but their help is not required), and the prayer formula⁸⁸ (in which the help of the deities is requested). In both cases, the binding formula is often followed by a purpose clause; for example, tablets 2 through 6 request Proserpina's help in binding various parts of the victims, so that (among other things) the victim will not be able to say what the trouble is, or give himself or herself any help. The wish formula is less in evidence, with only three examples. In each tablet, the wish is expressed with a subjunctive verb in the

⁸³See also *PGM* 12. 445 - 448, 449 - 452, 453 - 465, 466 - 468.

⁸⁴See the introduction to this chapter, and especially footnote 4.

⁸⁵Faraone (1991a), 28 n.59, reports 15 published Greek rivalry tablets.

⁸⁶See Faraone (1991a), 5 - 11.

⁸⁷Tablets 1, 8, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, and 43 may be categorised as direct binding formulas.

⁸⁸Tablets 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, and 36 may be categorised as prayer formulas.

main clause.⁸⁹ The last category has but one example, in which the victim is compared to a corpse.⁹⁰

In terms of the desired effects, for the most part, the western tablets have eastern antecedents. For example, from fourth century BC Euboea comes an example of an erotic *defixio* which reads as follows: "I bind Isias before Hermes the Restrainer -- the hands, the feet of Isias, the whole body."⁹¹ This clearly calls to mind the fourteen examples in the present collection which seek to bind the body parts of the victim.⁹² An example from fourth century BC Attica expresses the wish that "(just as) this corpse lies useless, (so) may all the words and deeds of Theodora be useless with regard to Charias and to the other people..."⁹³ recalling number 7, from Augustan Italy. Examples of Greek tablets seeking to turn the members of a couple from each other exist; from fourth century Greece there is a tablet which seeks to separate two men.⁹⁴ Furthermore, a fourth century BC Attic tablet aims to make sure that a certain man is bereft of female company in general -- "[I bind?] Aristocydes and the women who will be seen about with him. Let him not marry another matron or maiden".⁹⁵ However, the wish that the victim will become hated by the third party, present on five of the western tablets, does not appear on any of the eastern tablets found so far.

Perhaps more noteworthy is the lack of Greek precedent for the tablets which wish utter destruction upon their victims. As mentioned above, Faraone has persuasively argued that Greek *defixiones* sought only to restrain their victims, not to destroy them; on occasion, this wish was expressed though analogies with the corpse in whose grave the tablet is deposited, but these comparisons, as was the case with comparisons made to the lead of the tablets themselves,⁹⁶ were intended only to incapacitate, not kill the victim.⁹⁷ However, a

⁸⁹Tablets 18, 22, and 27; in Greek the wish is represented with the optative.

⁹⁰Tablet 7.

⁹¹Cited in Gager (1992), 86.

⁹²For more anatomically detailed Greek example, see Gager (1992), 162 - 163 (from a fourth century BC business context).

⁹³Audollent (1904), number 68, Gager (1992), 90.

⁹⁴Gager (1992), 92; see Jordan (1985), 222 - 228 for three (admittedly Roman period) examples of Greek *defixiones* seeking to separate couples.

⁹⁵Faraone (1991a), 14; see also Petropoulos (1988), 218 for another example.

significant proportion of the western rivalry tablets do not seem to be so benign. The five tablets from first century BC Italy all speak of utter destruction for the victim, while two of the four fourth or fifth century Italian tablets appear to wish likewise (tablet 16 with particular vehemence); in addition, tablet 8, from Augustan Italy and number 11 from second century Italy could be interpreted to wish the death of their victims in view of the presence of the verbs *consumas*, *periant*, *occidant*, and *tabescant*.⁹⁸ While these tablets come from a relatively confined geographical area, their chronological distribution is very broad and relatively evenly spaced.

Another un-Greek characteristic which may be found in this corpus of tablets is the “after the fact” curse. In general, Greek and Roman *defixiones* alike were used to gain unfair advantage in the future, not revenge for the past.⁹⁹ However, *defixiones* cursing thieves are not uncommon in Greek or Roman *defixio* practice,¹⁰⁰ though the victim is usually not named (the thief being unknown).¹⁰¹ This sort of vengeful curse is uncommon, if not unheard of, in the Greek erotic context. However, tablet 9, from first century AD Italy appears to be a spurned woman cursing her ex-partner and his new lover. In addition, tablet 13, which dates to second or third century Italy and which curses a woman and her husband, could be interpreted as a vengeful curse depending upon who we suppose the practitioner to be. At first glance it appears to be a simple curse aimed at separating a married couple; since the wish is expressed that the woman will be hated by her friends, the gods, and her husband, while the husband is simply to hate his wife and forget his love for her, it seems that this tablet was the work of a female practitioner who hoped to gain the amorous attention of the husband. This is supported by the presence of the word *διακοψω*,

⁹⁶Analogies are also regularly to be found with the backward writing on the tablet (see number 20, for example), and in the cases where the tablets are deposited in wells, occasionally with the coldness of the water (see Jordan [1985], 222 - 228).

⁹⁷Faraone (1991a), 8.

⁹⁸The endings of these last three verbs are fragmentary; see number 11.

⁹⁹Watson (1991), 6 - 7, 41 - 42, notes that in general, cursing stemmed from a perceived previous injury, but that the use of *defixiones* appears to be the exception to this rule.

¹⁰⁰“Judicial” curse tablets also deserve some mention at this point; previously believed to be curses against people who had beaten the practitioner in court, they are now believed to be a pre-trial attempt at restricting the victim’s performance (see Faraone [1991a], 15). The problems inherent in the study and categorisation of these “judicial” and theft tablets are massive, the arguments subtle and sinuous. Versnel (1991b) has argued that tablets of this type are not true *defixiones*.

¹⁰¹In addition, the tablets themselves reflect a “quasi-legal” aspect (Gager (1992), 175), involving a simulated transference of the stolen property from the practitioner to the god or daemon.

“I will split in two”, which is common idea in spells of erotic separation.¹⁰² However, the inclusion of the wrongs done by the wife towards the husband “under the cover of darkness” makes one suspect that the practitioner is actually the husband, who wishes to gain revenge upon his philandering wife (a scenario which recalls the tombstone of the jilted husband of Acte, above), and more poignantly, to make himself stop loving her.¹⁰³ If this is indeed the case, it is possible that the same might hold true for tablets 19 (from fourth or fifth century Pannonia) and 23 (from first or second century Germany), in light of the fact that they bemoan the victims’ sexual promiscuity -- but this is impossible to prove.

The last point which deserves mention affects not only the western erotic rivalry texts, but all erotic rivalry texts in comparison to the other kinds. It is the high ratio of female victims (and, it appears, female practitioners) to their male counterparts. If the corpus here can taken as generally representative, it appears that a woman was at least three to four times more likely to be the target of an erotic rivalry *defixio* than a male, and hence probably three to four times more likely to be the one commissioning such a tablet. If we compare these numbers to the ratios obtained from the non-erotic tablets of Audollent’s collection, which includes *defixiones* from all parts of the empire, all periods, and all purposes, we find that in non-erotic *defixio* usage, males were at least seven to eight times more likely to be the commissioner of a curse tablet than females.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, in a non-erotic context, women were just slightly less likely to be the victim of a curse tablet than horses.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the erotic rivalry tablets present rather an aberration in terms of the normal sex-ratio for *defixio* use, both in terms of the victim and the practitioner.

¹⁰²Moke (1975), 259; Petropoulos (1991), 218.

¹⁰³This is the view taken by Audollent (1904), 273; Jordan (1985b), 223 takes this as the work of a third party.

¹⁰⁴See Audollent (1904), 449 - 450; the ratios are as follows: of the non-erotic tablets from all parts of the empire (273), there are 77 from which the sex of the practitioner is able to be determined to be male, as opposed to just 11 females; if we narrow the field to just those non-erotic tablets from the west (189), we find that the ratios are much the same (54 males to 7 females). Note, however, that of the 107 tablets from Bath (Tomlin [1988], esp. 95), 21 contain the name of the practitioner; of these 21, approximately one-third were composed by females. However, these tablets all concern theft and are from a small geographical and chronological expanse, and as such should perhaps not be taken as generally representative.

¹⁰⁵There are 40 examples of female victims to 41 equine victims of a total non-erotic tablet sample of 273.

The Attraction *Defixiones*

Alimbeu, columbeu, petalimbeu, see to it that Victoria whom Suavulva bore does not sleep, loving and maddened with love for me, until she, darling girl, comes to me...

Alimbeu columbeu petalimbeu faciatis Victoria quem peperit Suavulva amante furente pre amore meo neque somnu videat donec at me veniat puella[r]u d[elic]ias....

-- Tablet 32 (partial), 3rd century AD Africa

The above is an example of the sort of formula which may be found on a curse tablet of erotic attraction. The aspect which immediately strikes one about the tablets of this category is that in the West, they are confined almost exclusively to the province of Africa. Only one tablet from elsewhere, number 21 from Raetia, can be included under this heading; even this at best can only be called a pseudo-attraction tablet, for while it targets the object of desire, as do the rest of these tablets, the formula by which it does so differs rather significantly. In any case, all of the tablets of this type, including the one from Raetia, come from the second or third century AD, the majority coming from the later period. All are of lead. Of the nineteen tablets, eleven are inscribed in Latin,¹⁰⁶ three are in Greek,¹⁰⁷ and five are in Latin transliterated into Greek letters.¹⁰⁸ One of the Greek tablets contains two lines transliterated into Latin letters;¹⁰⁹ three of the Latin tablets contain Greek *ephesia grammata*,¹¹⁰ while one bears only the names of the daemons in Greek, the rest being in Latin.¹¹¹ At least two contain magical signs and drawings of daemonic figures.¹¹² Only the tablet from Raetia appears to have been inscribed from right to left and bottom to top.

The study of the victims and practitioners of these tablets is very rewarding in comparison to that of the rivalry tablets, for we are given not only the names of the victims, but also the names of the practitioners (except in the cases in which the tablet is

¹⁰⁶Tablets 21, 29, 31, 32, 33, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, and 45.

¹⁰⁷Tablets 36, 37, and 38.

¹⁰⁸Tablets 28, 30, 34, 35, and 46.

¹⁰⁹Tablet 36.

¹¹⁰Tablets 31, 34, and 42.

¹¹¹Tablet 44.

¹¹²Tablets 31 and 44.

fragmentary). Several points are worthy of note here. First, the victims and the practitioners are not only identified by their own names, but also often by the names of their mothers.¹¹³ The naming of the victim in such a way appears to be a common convention for tablets and binding spells of attraction of the second century AD onward,¹¹⁴ though only one example of such a practice appears in the erotic rivalry tablets -- this is tablet 13, which carefully identifies the victim, Valeria Quadrilla, and the (possible) practitioner, Vitruvius Felix, not only by their respective mothers, but also by their respective fathers.¹¹⁵ As for the presence of the practitioner's name and his mother's, it seems probable that the practitioner would only sign his (or her) name to the tablet when he or she was expecting some personal effect in the future as a result of the curse. This self-naming essentially makes the practitioner also a victim of the curse; in Felix's case (if he was indeed the practitioner), he expected to be freed from love; in the attraction tablets, the practitioner expected the object of desire to become obsessed with him (or her). Both the direct object of the curse (the victim) and the indirect object of the curse (the practitioner) would therefore be named as accurately as possible, so as not inadvertently to curse the wrong person due to some confusion of names, or (worse!) make the victim fall in love with someone else. Identification by the mother's line probably seemed like the best bet for accuracy, perhaps because it was felt that one could never be completely certain of the identity of one's father, but one could be about one's mother.¹¹⁶

One might suppose with the names of both the practitioner and the victim so well documented that the social position of each would be easy to determine. Such a study, however, would be based more on conjecture than certainty. Unlike some of the rivalry tablets, no one is ever referred to as being the slave or freedperson of another; furthermore, few of the names given are Greek, or even sound Greek, which might have indicated slave or freed status.¹¹⁷ Some of the victims and practitioners have names which sound

¹¹³The tablet from Raetia is an exception; the victim and the practitioner are both named, but their maternal lineage is not. The same is true for tablets 34, 35, 42, and 45. In addition, tablets 31, 32, and 45 do not contain the name of the practitioner at all.

¹¹⁴And indeed on *defixiones* of all purposes (Jordan [1976], 128).

¹¹⁵Incidentally, the naming of both Quadrilla and Felix's parents indicates that both Quadrilla and Felix were the children of freedpersons, as in both cases, the parents and their respective child share a common praenomen (Valerius/a in Quadrilla's case, and Vitruvius/a in Felix's), which would have been the gentile name of their masters.

¹¹⁶Brashear (1995), 3394.

¹¹⁷Dionysia, the mother of Sextilius, the victim of tablet 28 is the exception.

aristocratic (Domitiana, the practitioner of tablet 36, for example), but it is always the case that their mothers' names do not; this could possibly indicate that the person was a freedperson of an aristocratic family.¹¹⁸ In any case, it may probably be safely assumed that the majority, if not all, of the attraction tablet victims and practitioners were of non-elite status, though some may have been freeborn citizens.

Next, we find upon examination of the tablets that only two of the victims are male, while at least eleven, and probably twelve, of the victims are female.¹¹⁹ Three more tablets are too fragmentary to be able to tell the gender of the victim for certain, but in view of the others, it would appear that most if not all of these target females. No homosexual relationships are indicated in the tablets whose texts are in a condition to allow the gender of the victim and the practitioner to be known; thus we have at least twelve male practitioners to a mere two female, an interesting (and more pronounced) inversion of the male to female ratio of the rivalry tablets.

These tablets are extremely formulaic, and thus resemble each other strongly both in the desires they express and in their method of expressing them.¹²⁰ Sixteen of the tablets are prayer formulas, beseeching the powers that be to cause all sorts of things to happen to the victim (discussed below); eight of the tablets¹²¹ contain invocations of the infernal gods (two mention Proserpina by name)¹²² and/or the daemon of the corpse which inhabits the grave into which the tablet was thrown. Eight others¹²³ include an invocation of Hebrew, Egyptian, and Christian deities; one tablet includes daemons and deities of all descriptions.¹²⁴ Only one of these tablets (number 28) bears a threat against the gods if they should fail to do the practitioner's bidding.¹²⁵ The others contain no reference to the

¹¹⁸Domitiana's mother's name was Candida; compare also Oppius, the practitioner of tablet 30 and the son of Veneria, and Septimia, the practitioner of tablet 28 and the daughter of Amoena.

¹¹⁹This is assuming that number 34 and 35 are indeed two parts of the same tablet; in addition, number 39, while fragmentary, probably targets a female due to the wish that the victim become forgetful of everyone else -- a common female-targeting formula.

¹²⁰The fragmentary nature of some of the tablets hinders a comprehensive comparison of these tablets in all aspects; what follows represents the proportion of intact tablets which bear certain characteristics. The numbers may actually be somewhat higher than presented here, but we cannot know for sure.

¹²¹Tablets 29, 30, 33, 36, 38, 39, 44, and 46.

¹²²Tablets 33 and 39.

¹²³Tablets 28, 31, 32, 34 and 35, 36, 41 and 45.

¹²⁴Tablet 36.

gods. Rather, one tablet contains a direct binding formula, followed by a purpose clause;¹²⁶ one more contains a wish formula.¹²⁷ Several of the tablets also include the formulaic phrases “now, now, quickly, quickly!”¹²⁸ or “from this day, from this hour...” indicating the urgency of the request.¹²⁹

The tablet from Raetia (tablet 21) is not at all easy to categorise, as it does not really resemble the other tablets in its formula; rather than wishes or invocations, it makes a series of observations about the victim followed by commands (for example, *patere* -- “endure!” and *ama* -- “love!”). There is no verb of binding, though perhaps *sub iugum missa q(u)iesce* (“sent under the yoke, rest easy...”) could be taken as a reference to binding.

To turn to the desired effect of these tablets, it is, as mentioned above, to make the victim fall in love with the practitioner. This goal was to be accomplished through the following scenarios (or any combination thereof):¹³⁰ to make the victim “burn with desire” (present on six tablets),¹³¹ be wakeful with thoughts of the practitioner (present on six tablets),¹³² be crazed or frenzied (present on five of the tablets),¹³³ have thoughts only of the practitioner, or alternately, be forgetful of everyone else such as her parents, friends, relatives, and other men (present on eight of the tablets),¹³⁴ or be unable to do anything else because of her incapacitating love for the practitioner (present on four of the tablets).¹³⁵

¹²⁵This indicates Egyptian influence (Brashear [1995], 3391 n.6; Ritner [1995], 3369 - 3370).

¹²⁶Tablet 40. Petropoulos would categorise this as a *φιλητροκατάδεσμος*.

¹²⁷Tablet 42.

¹²⁸A very common formula in spells of erotic attraction (Moke [1975], 37).

¹²⁹Tablets 36 and 44; tablets 33, 37, 39, 44, and 46.

¹³⁰Only tablet 28 appears to include all of the possibilities, with the possible exception of having the practitioner alone in the victim’s mind (in this case, a male). The practitioner wishes to be in the victim’s thoughts, but does not specify that she alone should be there. Most of the other tablets contain at least two, and often three or four of the possibilities. Three tablets (31, 37, and 38) are too fragmentary to be guessed at.

¹³¹Tablets 28, 29, 40, 41, 42, and 45; note that one tablet also wishes the victim to be burning and freezing (number 29).

¹³²Tablets 28, 29, 30, 32, 36, and 41.

¹³³Tablets 28, 32, 36, 39, and 41.

¹³⁴Tablets 28, 29, 30, 34, 39, 40, 41, 45 and 46; 45 actually demands that the victim be driven from her parents.

¹³⁵Tablets 28, 29, 30, 33, 40; tablet 29 actually binds the (female) victim’s will, as well (*voluntatem*).

The tablets which target the two males are only notably different in one respect from those which target females -- the wish is often expressed that females will be forgetful of their parents, relatives, friends, and other men, while such a desire is not expressed in reference to the male victims. Instead, the female practitioner of tablet 28 wishes to be in the thoughts of the victim, but does not require him to be forgetful of everyone else; alternately, the female practitioner of tablet 36 requires that the victim desire no other woman, but no mention is made about making him forgetful.

Some tablets merely contain the desired effects mentioned above, while others go a step further, and wish that such physical discomforts will force the victim to fulfil an ultimate goal. Nine tablets express a final purpose. Only one tablet (one which targets a female) is blatantly seeking sex, pure and simple;¹³⁶ on the other hand, only one tablet (one which targets a male) mentions marriage as the ultimate desire.¹³⁷ Four other tablets, all of which target females, perhaps suggest marriage, for they certainly seem to desire a long relationship -- they make the request that the victim love the practitioner "to her dying day".¹³⁸ Three others practitioners are not as constant in their devotion to the victims (of which two are female, and one is uncertain), desiring only that the victim be harassed with the physical discomforts outlined above "until she comes to me" -- just what would happen when she did is left unsaid.¹³⁹

One final note about the desired effect of these tablets deserves mention. All imply that the practitioner seeks to subject the victim and make her subordinate, though this desire is often not expressed in so many words. One tablet actually spells this out, demanding that the victim be subjected to the practitioner as a slave (tablet 36).¹⁴⁰ The tablet from Raetia expresses a similar desire, exhorting the female victim to submit to the practitioner's nature. Winkler has suggested that this expressed desire for the subordination of the victim could also indicate the desire for "permanence and stability" of the intended relationship.¹⁴¹

Where do these tablets of attraction fit into the wider context of *defixio* use? At first glance it appears that they have little in common with other kinds of *defixiones*, even the

¹³⁶Tablet 45.

¹³⁷Tablet 36.

¹³⁸Tablets 30, 35, 41, and 46.

¹³⁹Tablets 32, 33, and 44. See Winkler (1991), 232 - 233.

¹⁴⁰Moke (1975), 127, notes that in some forms of erotic attraction magic (*διαβολή*), the victim is "punished" by being forced to fall in love with the practitioner and become subjected to him or her.

¹⁴¹Winkler (1991), 233.

erotic rivalry tablets. The most glaring difference is of course the desired effect of the curse. They also differ from curse tablets in general in the fact that they contain the name of the practitioner. However, they are similar to other forms of curse tablets in some ways; for example, the African tablets are all made of lead, and were deposited in graves. Furthermore, the methods of cursing usually involve invocations of the chthonic deities or daemons, and at least one (tablet 40) involves a binding formula. They also share some formulaic conventions of expression with other kinds of curse tablets from the same period, such as the naming of identification of the victim by the mother's name,¹⁴² and the tag phrase "now, now, quickly, quickly!"¹⁴³ In addition, one of the attraction tablets (number 32) echoes the sentiments of the rivalry tablets as it bears a curse against a man, presumably the victim's present partner, lest he be able to come after the practitioner.¹⁴⁴

Despite these similarities, however, the erotic *defixiones* of attraction seem to be very much a discrete genre of curse tablet. In the Roman world as a whole, these tablets are only to be found within a very confined geographical area and chronological expanse. Besides the tablets from Africa, attraction tablets are only found in significant numbers in Egypt, although there is one example from Tyre.¹⁴⁵ All of these tablets date to the period of the second century to the fourth century AD. In addition to the fact that they all seek to attract the victim of the curse, they often use the same conventions for expressing their desire. For example, like the African curses, the eastern examples also usually require the victim to "burn with passion" for the practitioner, be sleepless, and be forgetful of all others.¹⁴⁶

There are differences, however, to be noted between the attraction tablets of Africa and the tablets of Egypt. The most striking, perhaps, is the lack of emphasis on sex in the African tablets. The Egyptian tablets, like many of the spells of attraction to be found in the *PGM* (a collection which incidentally also derives from Egypt), are very explicit in the

¹⁴²Jordan (1976), 128.

¹⁴³Although this last is only present on two of the African tablets.

¹⁴⁴Compare tablet 25; compare also Tib. 1.2.53 - 56: "She framed me a charm to enable thee to deceive: chaunt it thrice and spit thrice when the spell is done. Then will he never trust anyone in aught that is said about us, nay, not even his own eyes if he see us on the pillowed bed" (trans. J.P. Postgate). *Haec mihi composuit cantus, quis fallere posses:/ ter cane, ter dictis despue carminibus/ Ille nihil poterit de nobis credere cuiquam,/ non sibi, si in molli viderit ipse toro.*

¹⁴⁵There are at least twelve examples from Egypt, and two more of unknown origin. See Jordan (1985b), 223 and n.16, for references; see also Faraone (1991a), 29 n.66, and Martinez (1991), who provides a very detailed commentary for *P. Mich* 757 from Egypt (a lead tablet).

¹⁴⁶Faraone (1993b), esp. 17 - 19; Petropoulos (1988), 219 - 220.

desired sexual behaviour of the victim. The spells often require the victim (usually a female) to submit no longer to either vaginal or anal intercourse with another man;¹⁴⁷ she is sometimes also debarred from performing oral sex. By no means is she allowed to enjoy such relations should she have them (with anyone but the practitioner, of course). Furthermore, the comparable magical papyri usually indicate that at the same time she is to be consumed by passion of such magnitude for the practitioner that she will come running to his house to “join head to head, and bind lips to lips, and join belly to belly, and bring thigh to thigh, and fit the black with the black”¹⁴⁸, or to “glue her female pudenda to my male one...”¹⁴⁹ The African tablets are not nearly so specific in their prohibitions or desires, and therefore seem much more reserved; as mentioned above, only one tablet names sex as its ultimate goal, and the practitioner is satisfied with *coitus facere* as an explanation of his desire, sparing the underworld daemons the particular details. As for the victim’s relationship with other men, she is merely to forget them, if other men are indeed mentioned at all -- no mention is ever made of her sexual habits.

The use of material from the victim’s person, or *oivola*, in working the spell is another notable difference between the African and the Egyptian tablets of attraction. The use of the intended victim’s “stuff” is common in erotic magic of attraction of all descriptions. Material collected (often a strand of hair) was expected to have a sympathetic magical effect, much in the same way a figure which represented the victim was sometimes used;¹⁵⁰ the “stuff” served as “a part of a whole”, and the person to whom it belonged was expected to react in the same way his or her “stuff” was being treated.¹⁵¹ Thus in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, Pamphile mistakenly uses goat hair in her erotic spell, and inadvertently brings wine skins (the unfortunate fate of the goats) rolling to her gate instead of the young lover she had meant.¹⁵² Alternately, “stuff” was used as a sort of calling card by the practitioners of erotic curse tablets. For example, the Egyptian tablets often exhort the daemon who is to do the practitioner’s bidding to go to the house of the victim whose “stuff” it has been given and carry out his subsequent wishes.¹⁵³ None of the tablets from

¹⁴⁷See Martinez (1991), 30 line 8 - 11; cf 17.

¹⁴⁸Martinez (1991), 15 line 400 - 405. cf. *PGM* 4.115 - 122, 17a.20 - 24.

¹⁴⁹*PGM* 36.84 - 85; 36.111 - 113 (trans. E.N. O’Neil).

¹⁵⁰Petropoulos (1988), 216.

¹⁵¹See, for example, Theoc. *Id.* 2; Verg. *Ecl.* 8.64 - 109 and *Aen.* 4.507 - 508.

¹⁵²Apul. *Met.* 3.16.

Africa make mention of “stuff” of any kind -- though this does not, of course, necessarily mean that “stuff” was not used.¹⁵⁴

Finally, the question of where these tablets fit into the practice of erotic magic in general can be addressed. The fact that these tablets as a body are remarkably similar to magical recipes of erotic attraction found in the *PGM*, which may or may not require a lead tablet,¹⁵⁵ suggest that attraction *defixiones* were just one of many possible forms of erotic attraction magic. It appears that the texts of these tablets were copied from the pages of a magical handbook by a magician at the request of a love-stuck client;¹⁵⁶ for example, five of the tablets from Egypt have been noted for their resemblance to a section of magical text describing how one could attract a lover (*PGM* 4.296 - 466).¹⁵⁷ The spell requires three things to be effective, according to the recipe: a “voodoo doll” to represent the victim,¹⁵⁸ an oral formula to be spoken while piercing the doll in 13 strategic spots with a pin, and a lead tablet to be inscribed with an erotic formula of attraction. One of these tablets was actually found with a clay figurine, stuck through with thirteen pins;¹⁵⁹ it seems probable that the other four were also part of such a ritual, in which only the leaden tablets have survived.¹⁶⁰

Thus, the magical papyri allow an insight into the practice of erotic magic of attraction which the curse tablets do not. A brief perusal of the collection of magical recipes which

¹⁵³See for example Martinez (1991), 30 line 8.

¹⁵⁴See for example *PGM* 4.1496 - 1715, in which the offering accompanying the rite is not mentioned in the written formula.

¹⁵⁵For example, see *PGM* 7.459 - 461, 462 - 466 for similar spells of attraction involving tin tablets, and 7.300 - 310, 467 - 477 for spells involving shells. In addition, two other examples of erotic attraction *defixiones* have been found in Egypt, not on lead, but on papyrus and linen (Faraone [1991a], 29 n.66). Moke (1975), 186, notes that the tag phrase “now, now, quickly, quickly!” appears in at least 90 instances in the *PGM* erotic recipes.

¹⁵⁶See *PGM* 4.329 - 433, 5.304 - 370, 36.1 - 34, 36.231 - 356, 58.1 - 14 for examples of recipes which describe how to make a lead *defixio* (Jordan (1983), 162).

¹⁵⁷See Martinez (1991); Jordan (1985a), 189. Moke (1975), introduction x, dates this papyrus to the fourth century AD.

¹⁵⁸For other spells of erotic attraction involving dolls see, for example, *PGM* 4.1872 - 1927. Dolls in erotic spells were not used exclusively for attraction -- see Ovid’s panicked attempts to explain away his impotence: “Was my body listless under the spell of Thessalian drugs? Was I the wretched victim of charms and herbs, or did a witch curse my name (*defixit*) upon a red wax image and stick fine pins into the middle of the liver?” (*Am.* 3.7.27 - 30, trans. G. Showerman): *Num mea Thessalico languent devota veneno/ corpora? Num misero carmen et herba nocent,/ sagave poenicea defixit nomina cera/ et medium tenuis in iecur egit acus?* (cf *Am.* 3.7.73 - 80).

¹⁵⁹See Gager (1992), 97 - 100.

¹⁶⁰See also *PGM* 101.1 - 53 for a spell particularly similar to the curse tablets of Africa.

survive quickly indicates two things: first, a very high percentage of them are concerned with the very thing our leaden tablets are, that is, the attraction of a lover.¹⁶¹ Second, very few of these recipes require the use of material which would have survived the ages.¹⁶² This suggests that the practice of love magic of this type was far more common (at least in the Roman provinces of northern Africa) than might be suggested by the relatively few erotic tablets which survive. But what are we to suppose for the rest of the Roman world, where neither tablets of attraction nor magical handbooks have come to light? Was it the case that in the matters of the heart, magic was only used against one's rivals, never one's object of desire? Literary evidence suggests that it was not. Although the use of lead tablets to bend one's beloved to one's will appears to be confined to the southern Mediterranean (though the tablet from Raetia makes even that statement less positive), the Romans of the other western provinces were not unfamiliar with the idea of "binding" a lover, through one magical means or another. References to the creations of love potions abound in the literary sources,¹⁶³ designed to have the same effect on their victims as the curse tablets of attraction. *Hoc...magae/dixere amorem posse defigi...* says the wicked centaur to Deineira as he hands her a vial of the poison with which she will later mistakenly kill her husband.¹⁶⁴ Propertius describes his being in love as having had his hands tied behind his back (*vinctus eram versas in mea terga manus...*)¹⁶⁵ as does Tibullus (*ipsa Venus magico religatum bracchia nodo/perdocuit...*).¹⁶⁶ The bondage imagery in both of these passages clearly calls to mind the binding formulas of curse tablets in general and of the use of the voodoo doll used for specifically erotic purposes in the *PGM* and Egyptian tablets.

It should be noted, however, that literary references to erotic magic of attraction usually portray women as the practitioners.¹⁶⁷ This contrasts sharply with the image gathered from

¹⁶¹Betz (1987), 94 - 95.

¹⁶²See, for example, *PGM* 4.1390 - 1495, which requires bread, soil polluted by a violent death, and a spoken charm; 4.1496 - 1596, which requires a myrrh offering and a spoken charm; 4.2006 - 2125, which requires an inscribed sheet of papyrus and flax leaf; 7.405 - 406, a spell to be spoken while kissing. Furthermore, there are recipes for potions to be rubbed on a man's penis in order to make a woman love him (see Moke [1975], 234; *PGM* 7.191 - 192).

¹⁶³See, for example, Dido's magic (Verg. *Aen.* 4.450 - 705), Canidia's spells (Hor. *Epod.* 5, *Sat.* 1.8), and Simaetha's charms (Verg. *Ecl.* 8.64 - 109).

¹⁶⁴Sen. *Her.O.* 524 - 525.

¹⁶⁵Prop. 3.24.12 - 13.

¹⁶⁶Tib. 1.8.5 - 6.

the African curse tablets, in which the practitioners were almost exclusively male.¹⁶⁸ To be sure, there are a few literary sources which report female claims to have been worked upon by erotic magic,¹⁶⁹ but they are not numerous enough to offset the blatant contradiction of evidence. This interesting dichotomy will receive more attention later.

Conclusion

To sum up the impressions given by this relatively small body of evidence, it may be noted first that curse tablets enjoyed a long period of popularity in the western Roman world; curse tablets of an erotic nature in particular were known and used in Italy since the second century BC and almost everywhere else by the second century AD. While *defixio* use in general appears to have been a mostly male-dominated form of magical practice, a disproportionate number of females seem to have been targeted by, and thus also to have employed, tablets working a spell stemming from a situation of erotic rivalry. The use of lead tablets in Roman cursing indicates an element of Greek influence, but the Roman tablets are not always exact copies of the Greek curse tablets, either in method or in desired effect; by the second century BC *defixiones* in Italy were being inscribed in the local language rather than in Greek, and the Roman erotic rivalry *defixiones* on occasion demanded effects which the Greek did not, most notably the complete and utter destruction of the victim rather than the mere restraint.

The other genre of erotic tablets, the tablets of erotic attraction, made only a relatively brief and localized appearance on the time-line of ancient curse tablet usage. In the western Empire, they are only found in second and third century Africa.¹⁷⁰ Their eastern Empire counterparts are confined almost as narrowly to second to fourth century Egypt. The African examples differ from the Egyptian in their relative lack of explicitness in the sexual prohibitions and demands laid upon the victims by the practitioner, the majority of whom are male in this particular genre of erotic tablet.

The rivalry tablets and the attraction tablets together provide us with a rather small number of erotic tablets when compared with the number of *defixiones* which survive in total;¹⁷¹ this might wrongly lead us to suppose that erotic matters were something which

¹⁶⁷Winkler (1991), 227. For example, Horace, Vergil, Petronius, and Lucan all portray female magicians.

¹⁶⁸The same holds true for the *PGM* (Moke [1975], 352 - 353).

¹⁶⁹for example, see Amm. Marc. 28.1.50, in which a woman hopes to escape the charges of *stuprum* by claiming to have been worked upon by *nefariis artibus*; note also that Apuleius was charged with having used magic to secure the love of the wealthy widow Pudentilla (his defence is recorded in his *Apologia*).

¹⁷⁰Except tablet 21 from Raetia, as discussed above.

received magical attention only occasionally in the ancient world. This supposition is easily belied by the numerous literary references to magical practice of an erotic nature, and more importantly by the survival of magical handbooks, which indicate that the use of curse tablets was but one of numerous ways to separate lovers or to bring a lover to one's doorstep. We are less fortunate in our evidence for the other ways to work an erotic spell than we are with the erotic curse tablets, as the lead tablets, a by-product of the magic used, have occasionally survived, while it can never be known how many ancients chanted at the moon or brewed up magical potions to win their heart's desire.

¹⁷¹Of the western *defixiones* found to date, approximately one-tenth are erotic.

CHAPTER THREE

ROMAN *DEFIXIONES*: SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

In Chapter One it was suggested that the study of ancient magical practices may increase knowledge of various areas of ancient life. On the most basic level, the erotic curse tablets reflect the private religious, that is, magical, belief and activity of individuals. As magical activity indicates attempts made by individuals to gain power and influence in situations in which they really had none, the erotic curse tablets represent difficulties experienced by individuals in the realm of affective relationships. This chapter will therefore be devoted to a study of the tablets' social significance, to determine if they contain any information about the nature of Graeco-Roman, and particularly non-elite, affective relationships.

The principal argument of this chapter may be summarised as follows: the tablets of erotic rivalry and the tablets of erotic attraction, which were for the most part composed by females and males respectively, should be considered as indications of gender-specific problems usually encountered in the course of an affective relationship. More specifically, it is my contention that the erotic rivalry tablets usually embody attempts made by females to ensure the monogamy of their partners in a pre-existing relationship, while the erotic attraction tablets were used by males who hoped to ensure future success in forming a conjugal-type relationship.

Some preliminary explanations and definitions are required, however, to make discussion of the western erotic curse tablets profitable. First, source-related difficulties are encountered in the study of Roman erotic magic. The result is that I will often use as comparative and supporting evidence sources which may not at first glance appear to be immediately relevant or dependable. Thus, justification is required for the use of some primary and secondary sources. Second, a definition of both the term "erotic" and "curse" is necessary; up to this point I have used both the terms rather freely. What types of relationships can be termed "erotic"? Does eroticism connote only pure lust, or lust tempered with an emotional aspect to create what we might term romantic love? Do all of the tablets under discussion really deserve the nefarious title of curses? How indeed could "erotic cursing" be conceptually possible? These questions can only be answered through an investigation of the ancient concept of love and the condition of being in love. Each of these points will be considered in turn.

The Source Evidence: The Difficulties of Not Being Greek

We are more an example for people than imitators of others.

παράδειγμα δὲ μᾶλλον αὐτοὶ ὄντες πρὶν ἢ μιμούμενοι ἑτέροις.

-- Thuc. 2.37.1

The main problem regarding the secondary source material concerning ancient magical practice is that although this is currently an area of growing interest among scholars, the lion's share of attention has been directed towards Greek magical practice. This is particularly true for both the subject of erotic magic and *defixiones*.¹ Conclusions drawn in such scholarship cannot be taken as unquestionably valid for Roman erotic magic, as Roman society was not an exact reflection of Greek society. It is not necessary (nor would it be responsible) to disregard this scholarship, however, as discussions of Greek erotic magic are not entirely irrelevant to the present study for the following reasons: first, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, there is an undeniable correlation between the eastern and western examples of erotic tablets in terms of material, formula, and anticipated effect. Second, with particular reference to the tablets of the African provinces, it appears that a geographical division between East and West may be more artificial than for the provinces of the northern Mediterranean, at least as far as erotic magic is concerned; as discussed in Chapter Two and again later in this chapter, the erotic curse tablets of Africa and Egypt in many ways have more in common with each other than they do with those of any other part of the Roman world. Finally, the majority of the western erotic tablets date to imperial times, with the highest concentration in the second and third centuries. Roman contact with the East had been well established by this time, and it is therefore probable that there existed a higher degree of cultural synthesis between East and West than there had been a few centuries earlier; thus, discussions of Greek erotic magic are perhaps not as inappropriate for the examination of the western tablets as they would have been had the majority of the western tablets dated to republican times. Nevertheless, discussions based upon Greek evidence are still not discussions based upon Roman evidence, and cannot be treated as such. I therefore endeavour to avoid basing my own arguments solely on such scholarship if no supporting Roman evidence exists.

¹For example, concerning erotic magic, the most notable recent studies have been done by Faraone, who focuses on Greek erotic magic, as do Betz, Moke, Martinez, Petropoulos, and Winkler; as for the general study of *defixiones*, D.R. Jordan and J. Gager are probably currently the most active scholars, but while Jordan is concerned only with the Greek tablets ("the Greek tablets are much more numerous than the Latin, they span a longer period, and they generally give us more diverse information about the development of ancient magical and religious beliefs," (Jordan [1985a], 152)), Gager (1992), who provides a discussion of both Greek and Latin *defixiones*, is not concerned with drawing distinctions between the two.

In addition to the dearth of scholarship about Roman erotic magic, difficulties are also encountered with the primary source evidence. It has been established that the western erotic rivalry tablets appear to have targeted, and were thus perhaps also the work of, the non-elite. The practitioners and victims of the erotic attraction tablets were probably also of non-elite status. A useful examination of these texts naturally requires that a common and probable background scenario for the composition of the tablets be found. The tablets, however, provide little or no indication of causative circumstances; probable situations must then be created from information gathered from other sources of evidence. Chapter One aimed to provide both the legal context concerning Roman conjugal relationships and the ideology of the Roman elite. Though both of these considerations are important for the study at hand, the information they provide about the reality of non-elite affective relationships is somewhat limited. Though some literary genres such as erotic poetry and New Comedy might provide some evidence about the reality of affective relationships, problems arise when it is considered that such works were written by, for, and about, the elite, and that much of the content of these works was dictated by the conventions of their literary genre.

In this vacuum of appropriate primary source material, the ancient Greek and Latin novels offer no small attraction as a source of evidence for the social historian. These tales of young love offer an image of passionate and romantic relationships rarely mentioned and even less often condoned by the authors of the more respectable literary genres; in short, the novels are concerned with the type of passionate attachment one might expect the practitioners of the erotic tablets, particularly the tablets of erotic attraction, to have been experiencing. Furthermore, the novels present characters of all levels of social and economic status. However, in spite of the growing popularity of this genre among literary scholars today, it is still regarded with some suspicion by ancient historians. With particular reference to the western erotic curse tablets, how far can a body of fictional tales, set in the Greek world and written by Greeks, be taken as evidence for the reality of Roman affective relationships? Are Latin novels any more reliable? Other questions must be asked before these can be answered -- of what social and economic status were the authors and the intended audience? Was the form of the novel derived from other literary genres? In reference to the Latin novels, how much of the content can be said to be truly Roman, and how much is due to Greek influence? What was the purpose of the novel?

It will be useful to back-track a little before attempting to answer such questions, to define first what is meant by the phrase "the ancient novel".² This classification refers

specifically to a body of ancient texts comprised of five prose-fiction works in Greek, two prose-fiction works in Latin, and a collection of what appear to be prose-fiction fragments.³ The dating of the Greek texts is for the most part uncertain, but it is now generally agreed that of the complete texts, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* by Chariton is the earliest, followed by *An Ephesian Tale*, by Xenophon of Ephesus; these two have been placed in the first and second centuries AD respectively.⁴ The remaining three, *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius, *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus, and *An Ethiopian Story* by Heliodorus, are thought to have been written about a century later, in the late second and third centuries (or perhaps even fourth, in Heliodorus' case).⁵ The dating of the Latin novels is much more certain, with Petronius' (fragmentary) *Satyricon* dating to the years between 63 and 66 AD, and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (or *The Golden Ass*) dating to the second half of the second century AD.⁶

The question of the social status of the authors is tricky for the Greek authors, but clear for their Latin counterparts. While Petronius was a member of Nero's intimate entourage, Apuleius was a member of the educated African elite.⁷ Little is known about the Greek novelists;⁸ the presence of literary allusion and sophisticated style of expression indicates that they were educated, but education did not necessarily imply

²The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word "novel" as "a fictitious prose story of book length", and though this definition applies to the above works, scholars have sometimes found it useful to differentiate between "novel" and "romance". While "novel" describes characters, actions, and situations which are fictitious but ordinary, "romance" describes a string of situations which are idyllic or fantastic and generally remote from everyday life. Thus "romance" is often the term assigned to the Greek novels, as they share a common plot of romantic separation and reunification through divine agency (with a good measure of fantastic adventure in the interval), while the Latin works are usually called "novels" since their plots are thought to be closer to possible situations (see Hägg [1983], 4). Nonetheless, the lines between the romance and the novel are often crossed, as the romances inevitably display some identifiable elements of Hellenistic society, while the novels contain some elements which are unrealistic (see Reardon [1991], 3 - 4).

³Sometimes also included in the corpus are *The Wonders Beyond Thule* (Antonius Diogenes, mid second century AD), *A True Story* (Lucian, third quarter of the second century AD), *The Ass* (Pseudo-Lucian, third quarter of the second century AD), *A Babylonian Story* (Iamblichus, 165 - 180 AD), the *Alexander Romance* (third century AD), and *Apollonius King of Tyre* (original, third century AD, Latin version, fifth or sixth century AD; see Archibald's edition [1991]).

⁴Chariton's and Xenophon's novels are sometimes called the "Pre-Sophistic" novels (Hägg (1983), 34).

⁵Reardon (1989), 5.

⁶Bowie and Harrison (1993), 160; Walsh (1970), Appendix I.

⁷On Petronius' career see Walsh (1970), 67 - 70; for Apuleius', see Walsh (1970), 141 - 142.

⁸See the individual introductions to each novel in the 1989 collection of translations, edited by B. Reardon.

social prominence, and at least one scholar is certain of the unimpressive status of the Greek authors.⁹

As for the status of the intended audience, the Latin novels were unquestionably written for an elite audience, though as some have pointed out, the “low-life material” found in the work of both authors would have been “more extensively popular.”¹⁰ The target-audience of the Greek novels is debatable; scholars’ suggestions range from “the poor in spirit”¹¹ to the educated elite alone.¹² Most agree that the intended audience was the educated upper class, who would understand clever literary allusions, but that the actual audience was probably much more diverse, as the only prerequisite for the audience was “true literacy, or membership in a group where such literacy is represented.”¹³

To turn now to the novels themselves and their place in the canon of ancient literature, few these days agree whole-heartedly with Perry’s often-quoted statement that the inventor of the novel “conceived it on a Tuesday afternoon in July, or some other day or month of the year.”¹⁴ While few support the idea that the novel “evolved” as a literary form, most scholars are amenable to the possibility that earlier and contemporary literary genres of all descriptions had a degree of influence.¹⁵ Thus

⁹See Walsh (1970), 3, who states that the Greek authors were “representative of a wider literacy to which there is no parallel in the Latin-speaking areas of the early empire.” For the literary style of the authors, see Bowie and Harrison (1993), 160, 163; Hägg (1983), 96, addresses and refutes the argument made by some that the novelists may actually have been women.

¹⁰Bowie and Harrison (1993), 168, 172; Hägg (1983), 166. See also Dowden (1994) for a discussion about the audience of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* in particular.

¹¹Perry (1967), introduction vii and 90; Reardon (1969), 307, agrees that the novel “did not attract the best minds”; see also Hägg (1983), 90 - 96, who agrees with Perry that women may have made up a large part of the novel readership. See also Egger (1994), 263 - 265, who also argues that women comprised a large part of the “aural audience”.

¹²Wiersma (1990), 111.

¹³Hägg (1983), 93; Bowie and Harrison (1993), 160; Reardon (1991), 41; see Wiersma (1990), 111, who argues that the novel was never meant to be read aloud, but compare Plut. *De mul. virt.* 1.1, who seeks to distinguish his work from novels by saying that his is historically based and not designed *προς ἡδονὴν ἀκοῆς* (cited in Walsh [1970], 2 n. 1). See also Tatum (ed.) (1994), Section Eight “How Antiquity Read Its Novels” for a collection of essays concerning the identity of ancient readership.

¹⁴Perry (1967), 175. Perry blames the search for the novel’s evolution as a literary form on Aristotelian theory of evolution and biology (see 15 - 27).

¹⁵See Reardon (1991), 54 - 55, who notes that literary genres have always been notorious for borrowing from one another.

Greek philosophy, epic, historiography, rhetorical exercise, travel tales, biography, erotic poetry, and drama (particularly New Comedy) all have “points of contact” with the novel.¹⁶ The possibility that the novel was actually a literary form borrowed from eastern cultures has received some attention,¹⁷ though most scholars are unwilling to press this argument too far.¹⁸ The Latin novels, for their part, are recognised to have been heavily influenced by the Greek novels regarding their form and content, yet they are not exact replicas -- Walsh calls them a combination of Greek romance, comic travel tales, Milesian tales (titillating Hellenistic dinner-party stories), and Roman satire, mixed together in varying amounts depending upon the effect ultimately desired by the author.¹⁹ This leads to the next question -- what was the purpose of the novel?

Again, there is little disagreement about the Latin novel in this respect. Though its primary function was to provide entertaining diversion, it was probably also intended as a social satire, literary parody, and (in Apuleius' work), a means by which to provide religious instruction to the elite.²⁰ The role of the Greek novel has enjoyed a much more colourful discussion. Merkelbach argued that the novels were the texts of mystery cults, and that the secret meaning of their words could only be decoded by the initiated,²¹ but recent scholars have viewed this theory with scepticism. The most persuasive arguments to date are those of Perry and Reardon, who contend that the novel served as a means by which an individual might have his cultural and spiritual

¹⁶Reardon (1991), 166. Philosophy: Reardon (1969), 292; (1991), 54 - 55, 69 (Plato unwittingly “sowed the seeds” for Greek Romance), 97; epic and historiography: Reardon (1991), 142 - 145; Hägg (1983), 110 - 113; rhetoric: Reardon (1991), 148 - 153; travel tales and biography: Hägg (1983), 115 - 118; erotic poetry and drama: Reardon (1991), Chapter 6; Hägg (1983), 121 - 122.

¹⁷Reardon (1969), 306 n. 39; Hägg (1983), 96 - 101.

¹⁸Anderson (1984) argues at length about Summerian origins of the novel, but has received mostly criticism.

¹⁹Walsh (1970), 4, 8 - 10. Petronius' *Satyricon* is thought to be less dependent upon Greek romance than Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*; Apuleius' tale, though based upon either *The Ass* by Pseudo-Lucian or a common source (Bowie and Harrison [1993], 170), nevertheless contains elements of the author's own creation. See Walsh (1970), 147 - 152, esp. 148: “Except in the two episodes of Psyche and Lucius' conversion [neither of which appear in *The Ass*], Apuleius has systematically incorporated into each book a section of the original story, which he supplements with contrasting anecdotes or episodes.”

²⁰Walsh (1970), 22 - 52 of Petronius, 52 - 66 of Apuleius. See also Hägg (1983), 190.

²¹*Roman und Mysterium* (1962); the actual idea upon which Merkelbach expanded was furnished by Kerenyi in his work *Mysterientexte* (1927); see Bowie and Harrison (1993), 160, Reardon (1969), 291, and Hägg (1983), 101 - 104, for discussion.

needs fulfilled, things which Hellenistic society, ever expanding and increasingly cosmopolitan, now failed to do.²²

Finally, the issue of the ancient novel's reliability as a source of information may be addressed. To begin with the Greek novel, as discussed above, the social status of the authors remains unknown. The readership is likewise something of a mystery. It may perhaps be presumed that the authors did not come from the top of the social scale, though they probably did not come from the bottom, either; their audience was perhaps also somewhere between the two social extremes. The form of the novel was influenced by other literary genres; in addition, no one could deny that as its own genre, the novel is full of conventions and clichés, not least of which is the passionate attachment of the hero and heroine, their unfortunate separation, and their divinely directed reunification; in addition, portrayal of the lower classes is sometimes obviously romanticised.²³ However, if the novel served to provide the readership with a sense of identity, its setting and social premises had to be identifiable to the audience. Therefore, while the novels probably should not be taken as proof that young couples were regularly torn from each other's arms by pirates, sold into slavery hundreds of miles from home, and reunited with each other by an act of a god so as to live happily ever after, it is not unreasonable that the novels should contain accurate information about social custom.²⁴ Thus, if the hero and heroine experience anxiety, anticipation, and concern about acting in a socially inappropriate manner due to their passionate infatuation, it may cautiously be believed that these were emotions to which the Greek

²²Perry (1967), 45 - 48, requires that one consider epic and the novel as one and the same literary genre, as the novel was the "epic for Everyman" (48) -- it provided the sense of cultural identity to the Hellenistic man which the Homeric epics had for his ancestors; heroes had been brought down to a manageable life-like size, as apparently "Everyman" could not longer relate to the larger-than-life figures of Homeric epic. Reardon (1969), 293, and (1991), 28 - 29, sees the novel as "a social and personal myth, of the private individual isolated and insecure in a world too big for him." Hägg (1983), 90, tends to agree; Bowie and Harrison (1993), 165 - 166, suggest that these theories are more appropriate for the social milieu in which the Pre-Sophistic novels were written than for that which produced the later novels.

²³Reardon (1991), 24 - 26; see also Hägg (1983), 38, for a discussion of Theocritus' influence on Longus' portrayal of pastoral life.

²⁴See Bowie and Harrison (1993), 165 - 166, who state that the novels contain "nuggets of reality" of Greek society in the Roman empire; Hägg (1983), 82 - 87, agrees, as does Wiersma (1990), 109, and Reardon (1969), 307 - 309, and (1991), 57. See Tatum (ed.) (1994), Section Five "The Real World" for a collection of essays concerning the novels and contemporary reality; Egger (1994) provides a discussion focusing particularly on the Greek novel and the realities of ancient marriage. See also Bradley (1994), esp. Chapter Five, in which he effectively uses novel evidence to reconstruct the quality of slaves' lives.

audience could relate.²⁵ But what about the Roman audience? Do the Roman novels reflect Roman reality?

It has been stated that the Roman novels were influenced by their Greek counterparts. Nevertheless, Petronius, who is generally felt to have been less reliant upon the conventions of the Greek romance than Apuleius,²⁶ is usually credited with supplying an accurate image of Roman social life in the Neronian age.²⁷ Though an elite bias must be suspected, *The Satyricon* is not lacking information about affective relationships of the non-elite; Trimalchio, a freedman (albeit an outrageously wealthy one) and his wife Fortunata provide much of the subject matter for the surviving text. As for the *Metamorphoses*, in spite of Apuleius' obvious reliance on a Greek original for the basic story-line, he nonetheless places his tale in the setting of contemporary society. Millar has persuasively argued that Apuleius provides an accurate image of second century provincial life;²⁸ though the *Metamorphoses* takes place in the Greek East, the author himself was from the province of Africa, and was writing in Latin for a Roman audience. Thus, it should be expected that the audience should have found much to be familiar within the text of the novel; furthermore, though the author and his intended audience were elite, the main character (during his time spent as an ass) interacts with many people of non-elite status. Hence, both Roman novels provide evidence about the non-elite as perceived by the elite, which, while not ideal, is infinitely preferable to no mention of the non-elite at all, as is the case with so many other sources.

To sum up, then, the ancient novel contains a host of difficulties when considered as evidence. In spite of its inherent problems, however, this genre is nevertheless potentially very valuable as source material for ancient affective relationships for two main reasons. First, the characters of the novels convey emotions which one might expect the tablet practitioners to have felt. It must always be recalled that magic was an

²⁵See Reardon (1969), 307: the novelists "face honestly the problem of the ordinary affections of man (and woman) in a way that is not dictated by ideology."

²⁶Though there has recently been some discussion about the possibility that Petronius drew on a pre-existing Greek model (the *Iolus* fragment); see Reardon (1991), 42, Hägg (1983), 174.

²⁷Walsh (1970), Chapter 2; Bowie and Harrison (1993), 168; Hägg (1983), 171 - 172. Walsh (1970), 17 - 18, notes that the question of Petronius' model arose as early as 1892, when A. Collingnon suggested that there might have been a Greek comic fiction work called the *Priapeia* (which is, of course, lost). Walsh rejects this theory, however, stating that even had there been such a work, the episodes of Petronius' novel are so Roman in nature that Petronius would have had to have rewritten his model so thoroughly that the connection between the two works would have become negligible.

²⁸Millar (1981); Bowie and Harrison (1993), 172.

activity not condoned by society; the tablet practitioners nevertheless felt so strongly about achieving their purpose that they were willing to undertake the risk to their reputation and perhaps even civil safety. The passion, anxiety, and concern expressed by the characters of the ancient novel must have been shared by the tablet practitioners. Second, the novels were probably written in the early centuries AD, and were thus roughly contemporary with the majority of the erotic curse tablets. As discussed above, the novels' settings and social premises reflected contemporary reality, so as to be recognizable to their audience. The evidence supplied by the ancient novels may then be employed with due caution to reconstruct the situations of the tablet practitioners.

Erotic Curse Tablets: A Contradiction in Terms?

“A virgin?” said Thersandros. “Ridiculous impudence! A virgin after nights with all those pirates? Did the desperadoes become eunuchs just for you? Was the pirates' lair a school of philosophy?”

“Παρθένος;” εἶπεν ὁ Θερσανδρος· “ὦ τόλμης καὶ γέλωτος· παρθένος τοσούτοις σοννυκτερεύσασα πειραταῖς. εὐνουχοί σοι γεγόνασιν οἱ λησταί; φιλοσόφων ἢ τὸ πειρατήριον;”

-- Ach. Tat. 6.21²⁹

What kind of love do the erotic tablets deal with? There are two kinds of love, says Plato through the character of Pausanias at a symposium: the Heavenly (*Οὐρανία*) and the Common (*Πάνδημος*). Philosophers and the better sort of course experienced the former, which down-played the carnal aspect and focused on the esoteric. The latter was engaged in “by the meaner sort of men; who, in the first place, love women as well as boys; secondly, where they love, they are set on the body more than the soul; and thirdly, they choose the most witless people they can find, since they look merely to the accomplishment and care not if the manner be noble or no.”³⁰ Philosophers were still credited with being above the flesh in the second century AD, when Achilles Tatius was writing his novel. At a glance, then, it would appear that the practitioners of our tablets were not philosophers. The practitioners of the tablets of erotic attraction openly betray

²⁹Trans. J.J. Winkler.

³⁰Pl. *Symp.* 180C - 181B (trans. W.R.M. Lamb): καὶ οὗτος ἐστὶν ὃν οἱ φαῦλοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐρώσιν. ἐρώσι δὲ οἱ τοιοῦτοι πρῶτον μὲν οὐχ ἥττον γυναικῶν ἢ παίδων, ἔπειτα ὧν καὶ ἐρώσι τῶν σομάτων μᾶλλον ἢ τῶν ψυχῶν, ἔπειτα ὡς ἂν δύνωνται ἀνοητοτάτων, πρὸς τὸ διαπράξασθαι μόνον βλέποντες, ἀμελοῦντες δὲ τοῦ καλῶς ἢ μὴ. See also Apul. *Apol.* 12 for similar sentiment.

their physical lust in their language and the desired effect of the magic on their victims, while one cannot help cynically supposing that the practitioners of the rivalry tablets were not merely begrudging their victims the stimulating conversation of the mutual object of desire. However, does the presence of physical lust deny the presence of an emotional attachment? Clearly it should not; modern views of romantic love require both emotional fulfilment and “chemistry”.

But is romantic love a valid concept for the ancient world? The “birth” of romantic love has traditionally been credited to the troubadours of twelfth century France. Recent classical scholars, most notably Rudd and Treggiari, have questioned this belief. Rudd has compiled a list of elements necessary for romantic love: first, the lover must experience “love at first sight”; second, characteristic physical manifestations, or “love-sickness”, must be suffered; third, the lover must be preoccupied with the object of desire; fourth, the lover must experience a general change of outlook or attitude; fifth, the lover must desire a long-term relationship with the object of desire; sixth and finally, sexual consummation must be postponed.³¹ According to these criteria, and basing his argument upon the evidence of love poetry and romance, Rudd states that romantic love was very well known to and experienced by many members of both Greek and Roman society, and not in homosexual relationships alone, as has sometimes been averred.³² Treggiari’s criteria for romantic love differ from Rudd’s in that the lover is allowed to attain the object of his desire and consummate the union; this makes romantic love in marriage theoretically possible. Such a definition is also more compatible with current notions of romantic love, which dictate that romantic attachment should ideally contain the presence of mutual regard; a one-sided relationship is more probably to be termed infatuation. With the help of comparative material from seventeenth and eighteenth century England, and information taken from a variety of Roman literary sources, Treggiari persuasively argues the as yet contentious point that not only was romantic love possible in Roman marriage, but that it was even possible prior to, and could have been one of the driving-forces for, marriage.³³ Contrary to the conventional view of Roman match-making, in which the future bride and groom are passive by-standers in the whole process, Treggiari suggests that a couple could have formed a prior emotional attachment and played an

³¹Rudd (1981), 144 - 145.

³²Rudd (1981), 146 - 155.

³³See Treggiari (1991c).

active role in bringing about their own betrothal;³⁴ indeed, such a situation appears to have even been looked upon favourably by legislators who wished to increase the rate of marriage.³⁵

If it can be accepted, then, that romantic love is not an anachronistic concept for the Roman world,³⁶ it may be questioned if this emotion has a place in the consideration of the erotic curse tablets. According to Rudd's criteria, the tablets of erotic attraction could be said to reflect romantic love, as the practitioners were seeking to bring about relationships which were thus far unfulfilled. However, by our own cultural standards, it might be more accurate to term the emotion infatuation, partly because of the one-sided character of the relationship, and partly because the tablets primarily indicate the practitioners' physical lust for the victims. The depth of the emotion involved cannot be gauged, except to say that at the point of execution of the magical rite, it was probably secondary to the carnal aspect. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the practitioner desired both emotional and sexual gratification; indeed, one suspects that if it were possible to interview one of the practitioners on this point, he would have expected emotional gratification through satiating his physical desire, that is, for the practitioner, the two aspects were inseparable.³⁷

The driving emotion behind rivalry tablets, on the other hand, is more difficult to assess. Were the practitioners third parties seeking to break up a happy pair, or one member of a relationship who was seeing his or her partner slipping away? These possibilities will receive further discussion shortly; for the time being, it is enough to conjecture that if the former were the common scenario, infatuation could again be suspected; if the latter were the case, however, one might suppose that an emotional link existed as well as a physical link, as the practitioners would then have been seeking to maintain an existing partnership (whether one based on companionship or passionate romance). In any case, it is probably safe to assume that both kinds of tablets reflect

³⁴Treggiari (1991c), 192, 199 - 200, notes that it was common for a match to be arranged between the groom and the bride's father; in such cases, the usual view is that the groom assessed the bride's material and social assets favourably, but Treggiari argues that an emotional attachment was also not uncommonly taken into account. The girl will have also had some input in the matter (205).

³⁵Treggiari (1991c), 209: "Intended marriage to a young owner was a valid reason for the manumission of a slave woman...To a legislator love was a useful element in maximising the rate of marriage."

³⁶For an argument that romantic love existed in conjugal relationships in Classical Greece, see Green (1982), 36 - 37.

³⁷Note Treggiari (1991c), 210, who argues that what we would call romantic love is "usually represented in our sources as a sexual attraction."

feelings which were rooted in varying degrees of emotional and physical desire, the degrees of each depending upon whether the desired relationship was previously fulfilled or not.

The Graeco-Roman perception of being “in love” of the type described above must be addressed in order to see whether both the rivalry tablets and the attraction tablets can be said to be curses, and if erotic “cursing” was even considered to be a real possibility.³⁸ There exists a fundamental difference between the way modern western societies and ancient Graeco-Roman societies understood the concept of being in love. The English idiom “to fall in love” implies an unexpected, but pleasant, almost active action on the part of the lover. The Romans (and the Greeks), on the other hand, were “captured” by love -- the idiom “*captus/a amore*” is ubiquitous in Roman literature.³⁹ Venus, and especially Cupid (in the Greek sources Aphrodite and Eros) are often described in literature as attacking poor unsuspecting people with cruel strategy;⁴⁰ for example, the novelist Xenophon of Ephesus describes a battle waged by Eros against a young man who refuses to pay him homage, that is, by refusing to fall in love:

Eros was furious at this, for he is a contentious god and implacable against those who despise him. He looked for some stratagem to employ against the boy, for even the god thought he would be difficult to capture. So he armed himself to the teeth, equipped himself with his full armory of love potions, and set out against Habrocomes...⁴¹

In this case, as in every case, Love is the victor. The argument might be made that such descriptions of the god Amor or Eros taking such an active role in human life were merely poetic licence; similarly, Plato’s theory that Eros was a semi-divine daemon might also be dismissed as philosophical rhetoric not shared by the general population.⁴² However, the very wording of the idiom “*captus/a amore*” seems to

³⁸For the difficulty of categorisation of erotic magic, see Gager (1992), 79 - 80.

³⁹See, for example, Livy 30.12.19, 36.10.14; Cic. *Clu.* 12.11; Sall. *Cat.* 15.1.2; Pliny *HN* 14.51.5, 36.21.7, 35.151.4; Pliny *Ep.* 6.33.2.3. Greek idiom is often similar (see, for example, Ach. Tat. 4.3 for a description of a man who *εαλώκει* by love); the imagery of love attacking a person as though in battle is very common (see below).

⁴⁰The military connotations of the vocabulary used to describe one’s capture by Cupid should not be ignored; the word *captus* often referred to one captured in war, who could very probably be sold into slavery (see Bradley [1994], 32 - 33).

⁴¹X. Eph. 1.2 (trans. G. Anderson). Compare Chariton 1.1, Ach. Tat. 1.4, 4.3, 4.7; Longus 1.15; Apul. *Met.* 2.16.

⁴²Pl. *Symp.* 202E - 212B; for modern scholarly dismissals of Venus/Aphrodite, see Friedrich (1978), 1: “One of the main authorities [of ancient mythology] speaks of “a pretty figure of mythology and folk-tales whom no one is known to have worshipped in the whole ancient world.” Another in his

indicate otherwise; perhaps not all people who fell in love believed themselves to have been physically besieged by Cupid's arrows, but it seems probable that many would have believed that their body had been invaded by a foreign entity. Indeed, it is this free-flying character of love that allowed love to be manipulated by magical means.⁴³

Thus love is susceptible to magic, but can there be such a thing as erotic cursing? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a curse is "a solemn utterance intended to invoke a supernatural power to inflict destruction or punishment on a person or thing." The rivalry tablets with their obviously malevolent aims certainly qualify as curses under this definition. But what about the tablets of erotic attraction? To be termed curses, the condition of being passionately in love would have had to have been something undesirable, for it is that emotion which the practitioners sought to inspire in their victims.

In the first chapter I addressed the elite reaction to the concept of passionate love. Ideally, the condition was to be avoided if at all possible, because when forming marital unions, it led one to be forgetful of one's priorities, which were essentially social, economic, and political advantage for oneself and one's family. Was passion taboo for those for whom these goals were perhaps less a priority,⁴⁴ that is, for the non-elite classes? It seems that passionate love should have received a warmer reception from such people, but in fact this does not appear to have been the case. Rather, the ideal of calm, rational behaviour, incongruous with overwhelming passion, was probably the ideal for all members of Graeco-Roman society. The reasons are manifold, and are not peculiar to any single social class.

First, there are many comparisons to be made between the condition of being in love and the unenviable condition of being ill, both in terms of cause and effect.⁴⁵ As previously discussed, there was widespread belief in the Graeco-Roman world that illness, like love, was something which attacked a body from the outside as a direct

authoritative article limits himself to "the foolish creature who complained of Diomedes and was caught in her husband's chains." I refrain from needlessly pillorying these two particular experts by naming them, because they are no worse than dozens of others."

⁴³For non-literary evidence of Eros as a daemon, see *PGM* 12.14 - 95 for a spell designed to secure Eros as an assistant for the magician.

⁴⁴As discussed in Chapter One. To recap, a woman could marry a man of higher social and economic status than herself, while it appears that a man could not very easily (Gardner (1986), 33; Weaver [1991], 180); recall that it was the man who decided what name the relationship should receive (that is, concubinage or marriage (Treggiari [1981], 59)). Note, however, that within the same socio-economic class, prospective partners might have been sought out on the basis that they shared a similar trade or source of income, in order to ensure economic stability (Treggiari (1991a), 123).

⁴⁵See Winkler (1991), 222 - 224, for a full discussion.

result of divine will. The physical symptoms of being in love had parallels with illness, giving the term “love-sickness” new force.⁴⁶ For example, people in states of (unrequited) love in the ancient world commonly betrayed their predicament through loss of appetite, insomnia, and melancholia. A lover is also often described as burning with love (*incensus/a amore*),⁴⁷ the desired effect, it will be recalled, of the tablets of attraction on the victim. However, fever, loss of appetite, insomnia, and melancholia are all symptoms recognized by ancient physicians as manifestations of illness; for example, the illness of a patient described by a Hippocratic doctor might be compared: for six days the young man was uneasy, sleepless, and feverish to the point of delirium; on the seventh day he died.⁴⁸ This introduces another unpleasant aspect of love-sickness; it could be fatal. The lover could either eventually waste away should his love remain unobtained, or he could commit suicide should it appear that his goal was unreachable.⁴⁹ “My life is finished!” wails the unsuccessful suitor of Callirhoe, the heroine of Chariton’s novel. “The day Callirhoe leaves here, I shall die!”⁵⁰ Similarly, Longus’s beautiful but supremely naive heroine Chloe is bewildered and alarmed at her physical reaction to her love for Daphnis:

Now I feel ill, but I don’t know what my illness is; I feel pain, although
I’ve not been injured; I feel sad, although I’ve lost none of my sheep; I

⁴⁶Compare Apul. *Met.* 10.2: *et languore simulato vulnus animi mentitur in corporis valetudine. Iam cetera salutis vultusque detrimenta et aegris et amantibus examussim convenire nemo qui nesciat...* “By feigning illness she pretended that her heart’s wound was a matter of her body’s health. In general, as everyone knows, the damage to one’s health and appearance are exactly the same in the sick and the love-sick...” (trans. J.A. Hanson). Though the love-sick might revel in their condition, as a piece of graffiti from Pompeii shows ([*CIL* 4.8408] *amantes, ut apes, vitam mellitam exigunt*), it is clear that not everyone shared the opinion that being passionately in love was a good thing, as the answers to the above statement show: *velle*, and *amantes -- amantes -- cureges!* (the editor, della Corte, suggests that *cureges* means *cura egeni*; see also della Corte [1976], 32 - 33).

⁴⁷See, for example, Tac. *Ann.* 4.3.9, 14.42.2; Catull. 64.18, 64.252, 67.24; Verg. *Aen.* 2.342, 3.297, 4.299.

⁴⁸Hippoc. *Epid.* 3.8.

⁴⁹Winkler (1991), 222, notes that “suicide is a common end to stories of hopeless love.” For a fuller discussion of lovesickness in history, including Graeco-Roman times, see Bercher and Ciavolella (1990). For a discussion of suicide in the Roman world in general, see Gris  (1982).

⁵⁰Chariton 2.6 (trans. B.P. Reardon): *Τῆς αὐτῆς ἡμέρας δπαλλαγῆσεται Καλλιρρόη μὲν ἐντεῦθεν, ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦ ζῆν.* Compare also 1.1: “But when Chaereas began to waste away bodily, he found courage, as befitted a youth of noble and generous disposition, to tell his parents that he was in love and would die if he did not marry Callirhoe...” *Χαιρέας δὲ νεανίας εὐφυῆς καὶ μεγαλόφρων, ἤδη τοῦ σώματος αὐτῷ φθιλοντος, ἀπετόλμησεν εἰπεῖν πρὸς τοὺς γονεῖς ὅτι ἐρᾷ καὶ οὐ βιώσεται τοῦ Καλλιρρόης γάμου μὴ τυχῶν.*

feel hot, although I'm sitting in deep shade...I'm dying, dear Nymphs...⁵¹

Furthermore, if love did not destroy its victim physically, it did mentally.⁵² We might compare the difference in nuance between the English phrases “to fall in love” and “to be smitten”. The first gives a generally favourable impression; the second, however, conjures up the mental image of some poor fool who is absolutely stupefied by his or her feelings for another. In much the same way ancient “captives” of love might find themselves consumed with thoughts of their object of desire (another common desired effect of the attraction tablets), a condition which is conducive to inappropriate behaviour. Rational thought becomes impossible: the lover is literally maddened by love.⁵³ The young lover Clitophon describes the circumstances of his demise:

As soon as I had seen her, I was lost...I now became a prey to a host of emotions: admiration, amazement, trembling, shame, shamelessness. I admired her generous stature, marvelled at her beauty, trembled in my heart, stared shamelessly, ashamed I might be caught....⁵⁴

Similarly, Callirhoe's unfortunate suitor Dionysius chastises himself for his scandalous behaviour:

“Dionysius, you ought to be ashamed of yourself...you behave like an adolescent! You fall in love at first sight -- and while you're in mourning at that....” This was good sense; but Eros, who took his restraint as an insult, set himself against Dionysius and fanned to greater heat the blaze in a heart that was trying to be rational about love...⁵⁵

Females were not immune; thus Dido *saevit inops animi totamque incensa per urbem/bacchatur* because of love for Aeneas;⁵⁶ love likewise made it impossible for one

⁵¹Longus 1.14 (trans. C. Gill): *Nūν ἐγὼ νοσῶ μέν, τί δὲ ἡ νόσος ἀγνοῶ· ἀλγῶ, καὶ ἔλκος οὐκ ἔστι μοι. λυποῦμαι, καὶ οὐδὲν τῶν προβάτων ἀπόλωλέ μοι· κἀμοί, καὶ ἐν σκιᾷ τοσαύτη κάθημαι...ἐγὼ δὲ μάτην ἀπελουσάμην...* Compare also Ach. Tat. 1.6, 4.7; X. Eph. *An Ephesian Tale* 1.5.

⁵²Winkler (1991), 223: “eros confounds social expectations and medical expertise.”

⁵³See, for example, Tac. *Ann.* 13.44.1; 13.44.13.

⁵⁴Ach. Tat. 1.4 (trans. J.J. Winkler): *ὡς δὲ εἶδον, εὐθύς ἀπωλώλειν...πάντα δὲ με εἶχεν ὁμοῦ, ἔπαινος, ἔκπληξις, τρόμος, αἰδώς, ἀναιδεια· ἐπήνουν τὸ μέγεθος, ἐξεπεπλήγμην τὸ κάλλος, ἔτρεμον τὴν καρδίαν, ἔβλεπον ἀναιδῶς, ἡδούμην ἀλῶναι.* Compare also Hor. *Carmin.* 1.27.16 (“erring” because of love), and Catull. 61.32, 64.329 (love overcomes reason).

⁵⁵Chariton 2.4 (trans. B.P. Reardon): “*Οὐκ ἀισχύνη, Διονύσιε...παιδαρίου πράγματα πάσχων, Ἀπαξ ἰδὼν ἐράς, καὶ ταῦτα πενθῶν...*” *Ἐφιλονεῖκει δὲ ὁ Ἔρως βουλευομένῳ καλῶς καὶ ὕβριν ἐδόκει τὴν σωφροσύνην τὴν ἐκείνου· διὰ τοῦτο ἐπυρφόρει σφοδρότερον ψυχὴν ἐν ἔρωτι φιλοσοφοῦσαν...*

poor heroine to behave with proper modesty when struck by the sight of the handsome hero:

Anthia too was in a bad way, as she let his appearance sink in, with rapt attention and eyes wide open; and already she paid no attention to modesty: what she said was for Habrocomes to hear, and she revealed what she could of her body for Habrocomes to see...⁵⁷

Thus love produced uncontrollable passions, and uncontrollable passions in general were not viewed with particular favour by the ancient Greeks and Romans. This may be illustrated by considering the word *incensus/a* in ancient literature when used to describe an emotional state. It has been noted that “burning” with love (or desire)⁵⁸ was a common phrase used to describe a lover; however, the image of burning appears in non-erotic contexts as well. For example, one could “burn” with anger (*incensus/a ira*)⁵⁹ -- another emotion which could lead one to behave irrationally.⁶⁰ “Burning” in general appears to have been something to avoid, because it implied a loss of reason and an inability to behave moderately. To burn with love for another was doubly dangerous, however; for not only did love make one lose control of oneself, but much like the Sirens’ songs, it made one welcome one’s own destruction.⁶¹

To sum up, being passionately in love as reflected in the erotic curse tablets appears to have been an unfortunate circumstance for all members of Graeco-Roman society, regardless of sex or rank. Those who found themselves “captured” by Cupid were not to be envied; life was undoubtedly easier, and the ideal of modesty and self-control much more attainable, for those who felt nothing but affection and companionship for those around them. To use magic to make another passionate about oneself was therefore rather underhanded. The tablets of erotic attraction then deserve to be labelled

⁵⁶Verg. *Aen.* 4.299 - 300: “Raving, lacking reason, and afire, she went frenzied through the whole city.”

⁵⁷X. Eph.1.3 (trans. G. Anderson): διέκειτο δὲ καὶ Ἀνθία πονήρως, δλοῖς μὲν καὶ ἀναπεπταμένοις τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τὸ Ἀβροκόμου κάλλος εἰσρέον δεχομένη, ἤδη δὲ καὶ τῶν παρθένους πρεπόντων καταφρονοῦσα· καὶ γὰρ ἐλάλησεν ἄν τι, ἵνα Ἀβροκόμης ἀκούσῃ, καὶ μέρη τοῦ σώματος ἐγύμνωσεν ἄν τὰ δυνατὰ, ἵνα Ἀβροκόμης ἴδῃ...

⁵⁸*cupidine* or *cupiditate*. See, for example, Tac. *Ann.* 4.39.1; Cic. *Phil.* 1.9.1, *Off.* 3.59.4.

⁵⁹See, for example, Tac. *Hist.* 4.21.10, 4.77.13; Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.89.2, *Mil.* 53.1.

⁶⁰For a comparison between the effects of anger and the effects of love on a person, see Ach. Tat. 6.19. Anger and how to control it were topics for philosophical treatises; for example, see the works of Aristotle, Seneca, and Plutarch.

⁶¹See Hes. *Op.* 57 - 58; Ach. Tat. 1.8.

curse tablets, as they aimed to provide not so much pleasure as pain and hardship for their victims.⁶²

Roman Affective Relationships: The Evidence of the Erotic Curse Tablets

Attempting to understand Graeco-Roman affective relationships through the evidence of the erotic curse tablets is much like attempting to understand modern social relationships using only evidence gathered from advice columns in newspapers: the difficulties which could be experienced are supplied, but it is unknown how commonly they were experienced by the general population. The tablets represent the problems of a group of individuals who were unable to conform placidly to conventional social standards; whether these people were the exception or the norm cannot be known. This of course does not mean that the tablets can yield no useful information. On the contrary, as they embody attempts made to surmount social and/or legal barriers, they provide indirect information about the barriers themselves. An examination of the general trends of the practitioner's gender and the desired result which exist in this body of texts may reveal something about social and gender boundaries generally experienced by ancient Romans in affective relationships.

The contradiction of gender roles presented by the different sources of evidence is a continual source of perplexity in the study of ancient erotic magical practice. Greek and Roman literary sources usually present females as the main consumers and practitioners of erotic magic, while the *Greek Magical Papyri* and the tablets of erotic attraction indicate the reverse.⁶³ How is this contradiction to be resolved? Scholars have proposed various solutions. Winkler (speaking of Greek magical practice) suggested that men and women alike could theoretically engage in love magic, but in reality, women "were more watched and guarded and disciplined than their brothers, and presumably had less access to male experts with their books and their money for hiring them," thus explaining the male-bias of the bulk of the non-literary evidence.⁶⁴ Gager

⁶²Winkler (1991), 222; Faraone (forthcoming), 7: "there is no indication that the use [of] erotic magic was welcomed by the victim and much evidence that it aimed at attacking [other people] and making them do something they would otherwise be unwilling to do."

⁶³See, for example, *PGM* 4.94-153, 4.296-466, 4.1265-74, 4.1390-1495, 4.1496-1596, 4.1716-1870, 4.2066-2125, 4.2441-2621, 4.2622-2707, 4.2708-2784, 4.2891-2942, 7.300a-310, 7.374-376, 7.405-406/7.661-763; see also Graf (1994), 211 - 216.

⁶⁴Winkler (1991), 228. Note that literary evidence from Homer on conventionally portrays the magicians themselves as women (quite often old women; see, for example, Petron. *Sat.* 131 and Luc.

denies that the non-literary evidence is as male-biased as Winkler suggests, stating that “even more than Winkler seems prepared to admit, both the tablets and literary figures such as Lucian demonstrate that women resorted to precisely the same ceremonies, spells, and devices as did men.”⁶⁵ Faraone has also noted that there is considerable evidence for (Greek) female magical practice as well as male, but disagrees with Gager by proposing that erotic magic was “gender-specific”. He suggests that erotic amulets and potions were believed to be effective in attracting male attention, while magic involving the idea of torturing, harassing, and burning (similar to the attraction tablets) was effective in bringing a female admirer to one’s doorstep.⁶⁶

I would propose a fourth possibility, which is essentially a combination of the three ideas stated above and involves only a slight shift in emphasis in Faraone’s wording: in the Roman world, at least, instead of being “gender-specific”, erotic magic appears rather to have been “problem-specific”.⁶⁷ Different kinds of magic were used to achieve different ends in affairs of the heart. I suggest that the problems, in turn, were gender-specific, rather than the forms of magical practice. Thus concentrations of male or female practitioners in the various forms of erotic magical practice indicate that different social and legal boundaries, insurmountable by mundane means, were in place for each gender. In short, men and women generally experienced different problems and thus used different forms of magic to solve them. Male and female problems may best be examined through separate discussions of the evidence provided by the rivalry and attraction tablets.

6.508 - 568). However, Galen provides a list of male magicians knowledgeable about erotic magic (Scarborough [1991], 162).

⁶⁵Gager (1992), 80 - 81.

⁶⁶Faraone (forthcoming), 7. See also (1992a).

⁶⁷I have essentially only placed an intermediary step in Faraone’s theory, a step which he himself implies in his argument that women were more concerned with remaining the preferred woman within a union, while men were more likely to use magic to start a relationship, but which I believe requires more emphasis if his theory is to be profitably applied to the study of Roman erotic magic. The crux of Faraone’s theory nevertheless remains that it is the forms of magic which were gender-specific rather than the purposes to which magic was applied, as he notes that in (desired) homosexual relationships, the practitioner would use the form of magic believed to be effective on the gender of the victim; for example, a female practitioner seeking a female victim would use burning and torturing magic (see *PGM* 32.1 - 19, for example), while a male seeking a male would use potions and amulets (Faraone cites *Plut. Luc.* 43.1-2 as an example (forthcoming), 7). However, there is enough evidence of men and women seeking heterosexual relationships using amulets and potions, or burning and torturing magic respectively to suggest that this theory is not infallible. See below for a more comprehensive discussion.

The Rivalry Tablets: Jealousy Rears Its Ugly Head

In Chapter Two, it was noted that rivalry tablets appear to have generally been composed by and against females, though there are some examples of both male practitioners and victims. As mentioned, most of the tablets unfortunately contain rather sparse information about the causative situation. Of the six which expressly state that they wish to turn the victim away from a named object of desire⁶⁸ only two give a clear indication that they aim to separate a married couple⁶⁹ (composed by a male and a female respectively); the remaining four (representing one male and three female practitioners) do not state the relationship between the victim and the object of desire,⁷⁰ though at least one of the victims appears to be the object of desire's slave woman.⁷¹ For the most part, the other tablets name only the victim, not indicating his or her relationship with the object of desire.⁷²

The determination of motivating circumstances is of course most problematic for this last category. However, probable situations may perhaps be inferred. For example, in the tablets which name just one victim, it appears that the practitioners were reasonably certain of being the object of desire's second choice, as success for the practitioner is hindered (or threatened) only by this one other person. This would indicate the existence of some previous relationship between the object of desire and the practitioner, perhaps a marital or quasi-marital union. In such a scenario the practitioner would have been seeking to protect the relationship from a third party intruder who was either actively pursuing, or who was being pursued by, one member of the partnership.⁷³ Since the majority of rivalry tablet practitioners were female, and

⁶⁸Tablets 1, 7, 13 (if this is indeed a third party practitioner and not the victim's husband), 22, and 27.

⁶⁹Tablets 13 and 20.

⁷⁰Tablets 1, 7, 22, and 27.

⁷¹Tablet 1. Tablet 7's victim has a Greek sounding name (Rhodine), which could also indicate servile origin.

⁷²Those tablets which malevolently curse both members of a couple (such as tablets 9, 12, 13, and 14 - 17) are difficult to interpret; number 9 seems to indicate that the practitioner is the spurned lover or wife of the male victim, whom she curses along with his new lover; perhaps the other tablets should be understood likewise.

⁷³The intentions of the victim towards the object of desire are unknown; if the victim were a slave woman, as many of the tablets seem to indicate (see, for example, tablets 1, 8, 10, 11, and 12) the victim may not have been the victim only of the practitioner, but also of the unwanted attentions of the object of desire. Alternately, a slave woman could perhaps wish to secure the favour of her master, and perhaps gain her freedom. The possibility that the practitioner is a willful intruder is discussed below.

since the use of magic indicates an absence of real power on the part of the practitioner, these tablets appear to indicate that women could be concerned when their husbands were unfaithful (or were in danger of being unfaithful), but futilely so. This gives the impression of marital partnerships of unequals, in which husbands had the ability to do as they pleased, while their wives had to suffer their indiscretions in silence. This hypothesis must be tested against the image of married life for ancient women as revealed by other sources.

It has been noted previously that married women were expected by law to be sexually faithful to their husbands, while their husbands could only be charged with adultery if they should take up with married citizen women, or with *stuprum* should they have relations with virgin, widowed, or divorced citizen women. This meant that a married woman did not have a legal leg to stand on should her husband have sexual relations with slaves, prostitutes, or women previously charged with adultery.⁷⁴ What, then, was the wife of a philanderer to do? This is to suppose that she would care about her husband's infidelity; if Roman marriage was a union between two people of lukewarm feeling, a wife might be willing to turn a blind eye to her husband's indiscretions.⁷⁵ Suppose, however, that the wife was unwilling to stand by idly (disregarding for the moment her motivation) -- what options were left open to her? If richly dowered and thus not economically dependent on her marriage, perhaps she could threaten to leave, taking her dowry with her.⁷⁶ A woman without the luxury of financial freedom might not have much leverage. A better strategy for a woman who lacked real power and influence was probably to ensure that she remained the preferred woman with her husband. There is ample evidence to support the theory that many women took precautions to ensure their place of preference with their partners, for whatever reason. The key to achieving this goal was to be the most attractive woman.

⁷⁴Compare Sulpicia's anger at being set aside for a woman she describes as a prostitute (3.16); cited in Treggiari (1991c), 208.

⁷⁵The question of honour might be raised; it is a subject most usually dealt with in discussions of female, not male adultery, and perhaps most commonly in reference to Greek tragedy (see, for example, Walcot [1984] and Shaw [1975]). Compare also Winkler (1991), 216, speaking of traditional Mediterranean ideology: "*honor and shame* [are] represented respectively by the men and the women of a family." See Cohen (1991), 111 - 123, for a discussion of the complexities, contradictions, and ambiguities involved in the consideration of traditional ideology and reality where Roman female adultery is concerned. Compare also Treggiari (1991a), 311 - 313, who argues that women's adultery did not have any bearing on the honour of her husband or her male relatives; furthermore, the wife of an adulterer could be expected to feel *dolor* or *iniuria*. See below for further discussion.

⁷⁶The alarmingly independent behaviour of a richly dowered wife is a comic topos; see Treggiari (1991a), 329 - 331.

What attracted a man? Presumably, what attracted a man before marriage would continue to be pleasing. An elite male was supposed to be drawn to the dazzle of wealth, position, beauty, and good character (the vital quality being no adulterous tendencies).⁷⁷ A lower class male might not have been able to be so discriminating; wealth and position might have had to have taken a back seat to beauty and good character. Thus the romantic hero Chaereas falls in love with Callirhoe, smitten by “her hair, her walk, her voice, how she had entered the courtroom, how she had stood and spoken and kept silent, how she had showed modesty and how she had wept...”⁷⁸

What was the woman’s role in all of this? Need she have sat passively by while men appraised her assets and faults, anxiously awaiting her acceptability ranking? The answer is probably no, though to the world at large this is how it ought to appear. Although it was widely recognised that females, like males, could be struck by love, under no circumstances were they to be the first to act upon their feelings -- in literature (except love poetry) it is a female’s ability to keep her passion to herself which separates the chaste from the whore. A woman who was previously (but not still!) married might be able to get away with taking a greater initiative in beginning a relationship, though even then she ought not to be the first to seduce; those women who were deemed too forward in their behaviour were chastised for being shockingly libidinous.⁷⁹ Ideally, and more properly, however, it appears that a woman, particularly a young virgin, ought not to have given any indication if she was in love, even if her love was making her physically ill. Thus two romantic heroines suffer bravely in silence, willing to die before disclosing their shameful secret passion to their families and friends.⁸⁰ A more modern example from twentieth century Morocco,

⁷⁷See Treggiari (1991a), Chapter 3: “Choosing a *Coniunx*”, and Bradley (1993), 247. Zarker (1972) argues that intelligence may have been one of the main features Catullus (and perhaps even Cicero!) found attractive in Lesbia/Clodia.

⁷⁸Chariton 6.7 (trans. and cited by J. Winkler (1991), 229).

⁷⁹See Treggiari (1985), 338, who describes Cicero’s rough handling of Sempronia and Sassia; sexually voracious married women are also something of a literary topos; see also X. Eph. 3.12 and Longus 2.15, for examples of young men seduced by (married) women, named Kyno (“Bitch”) and Lycaenion (“Little She-Wolf”) respectively. Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* is full of adulterous wives, all of whom receive harsh condemnation; see, for example, 3.15, 9.5, 9.14, 9.17ff, and 10.2. Barbarian females appear to have also been notoriously predatory, and dangerously so: see, for example, X. Eph. 2.3: “...we’re really done for....[Manto] is madly in love with Habrocomes and is threatening to do us terrible harm if she does not succeed. So consider what we must do. It is dangerous to thwart this barbarian woman” (trans. G. Anderson). ἀπολώλαμεν τελέως...[ἡ Μαντώ] ἐρᾶ μὲν Ἀβροκόμου σφοδρὸν ἔρωτα, ἀπειλεῖ δέ, εἰ μὴ τύχη, δεινὰ ἡμᾶς ἐργάσασθαι...σκόπει τοίνυν τί δεῖ ποιεῖν· τὸ γὰρ ἀντειπεῖν τῇ βαρβάρῳ σφαλερόν...

where arranged marriages are still common, might be compared; in this case the girl, Dawia (age 12), in love, describes her turmoil as her father made plans to marry her to another man:

I knew what was going on. I wanted to marry Mohammed but couldn't say anything. It would have been shameful. I loved Mohammed but could not tell the truth.⁸¹

A woman, however, was not completely without the ability to encourage or discourage males as she chose; it seems that a woman could play a very delicately balanced game of flirtation with a prospective mate (or lover). For example, she might surreptitiously flatter him; another young romantic hero describes how he was ensnared by the machinations of a slave girl:

[she] now began to lead me on in every way she could, with looks, gestures, and various other tokens. Like an idiot, I was convinced that I had suddenly become good-looking...⁸²

Still, the female's role appears to have been primarily to react to the male's advances, which might come in the form of gifts or actions of ambiguous meaning, designed to allow the female the ability to react positively while maintaining the appearance of upholding the ideal. For example, Faraone has studied ancient courtship rituals involving fruit, particularly the giving or flinging of an apple at a female by a male:

By hitting the girl with a piece of fruit, a man indicates his intent to seduce her; by willingly putting the apple to her lips or hiding it away in her bosom, the woman knowingly subjects herself to the aphrodisiac, and by doing so returns a message of her willingness to be seduced.⁸³

⁸⁰Chariton 1.1; X. Eph. 1.4. Compare also the poetry of Sulpicia, who bemoans having to wear a mask to conceal her love, in order to maintain appearances (3.13; cited by Treggiari [1991c], 208). Note also Galen's account of diagnosing a woman with love-sickness, a condition she had been unwilling to confess (this episode and others comparable in antiquity are discussed in Bercher and Ciavolella [1990], 48 - 51).

⁸¹Crapanzano and Garrison (1977), 160.

⁸²X. Eph. 1.11 (trans. J.R. Morgan): *τότε παντοῖς ἐφέλκετο βλέμμασι νεύμασι συνθήμασιν· ἐγὼ δὲ ὁ μάταιος ἀθρόον καλὸς γεγενῆσθαι ἐπεπέλομη...* Compare also Livy's description of how the African princess Sophonisba won over Masinissa (30.12.17 - 18): "Consequently while she was clasping now his knees and now his right hand, begging for his promise not to surrender her to any Roman, and her words were now more nearly those of a charmer than of a suppliant, the heart of the victor was quickly moved not to pity only, but with the amorous susceptibility of the Numidian race the victor was captivated by love of the captive," (trans. F.G. Moore): *Itaque cum modo genua modo dextram amplectens in id ne cui Romano traderetur fidem exposceret, propiusque blanditias iam oratio esset quam preces, non in misericordiam modo prolapsus est animus victoris, sed, ut est genus Numidarum in Venerem praeceps, amore captivae victor captus.*

⁸³Faraone (1990), 237 - 238; see also Longus 1.24; 3.34.

Though Faraone bases his argument on Greek sources, Catullus' description of a girl's blush when her lover's apple rolls from her lap indicates that it was a practice not unknown to the Romans.⁸⁴

Thus it appears that the ideal woman would be more attractive than other women without the appearance of trying to be so. Her lure should be her quality of virginal innocence, inexperience, and lack of guile (compounded with good looks and an overwhelming desire to be faithful). For some women, this may have left too much to chance.⁸⁵ Magic's secretive character made it an excellent means by which to assure attractiveness while maintaining the appearance of innocence, and for one who was married, was particularly useful for keeping one's husband at home; Faraone notes that amulets, magical girdles and the like were popular with women wishing to assure their own sexual attractiveness.⁸⁶ Wives could take the added precaution of potions, designed to render their husbands immune to the attractions of other women and thus to ensure faithfulness, either smearing them into their husband's clothes (like Deineira and her fatal coat for Hercules), or slipping them into their husband's food.⁸⁷ Women's notoriety for using magical potions for such a purpose appears to have been strong enough to have been used as a defence for Aretaphila, the wife of the tyrant of Cyrene, when she was caught trying to poison him: she claimed to only be protecting her own position of honour by providing an antidote to the love potions of other women.⁸⁸

There was another way by which a woman could attempt to keep her husband faithful; she could get rid of the competition. Curse tablets perhaps served a double function in this regard. They primarily sought to separate the rival and the object of desire, which could be accomplished either through a simple separation spell, such as

⁸⁴Catull. 65.18 - 19.

⁸⁵See X. Eph. 1.5, for an example of (unmarried) female distress at the possibility of competition: "when she saw other girls or women looking at him (and they all looked at Habrocomes), she was visibly distressed, in case some rival would outdo her," (trans. G. Anderson). Compare also Longus 2.39, where Chloe extracts a promise from Daphnis that he will not love any other women besides her.

⁸⁶Faraone (1992a), and (forthcoming), 7.

⁸⁷See Faraone (1992a). See also Smith (1978), 110, who notes that the eating of food over which an incantation had been sung or a potion added was a common magical means by which to transfer a daemon into a person's body.

⁸⁸Winkler (1991), 220 - 221 (from Plut. *De mul. vir.* 256A-C). Compare also Tac. *Ann.* 4.22, in which the ex-wife of a man accused of murdering his new wife (by throwing her out of a window) was charged (but acquitted) of having driven her ex-husband mad with *carminibus et veneficiis*; note that *venenum* could refer to love potions (Pharr [1932], 272), which, according to Ovid, "have the power to madden": *vimque furoris habent* (*Ars Am.* 2.105 - 106).

tablet 27, “May Quintula never again be with Fortunalis!”, or by neutralizing the attractions of the victim through a careful and comprehensive binding of body parts and mental capabilities -- a zombie-like appearance and personality would naturally not be very winning. Second, the tablets, composed and deposited in secret, provided the practitioner with the ability to steer events to her own will without appearing to be doing so. A successful practitioner would be rewarded with a stable union and an unblemished reputation.

Thus far, only the female practitioners have been discussed. How are the small number of male practitioners of rivalry tablets to be explained? If females used them because they had no other recourse to remove rivals and ensure faithfulness, what reason did men have? Husbands always had the legal right to set aside their wives for adultery, while adultery for wives was sex with anyone, free, slave, or barbarian, who was not their husband. Men appear to have openly threatened other men who sought to steal their girlfriends or seduce their wives;⁸⁹ two curse tablets, one which appears to cover up a previous adulterous affair (tablet 26), and another which aims to begin one (tablet 32), betray the practitioners’ fear of the jealous rage of the object of desire’s partner.⁹⁰

However, men did not always have the legal high ground in relationships. A remark in Tacitus may give insight into the sort of relationship in which a man might be powerless against a rival, and thus use a curse tablet. In the reign of Nero, the city prefect, Pedanius Secundus, was murdered by one of his own household slaves, *seu negata libertate cui pretium pepigerat sive amore exoleti incensus et dominum aemulum non tolerans*.⁹¹ Although Tacitus gives the former option more credence, it is significant that the latter was plausible. A slave involved in a love triangle would clearly have had no legal ability to remove his master as a rival; indeed, using a secret rivalry tablet would have been a much safer option for a slave to rid himself of his

⁸⁹For example, recall Pompeian wall graffiti quoted in Chapter Two; see also *CIL* 4.8259 for open rivalry over a slave woman: *Successus textor amat coponiaes ancilla(m), nomine Hiredem, quae quidem illum non curat, sed ille rogat, illa com(m)iseretur. Scribit rivalis. Vale. [the reply:] Invidiose, qui rumpeles, sedare [ie. (in)secare, as suggested by the editor] noli formosiozem, et qui est homo pravissimus et bellus.*

⁹⁰See Ach. Tat. 5.23 and 6.9 for a furious husband who thinks his wife has been untrue. See also Apul. *Met.* 2.7 for an example of a male choosing to “honour [another man’s] marriage-bed” by staying away from his wife.

⁹¹Tac. *Ann.* 14.42: “whether because he (his master) had denied him his freedom after he had fixed upon a price, or because he was burning with love for some teenaged waif and could not stand his master as his rival.”

master, as Pedanius' slave's overt action brought about the execution of not only himself, but also all of the other household slaves.

One of Martial's epigrams gives another possible scenario in which a male might have no legal recourse to remove a rival:

You are the paramour of Aufidia, and you were, Scaevinus, her husband; he who was your rival is her husband. Why does another man's wife please you when she as your own does not please you? Is it that when secure you can't get an erection?⁹²

Scaevinus' relations with his ex-wife were adulterous. Clearly, should he have wished to remove her new husband altogether, his options would have been limited. Men, therefore, in certain situations would have had no recourse but magic when seeking to remove a rival.⁹³ As in the case of the female practitioners, magic provided aid to those whom the law and social custom failed.

In general, then, it appears that women were concerned with maintaining pre-existing relationships, and protecting them from the disruptive intrusion of a third party. However, another possibility must be considered, that is, that the practitioner is him or herself the third party intruder while the victim is the person currently in favour with the object of desire. Indisputable evidence for "home-wrecker" tablets is rather sparse, however; as mentioned above, only two of the tablets appear to aim to divide a married pair in order to free up one member for the practitioner. It is improbable, though not impossible, that the other tablets represent third party intruders. Were this the case, it might be expected that the practitioner would seek to attract the object of desire rather than remove the current partner, since how else would success for the practitioner be assured? Even with the competition removed, a new relationship would still have to be instigated by the practitioner (the majority of whom are female, recall); the difficulties probably experienced by a female wishing to start a relationship have been previously noted. In general, then, it appears that the rivalry tablets were used more as preventative or protective magic rather than actively aggressive magic which sought to create a new relationship;⁹⁴ this is more in keeping with the general nature of

⁹²Mart. 3.70 (trans. W. Ker). *Moechus es Aufidiae, qui vir, Scaevine, fuisiti;/rivalis fuerat qui tuus, ille vir est./Cur aliena placet tibi, quae tua non placet, uxor?/Numquid securus non potes arrigere?* (cited in Richlin [1981], 395). See also Kolendo (1981), 292 - 293, for a discussion of homosexual relationships between masters and their slave boys.

⁹³See *Ov. Am.* 3.7.79 - 80, for an example of a man whose girlfriend suspects he has been worked upon by jealous magic when he proves impotent: *aut te traiectis Aeaeva veneficia lanis/devovet, aut alio lassus amore venis.*

⁹⁴This being more the realm of the attraction tablets; see below.

other types of *defixiones*, which usually sought to stack the odds in the favour of the practitioner in a situation whose outcome was uncertain, rather than to create new situations in the future.⁹⁵

The question of the nature of Roman marriages as reflected by the rivalry tablets may now be addressed. Can anything of the emotional state of affective relationships be inferred? Obviously, some women had unfaithful partners, or at least suspected that they would become unfaithful.⁹⁶ These women also, on occasion, feared the result of their partner's indiscretion enough to try to do something to prevent it, and having no legal or social backing, took the option of resorting to magic. It should always be kept in mind that magic was not undertaken lightly; the commissioning of a tablet must have meant some monetary expense and also the risk to one's reputation (and even life) should one be found out. Clearly the practitioners of these tablets felt very strongly about removing the competition, but their motives for doing so are difficult to assess. Could it be that they were frightened that they could be set aside for another woman? Tablet 9, in which the practitioner appears to be cursing her ex-partner and his new lover, indicates that this was a real possibility. Perhaps these women were dependent upon their partners for their economic well-being; they might have also felt that they would have little chance of marrying again if divorced. Apuleius notes that divorcees were viewed with suspicion by men looking for wives:

If she left [her husband] by divorce, she possesses one of two faults: either she was so intolerable that she was divorced by her husband, or so insolent as to divorce him.⁹⁷

Alternately, these women could have been seeking to ward off or avenge injured pride caused by their partners' infidelity; according to Treggiari, such a reaction was expected in a woman who had been cheated on.⁹⁸ There is of course another possibility -- the

⁹⁵Faraone (1991a), 11.

⁹⁶An article which appeared in the *Victoria Times-Colonist* on December 1, 1995 offers an interesting modern comparison; according to recent studies (conducted by the Federation of Italian Psychologists) two of three married men in Italy have been unfaithful to their wives; half of the respondents claimed that "marital indiscretions" were a "natural tendency", and a majority agreed with the statement that male adultery "should never or almost never be a reason for divorce."

⁹⁷Apul. *Apol.* 92 (trans H.E. Butler): *Seu repudio digressa est, utramvis habens culpam mulier, quae aut tam intolerabilis fuit, ut repudiaretur, aut tam insolens, ut repudiaret.* Cited in Treggiari (1991b), 41.

⁹⁸Treggiari (1991a), 311 - 313.

woman might feel true jealousy stemming from passion, infatuation, a romantic notion, whatever we want to call it, for her partner, and want to keep him for herself alone.⁹⁹

It is difficult to tell which possibility is the more probable; of course, one need not hold true in all situations, nor need it be the case that there was only one motivating factor for each tablet. However, the very existence of these tablets indicates that some males felt little attachment for their partners, or that the women had good reason to believe that what feeling existed would not last. This paints rather a desperate picture for women; it appears that marriage could be woefully one-sided to the sorrow of some wives, who had no real power to change the situation; wives could be flung aside, their regard trampled, and their affection ignored by their partners. Fortunately, there is some evidence which suggests that men were not always as cavalier in matters of the heart as the rivalry tablets would suggest. Let us turn to examine male anxieties and problems, as indicated by the tablets of erotic attraction.

The Attraction Tablets: Strategies for Initiating a Relationship

With only two exceptions, the attraction tablets represent male practitioners in pursuit of female victims. The practitioners sought to begin a relationship which did not yet exist at the time of composing of tablet, either in fact or in the degree of passion desired by the practitioner. This is in direct contrast to the rivalry tablets, which in general sought to maintain a relationship already in existence; thus, while women experienced difficulty keeping their relationships together, men, it appears, had problems getting them started in the first place. If men were, as it was argued above, responsible for making the "first move" in a relationship, it might be expected that social and legal factors would be on the male's side, giving him recourse to solve any difficulties experienced by normal means. However, the existence of the tablets indicates that there were insurmountable barriers separating the practitioner from his object of desire; it remains to examine what these barriers might have been.

The attraction tablets composed by males ought to be divided into two groups and considered separately: the first category is composed of those tablets which seek to harass the victim with physical and mental discomfort until she fulfils an ultimate wish, usually expressed as "until she comes to me"; the second category includes those tablets which seek only to instil passion in the victim for the practitioner, which may or may not express the wish that this passion last until the victim's dying day.

⁹⁹Petron. *Sat.* 74 - 75 describes a wife's jealousy of her husband's affections for a slave-boy, for example.

The term assigned to spells designed to compel the victim to come to the practitioner is *agoge* (*ἀγωγή*), which literally means “bringing”.¹⁰⁰ Five of the attraction tablets under study are *agoge* spells: tablets 32, 33, 36, 44, and 45. Number 36, composed by a female practitioner, will be discussed separately below; the remaining four are the work of male practitioners who sought to transfer their own feelings of passion to the victim, so that she would forget her family and any sense of modesty, and thus come to the practitioner.¹⁰¹ These tablets closely resemble the Egyptian attraction tablets, which sought to bring the victim to the practitioner explicitly for sex. Of erotic curse tablets, as a group, it is the *agoge* tablets of Egypt and Africa which have received the most discussion by scholars (who usually focus on tablets of attraction written in Greek).¹⁰² Why did the authors of these tablets feel that they were unable to approach the object of their desire under normal circumstances? What sort of difficulties were they facing that made it necessary to resort to magical means to invert the normal gender roles in beginning a relationship, transferring the onus of “making the first move” to the female?

Naturally, social and legal norms appear to be the most obvious barriers facing a man passionately infatuated. Though a man could form a sexual relationship with slave women, prostitutes, and formerly-convicted adultresses with impunity, he could not have sex with any free female citizen to whom he was not married (or considered himself married) without running the risk of legal action on the part of the woman herself, or her family.¹⁰³ From the woman’s point of view, while it appears that women could form unions with men of higher status than themselves with relative ease, a union formed with a man of lower status could bring a lowering of her own legal and social status.¹⁰⁴ Since these tablets sought to make the victim do something she normally would not have done, they could possibly represent love-lorn males of lower status (free or possibly even servile) than their citizen female victims, who sought to gain the attention and consent of their objects of desire through magical means, having realised that their chances for doing so otherwise were rather limited. Alternately, the

¹⁰⁰See Petropoulos (1988), 216.

¹⁰¹Note, however, that the texts for tablets 33 and 44 are far from sound, particularly in the parts where the wishes that the victim come to the practitioner are expressed.

¹⁰²For example, Faraone, Martinez, and Winkler.

¹⁰³Gardener (1986), 127 - 128; Treggiari (1991a), 278 - 279, 299 - 310.

¹⁰⁴Gardener (1986), 33; Rawson (1986), 27 - 28.

practitioner could have been seeking a woman who was already in a conjugal union, as apparently was the case in tablet 32; a woman who committed adultery could expect to receive very little sympathy from the law, and to lose her good reputation.¹⁰⁵

If either of the above were the usual scenario, it might be questioned if the practitioner had any long-term goals. A woman of superior status might not have been very willing to engage in a long-term relationship with a male of lower status to her own social and economic detriment, no matter how strong the magic was; similarly, a married woman might not be easily persuaded to leave her husband for good. The practitioners, though perhaps not the most rational minded of humans, might have therefore set themselves more modest goals. Winkler has suggested that the goal of the attraction tablets could have been to bring the victim to the practitioner for a single night in order to satiate his physical desire, and thus to provide a cure for his love-sickness. There is literary evidence to support this idea; Winkler cites the *Philopseudos* of Lucian, in which the young Glaucias, smitten with another man's wife, brings her to his bed for a single night of passion through magical means.¹⁰⁶ Ancient novelists also support the idea that sex was the only cure for consuming passion: the relatively worldly Philetas explains to Daphnis and Chloe that "there is no medicine for Love, no potion, no drug, no spell to mutter, except a kiss and an embrace and lying down together with naked bodies."¹⁰⁷ The maid of the sexually voracious step-mother of Heliodorus' novel agrees, adding that for women, at least, one act of consummation suffices.¹⁰⁸

The second category of attraction tablet, however, is difficult to fit into the above scenarios. Though the tablets aim to instil passion in the victim for the practitioner, often still requiring her to be made "forgetful" of her parents, relatives, and other men, at least four seek to make the victim's passion eternal, indicating that a long-term relationship could be desired by the practitioner.¹⁰⁹ More important, however, is the

¹⁰⁵See, for example, Hld. 1.17 for a woman caught in adultery: "Demainete, of course, saw her predicament in a flash: her hopes had come to nothing, her reputation was lost forever, the law would take its course, and punishment awaited her" (trans. J.R. Morgan): 'Η δὲ πάντα ἄμα τὰ περιεστῶτα, ὡς εἰκός, ἐννοήσασα, τὴν ἀποτυχίαν τῶν προσδοκηθέντων, τὴν ἐπὶ τοῖς μέλλουσιν ἀτιμίαν, τὴν ἐκ τῶν νόμων τιμοωρίαν... See also Gardner (1986), 127 - 130.

¹⁰⁶Winkler (1991), 226 - 227.

¹⁰⁷Longus 2.7 (trans. C. Gill).

¹⁰⁸Hld. 1.15.

¹⁰⁹Tablets 30, 35, 41, and 46.

fact that these tablets make no mention of what ultimate purpose the newly instilled passion was to serve. If it was to make the victim leave her home and come banging on the practitioner's door, the tablets make no mention of it; this is rather a major stipulation to be left out of the spell if this was indeed the expected effect.¹¹⁰ What was the point of these tablets, then? Was it enough for the practitioner to imagine that his beloved was languishing at home, thinking passionate but futile thoughts of him? Furthermore, if a long-term relationship was desired by the practitioner, would it not have been more to the point to use magic to persuade the girl's father to be receptive to the practitioner, rather than the girl herself? Though Saller has shown that a high percentage of both males and females could be fatherless at the time of first marriage,¹¹¹ and while it is certainly possible that some of the victims were fatherless, at least six of the tablets clearly indicate that the victim's parents were still very much alive at the time of the composition of the tablet.¹¹² It appears that this sort of attraction tablet requires a different approach in order to understand better the situation and aim of the practitioners.

Let us begin with a hypothetical, but perhaps fairly common, scenario: a young man, perhaps fatherless, is infatuated with a girl who may be still living in her parents' home.¹¹³ The girl could possibly have numerous suitors, particularly if she were good-looking and/or well-dowered.¹¹⁴ Our young lover may have no social or legal reasons why his suit would not be successful, but in view of his rivals (some of whom may be of higher economic or social standing than himself), he might be concerned that his suit will be refused in favour of another man's.¹¹⁵ Therefore, he might seek to gain advantage over his rivals, not by cursing them, but by assuring that his beloved will

¹¹⁰It must be admitted that some of the tablets which do not make the demand that the victim come to the practitioner are very fragmentary, and it is therefore possible that have once contained this stipulation (see tablets 30, 31, 35, 37, and 38). However, the high degree of integrity of at least eight tablets other tablets make it possible to assume with confidence that these texts, at least, never contained such a demand (see tablets 21, 28, 29, 39, 40, 41, 42, and 46).

¹¹¹Saller (1994), 120 - 121.

¹¹²Tablets 29, 33, 39, 40, 41, and 45.

¹¹³Treggiari (1991c), 192, 199 - 200, notes that it was probably a fairly common occurrence that a match would be arranged between a male suitor and the father of the prospective bride, often at the suitor's instigation.

¹¹⁴See, for example, Evans-Grubbs (1989), 72 - 73, who describes the popularity of Gregory of Nyssa's mother because of her beauty; the theme is usual in the Hellenistic novels as well.

¹¹⁵See *Apul. Met.* 8.1 - 2 for a noble and wealthy suitor rejected because of his bad character.

return his ardour and prefer him above all others. To achieve this goal, the lover could use a tablet of erotic attraction directed against his beloved; in contrast to the *agoge* tablets of Egypt and Africa, the aim of the practitioner in this case is not to compel his victim to make the first move, but to assure favourable reception from her when he presses his suit. The probability of such a causative situation for this second category of attraction tablets depends upon a number of conditions; each will be considered in turn.

First, attraction tablets of this variety must be considered to share a common underlying ethos with curse tablets of all varieties. In general, *defixiones* were directed towards giving the practitioner unfair advantage in a future situation or competition in which the outcome was uncertain at the time of composing the tablet.¹¹⁶ Thus, curse tablets directed against business competitors, legal adversaries, and circus rivals were common; in all of these cases, the practitioners wished to improve their own chances of success by reducing their competition's. Similarly, the erotic rivalry tablets sought to rid the practitioner of a third party intruder, thus securing the practitioner's position with the object of desire. The curse tablets which target the object of desire rather than the competition have been considered by some to represent a distinct form of cursing magic, a "kind of hybrid flowering of a later, more complex magical tradition."¹¹⁷ I would suggest that while the *agoge* tablets represent a radical variation of the traditional *defixio*, the attraction tablets which sought only to instil passion in the victim were closer in purpose to *defixio* use in general. Though the victim is not the practitioner's competition, the practitioner is nonetheless attempting to stack the odds in his favour, and ensure his success in a future venture about whose outcome he felt uncertain.

Second, there must be evidence from other sources which indicates that a male could be concerned with being the preferred suitor of his object of desire. There is evidence that men were as concerned with being attractive as women were; for example, part of the spell recorded in the magical papyri to gain Eros as an assistant daemon includes the following invocation:

I conjure you by the one who controls the four foundations, to accomplish for me, the man NN (or the woman NN) such-and-such a matter and to give me favor, sweet speech, charm with all men/and all women under creation, that they may be submissive to my every wish,

¹¹⁶Faraone (1991a), 4.

¹¹⁷Faraone (1991a), 15.

inasmuch as I am the slave of the most high god, the almighty who controls the universe...¹¹⁸

Philostratus reports that young men were also not opposed to using amulets and various other magical paraphernalia to attract the attention of a specific object of desire:

[Lovers] will accept from [magicians] a magic girdle to wear, as well as precious stones, some of the bits of stone having come from the depths of the earth and others from the moon and the stars; and then they are given all the spices which the gardens of India yield; and the cheats exact vast sums of money from them for all this, and yet do nothing to help them at all...¹¹⁹

The magical papyri furnish men with potions and charms to be spoken over food or drink to yield the same results;¹²⁰ furthermore, once the object of desire is literally within the man's grasp, there were helpful potions which, when applied to the appropriate part of the practitioner's anatomy prior to copulation, ensured the practitioner of the victim's everlasting devotion.¹²¹ Literature on occasion reflects male concern with being preferred; Catullus at a rocky point in his relationship with Lesbia wistfully recalled the days when *dicebas quondam solum te nosse Catullum/Lesbia, nec prae me velle tenere Iovem*.¹²² Similarly, the young romantic hero Daphnis is hurt when Chloe receives attention from other men, whom he perceives as rivals for her affections.¹²³ Thus, it appears particularly noteworthy that many of the attraction tablets demand that the victim be made forgetful not only of her family and friends, but of all other men as well.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸PGM 12.67 - 72 (trans. H. Martin Jr.); cf. 13.734 - 1077.

¹¹⁹Philostr. VA 7.39 (trans. F.C. Conybeare): οἱ κεστόν τε αὐτοῖς φέρειν διδοῦσι καὶ λίθους, τοὺς δὲ ἐκ σελήνης τε καὶ ἀστέρων, ἀρώματά τε ὅποσα ἡ Ἰνδικὴ κηπεύει, καὶ χρήματα μὲν αὐτοὺς λαμπρὰ ὑπὲρ τούτων πράττονται, ξυνδρῶσι δὲ οὐδέν.

¹²⁰See, for example, PGM 7.643 - 641, 7.973 - 980, 10.1 - 23. See also Ov. *Ars Am.* 2.105-106: "Nor will pale philtres given to girls profit: philtres affect the mind and have power to madden" (trans. J.H. Mozley): *Nec data profuerint pallentia philtre puellis: Philtre nocent animis, vimque furoris habent.*

¹²¹For example, the fruit of the acacia ground together with honey was supposed to be effective (PDM 14.930 - 32); see also 14.1046 - 1047, 14.1047 - 1048, 14.1049 - 1055.

¹²²Catull. 72: "you once used to say, Lesbia, that you were familiar with only Catullus, and that you would not prefer Jove to me."

¹²³Longus 2.39. See also Apul. *Met.* 10.21 for the "usual" things women say to show their love, among them "*te solum diligo*" ("It's you alone that I love").

¹²⁴For example, see tablets 29 and 40.

The last condition is of course that a female could expect to have some input in the relationships she would form. This is the most difficult condition to demonstrate. As discussed previously, the law made little allowance for female freedom of choice, the main responsibility being the woman's father or tutors. Treggiari has demonstrated, however, that divorced or widowed women had greater control in the choice of their future marriages;¹²⁵ as for first marriages, a girl may be assumed to have either dead or indulgent parents in at least some cases. In either situation the girl could probably expect to have influence in the choice of her future husband, particularly in the former case; in the latter, if all suitors were on fairly even ground socially and economically, perhaps a daughter might be able to choose her favourite from the ranks of her admirers.¹²⁶ At the risk of a circular argument, the attraction tablets could be taken as evidence that females did have some say in choosing their partners; if women were dictated to on this issue by their fathers or guardians, there appears to have been little point for the practitioner to compel his beloved to become passionate about him, as her love would have been in vain.¹²⁷

Thus, it is possible that those tablets which sought only to instil passion in their victim were aimed toward ensuring the practitioner's success in his future suit. The fact that the practitioner planned to do this by making the victim as mad for him as he was for her indicates that men could desire unions based upon erotic feeling first and foremost; at the same time, the fact that these men had to resort to magical practice to ensure their success would indicate that society at large might not have regarded the strength of the male's feeling for his beloved as suitable, or at least not sufficient, grounds for a union. This need not imply that unions were normally passionless affairs; lower-class ideals of marriage may have been close to those of the elite, but these tablets indicate that some regarded passionate unions as desirable. The practitioners of these tablets merely represent lovers who were not convinced of a favourable reception to their offer.

¹²⁵Treggiari (1991a), 135. Note that Apuleius was accused of trying to win the love of Pudentilla, a widow, through magical means.

¹²⁶Note Treggiari (1991c), 205, 210, who argues that both the future bride and groom of an arranged match could usually expect to have some input. Also note that there is evidence that a father's consent to a match was assumed unless he made it clear that he disapproved (Treggiari [1991a], 147).

¹²⁷Compare Evans-Pritchard (1937), 476, who in the course of his discussion why the Azande believe magic to be effective, notes that "magic is only made to produce events which are likely to happen in any case..." If the same stipulation can be held to be true for Graeco-Roman magic, there would be little point for the practitioner to attempt to make the object of desire fall in love with him if she had no say in the choice of her partner.

Success of a suit might appear to be a rather frivolous reason to undertake something as serious as magical practice, which was, as Philostratus says, “equally condemned by nature and law.”¹²⁸ However, rejection might possibly have meant more than heart-broken dejection to a man; it might have also meant public disgrace. The romantic hero Chaereas' father groans in dismay when his son informs him of his love for Callirhoe:

Then I have lost you, my boy! Hermocrates would certainly never give you his daughter when he has so many rich and royal suitors for her. You must not even try to win her, or we shall be publicly insulted.¹²⁹

Evans-Grubbs, using modern Mediterranean cultural comparisons, has convincingly demonstrated that a broken betrothal or rejected suit could have serious consequences for all involved.¹³⁰ The only way for a man to avoid the public insult of rejection was to abduct the unsuspecting bride, perhaps even right out of her father's home. Whether the woman was raped in actual fact by her would-be bridegroom following the abduction mattered little; her reputation would be ruined and her own family disgraced.¹³¹ The bride's family, attempting to make the best of this terrible situation, would probably agree to a marriage between the daughter and her abductor.¹³²

According to Evans-Grubbs, although disapproved of, abduction marriage appears to be a common and accepted marriage strategy in societies which subscribe to arranged matches. Ancient Graeco-Roman society was far from unfamiliar with it; in fact, abduction marriage came to be a favourite topic for rhetorical practice.¹³³ Even

¹²⁸Philostr. VA 7.39 (trans. F.C. Conybeare): *καὶ φύσει διαβέβληται καὶ νόμῳ...*

¹²⁹Chariton 1.1 (trans. B.P. Reardon): *Οἴχη δὴ μοι, τέκνον...δῆλον γὰρ ἔστιν ὅτι Ἑρμοκράτης οὐκ ἂν δόλῃ σοὶ τὴν θυγατέρα τοσοῦτους ἔχων μνηστήρας πλουσίους καὶ βασιλεῖς. Οὐκ οὐδὲ πειρᾶσθαι σε δεῖ, μὴ φανερώς ὑβρισθῶμεν.* Compare Ach. Tat. 2.3.

¹³⁰It should be noted that Evans-Grubbs (1989) is concerned with late antiquity, that is, the fourth century; however, the majority of the erotic tablets of attraction are not much earlier, as they date to the third century AD. Furthermore, *raptus* was certainly not unknown to the Roman world before the time of Constantine, as Evans-Grubbs points out (67); it is just at this time that the law became concerned with the lower classes as well as the elite (82). Legal penalties aside, the man's honour was the key issue, and one not new to the fourth century (see, for example, Apul. *Met.* 8.2 for a description of a rejected suitor: “He had been stained with the insult of rejection” [trans. J.A. Hanson]: *repulsae contumelia fuerat aspersus*). While a refused betrothal damaged a man's honour, a successful abduction, though the act was not explicitly condoned, would raise the man's standing in the community (61 - 62). One could compare the paradoxical status of an adulterer (discussed by Cohen [1991], 113, 120 - 123).

¹³¹Compare Winkler (1991), 216, who in relating a first-hand account of *raptus* as witnessed by Polemo in the second century describes it as “an unmitigated social disaster for all concerned.”

¹³²Evans-Grubbs (1989), 65.

¹³³Evans-Grubbs (1989), 62, 68 - 70.

Constantine's unreasonably harsh penalties for not only the abductor, but even the woman herself and anyone else in the slightest state of complicity, failed to curb the practice;¹³⁴ indeed, later emperors softened the penalties somewhat (if only to make the method of execution less degrading), when it became evident that people were unwilling to turn guilty parties in because of the cruelty of the punishments involved.¹³⁵ Evans-Grubbs suggests that Christians, at least, appear to have preferred to let the Church deal with a case of abduction; the Church's policy was to force a marriage between the girl and her abductor, give the abductor penance, and fail to report the whole disaster to the state.¹³⁶

However, the possibility of escaping unpunished with successful bride-theft did not lessen the seriousness of the action or the danger involved for the would-be abductor; at the very least he could expect physical resistance from the bride's relatives, and possibly his own death.¹³⁷ Rejection, and hence a loss of honour, was something to be avoided whenever possible.¹³⁸ Therefore, a lover, by ensuring that his passion for his beloved was returned and his preference above all other suitors guaranteed, might have hoped that his object of desire might have some influence with her parents, if they were still alive, when it came to making a match; if she could have no influence and his suit was rejected, he could then perhaps count on her consent to elope, making the logistics of abducting her and saving his honour easier.¹³⁹

In contrast to the unfeeling men of the rivalry tablets, then, the attraction tablets indicate that some males sought out unions based on passion, and desired emotional fulfilment; many of the African attraction tablets can be interpreted to represent the practitioner's desire for his victim's willing consent to a relationship, not merely obligatory compliance. Most telling in this regard is perhaps the attraction tablet from Raetia. If it can be taken at face value, the practitioner, Clemens, sought to win the love and consent of his slave woman, Gemella. Since masters could do whatever they

¹³⁴Probably in 326 AD; *Cod. Theod.* 9.24; see Evans-Grubbs (1989), 59 - 60, 67.

¹³⁵Evans-Grubbs (1989), 66.

¹³⁶Evans-Grubbs (1989), 76.

¹³⁷ Evans-Grubbs (1989), 70.

¹³⁸See *Apul. Met.* 8.1 - 14 for a tragic tale of a jealous and rejected suitor.

¹³⁹Evans-Grubbs (1989), 62, discusses the possibility of the bride being a willing participant in her own abduction. See also Winkler (1991), 214, 216 - 217, for an actual second century account of bride theft.

wanted with their slaves at any time, it appears that Clemens was hoping for a more two-sided and emotionally fulfilling relationship with this woman.¹⁴⁰

The small number of female practitioners of attraction tablets remains to be discussed. As mentioned above, female erotic magic is something of a topos in ancient literature; Theocritus' Simaetha, Vergil's Simaetha and Dido, Horace's Canidia, Apuleius' Pamphile, and Chariton's Melite are all females represented in literature as practitioners¹⁴¹ of erotic magic directed aimed to bring a specific male object of desire beating on their doors.¹⁴² In contrast, references to males practicing erotic magic of any description are much harder to find. This might lead one to expect that females should be at least as well represented in hard evidence for real magical practice of erotic attraction, such as the attraction tablets. However, the nineteen attraction tablets contain only two female practitioners, a number perplexingly small in light of the literature. Indeed, literary evidence aside, a larger number might be expected if in reality, as appears to have been the case, females could only react to male advances, not actively begin relationships themselves -- thus one of the tablets (36) is very specific about the effect desired; a dashing fellow named Urbanus is to come begging the love-sick Domitiana to be his partner (*συμβιόν*). Presumably the female practitioner of tablet 28 hoped for similar results.

A satisfactory explanation for the small number of female erotic tablet practitioners still remains to be offered. Winkler's suggestion that women had less access to magicians because of their cloistering and Faraone's argument that females did not seek to attract male lovers through burning and torturing magic are both undermined by the existence of these two African tablets; paradoxically, Gager's suggestion that women regularly resorted to the same magical devices as men is belied by the fact that most of the attraction tablets represent male practitioners, as do the spells of attraction to be found in the magical papyri. If erotic magical practice was, as I have suggested at the outset of this chapter, "problem-specific", then we must assume that women generally did not experience as many problems as men in the courtship stages of a relationship. This statement requires some discussion in order to test its validity.

¹⁴⁰See Kolendo (1981), 289 - 291, for a discussion of sexual relationships between masters and their slave women; the references to such relationships are abundant.

¹⁴¹Practitioners, but less often bona fide magicians; often the women hire a professional with the expertise, as Dido did, for example.

¹⁴²Theoc. *Id.* 2; Verg. *Ecl.* 8, *Aen.* 4.450 - 705; Hor., *Epod.* 5, *Sat.* 1.8; Apul. *Met.* 3.16 - 18; Chariton 5.22.

At least one of the female practitioners of attraction tablets was unwed; the other was probably likewise, for although married women seeking adulterous relationships are common in literature, they usually seek out men who were easily coerced, such as their slaves;¹⁴³ furthermore, women who sought to bring about adulterous relationships, which would mean their own social demise, by magical means are not at all well-attested in either the magical or literary sources.¹⁴⁴ Let us then consider the situation of an un-wed female of non-elite status who is perhaps living in her father's home. As discussed, a woman could not unilaterally begin a relationship with a man without incurring a loss of reputation.¹⁴⁵ She could encourage a certain suitor, perhaps, and could respond to his advances; however, she must always await his actions. She may also have more than one suitor. At the courtship stage of a relationship, then, the female paradoxically holds a fair amount of power -- she can encourage or ignore suitors at will. Since other females are unlikely to be in open pursuit of her suitors, she need not worry about rivals; rather, this is the concern of the suitors. They must compete with each other for favour; if the primary function of *defixiones* was to improve the practitioner's chances in a situation of uncertain outcome, the female would have little use for such magic at this point in the relationship.¹⁴⁶ It is only later, when the relationship has been established, that she need be concerned that her mate's attention may be drawn away by the presence of another female; if a suitor's attention wandered at the courtship stage of the relationship, she might be hurt, but perhaps not devastated; at this point, her loss would be relatively minor, particularly if she had other suitors.

This abundance of suitors and hence relatively problem-free courtship existence for a female might have been encouraged by the possibility, raised by some scholars, that males were more numerous than females in Graeco-Roman society.¹⁴⁷ The main

¹⁴³See, for example, X. Eph. 3.12, Petron. *Sat.* 126; see Kolendo (1981), 288, 291 - 292, for attitudes towards mistress/slave relationships. Step-sons also appear to have been common targets, reminiscent of Phaedra and Hippolytus (these relationships inevitably end in the destruction of the step-mother). See Hld. 1.9 and Apul. *Met.* 10.2 for examples.

¹⁴⁴Apuleius provides the only literary example of a married woman practicing magic to draw young lovers to her door which I have found so far (*Met.* 3.15 - 18).

¹⁴⁵See above and Treggiari (1985), 337 - 339 for just how far a woman could encourage a relationship before earning censure for her forwardness.

¹⁴⁶See Bradley (1993), 246 - 250, for a discussion of marriage arrangements as reflected in the *Letters* of Pliny the Younger -- "marriage in Pliny is brought into being principally as a result of decisions taken by men" (247).

arguments made to support this idea are that female babies were more likely to be exposed than male,¹⁴⁸ while females who were raised perhaps received inferior amounts and qualities of food to their male counterparts. The dangers of childbirth also reduced the number of females who survived to adulthood, but this is a life-stage decidedly later than that represented in the attraction tablets.

A single female might then expect to receive attention from a number of suitors. It is not impossible that this abundance of choice, compounded with the fact that males were expected to be the active pursuers of relationships, might have meant that females had little use for the magic of *defixiones* at the courtship stage; those females who would be satisfied with only a certain male who was remiss in his attentions were perhaps relatively rare, though the existence of two tablets (and the literary representations) indicate that it was a situation not unheard of.

Conclusion

In general terms, the rivalry tablets and the attraction tablets appear to represent the difficulties which could be experienced in affective relationships by women and men respectively. While both sexes were concerned with being the preferred person with their objects of desire, the stage of the relationship at which this was critical differed. Though there is evidence that women could attempt to bring a certain lover to their doorsteps begging for their hand in marriage through magical devices, their main problems were encountered once relationships had begun. As women with unfaithful partners had little legal or social footing to prevent their indiscretions, magic presented an opportunity to gain control in a situation in which they were otherwise virtually powerless. Part of the strategy to keep a husband faithful was to ensure one's own attractiveness; the other part was to remove the one who caught (or was in danger of catching) one's partner's attention, or, at the very least, to remove her attractions. Similarly, men who found themselves in love-triangles in which they lacked legal power over their rivals might also have sought to remove their competition by means of a curse tablet, though this seems to have been a less common situation.

¹⁴⁷See, for example, Bagnall and Frier (1994), 92 - 94; Clark (1981), 195; McGinn (1991), 338; Pomeroy (1975), 164 - 166; see Flory (1978), 87 - 88, and Weaver (1991), 178, for the difficulties male slaves might encounter finding a female mate within their own *familia*.

¹⁴⁸For examples, see Apul. *Met.* 10.23, *Select Papyri* #125 (Loeb edition). For a recent discussion of infant exposure in the Roman Empire, see Harris (1994); he agrees that "in the Roman Empire as a whole" females were more likely to be exposed than males, and when exposed, were less likely to be saved (see especially 5 - 15).

If women were concerned with maintaining a relationship, men were concerned with starting one. Women were expected to be passive partners at this stage, at the risk of their reputation; however, though the primary mover in a new relationship, a male's advances could be accepted or refused by the woman's father, or perhaps even the woman herself. Social and legal boundaries may have in some cases been limited a male's possibilities of success with his object of desire; he might not have a chance with a woman of higher class, for example, or another suitor of better means and standing might be welcomed instead. Therefore, the attraction tablets may have allowed men who were unsure of their reception the opportunity to better their chances of acceptance; should his suit be rejected, he could perhaps then count on the compliance of a woman magically worked upon to elope with him, which would both achieve his emotional and physical desires, and save him from public disgrace.

Can anything of the emotional content of non-elite unions be inferred from these tablets? The question is difficult. While the rivalry tablets represent the anxiety of women to keep relationships stable, the primary motivation for this desire need not have been emotional more than economic, or even concern for their own honour or social standing. Furthermore, the rivalry tablets also indicate that men could and did cheat on their partners. To be sure, women could and probably did as well, though a mis-used husband need not have had to use magic to put an end to the affair, having the law on his side. Nevertheless, these tablets present an image of partnerships of unequals, in which the women were forced to suffer their husbands' indiscretions with little ability to prevent them, and less ability or desire to leave the relationship altogether.

The tablets of attraction present an image in direct contrast to that of the rivalry tablets; they indicate a heart-felt desire on the part of some males to win the passionate love and consent of the female of their choice; this mitigates somewhat the seemingly heartless behaviour of some males as represented by the rivalry tablets. Furthermore, the balance of power in the relationship now appears to be weighted in favour of the female. However, the attraction tablets also deal with relationships which did not yet exist. This is not to say that the passionate practitioner never won the hand of his beloved; we simply do not know if he did or not. What is known is that at the point of composing the tablet, the practitioner had some reason to be anxious that he would not be successful. One cannot help suspecting that the practitioners of the attraction tablets were still young and (at the risk of sounding dismissive) foolish. These practitioners butt against the affective ideals of the society; the passion of young men is a theme ubiquitous in Graeco-Roman literature, never quite approved of, but tolerated because

of the understanding that one day, the young men will one day grow up and uphold the ideals they currently despise. That most young men did so is attested to by the very perpetuation of the ideals themselves. Thus, while the attraction tablets represent earnest desires, the rivalry tablets represent harsh realities. To the extent that the erotic *defixiones* allow perception, it seems that for the non-elite, like the elite, romantic love may not have been the primary consideration when making a match.

CONCLUSION: THE TABLETS OF EROTIC ANXIETY

I enjoy the strangeness of erotic magic.

- J. Winkler¹

Many share Winkler's sentiment, the present author included. To the modern ear "erotic magic" is a phrase loaded with the promise of mysterious, bizarre, and titillating charms. The idea of erotic magic was perhaps even more exciting to the ancient Romans, because in antiquity erotic magic enjoyed in addition both the praise of effectiveness and the notoriety of illegality: it was not only strange, it was also powerful and dangerous.

The unexpectedly nefarious identity of erotic magic in antiquity ceases to be surprising when both the social ideals of eroticism and the ambiguous nature of "magic" are considered. It is impossible to propose a clear definition of ancient magic as opposed to either ancient science or ancient religion. The ancients themselves were often unable to agree upon the heading under which a certain practice or belief should fall, but there appears to have been general consensus that magic to gain an end deemed "antisocial" was to be repressed. This interdiction arose not from the belief that magical practice was a waste of time and the occupation of the ignorant, but rather from the ubiquitous belief that magic *did* work, and could therefore provide unfair advantage to the unscrupulous.

The concern surrounding erotic magic was that it could be used to compel a normally modest and self-controlled individual to contravene social ideals and forget priorities when forming an affective relationship. Roman law dictated that marriage was to be undertaken for the propagation of children, and in ideal circumstances, its formation fell under the direction of the *patresfamilias* of the prospective bride and groom. The elite Roman ideal of marriage similarly encouraged a union based not on the romantic feelings of the two people involved, but rather on the appraisal of a potential spouse's ability to offer the most to one's family in terms of economic, social, and political standing. Relations between husband and wife were expected to be affectionate and warm, but not passionate.

Recent scholarship has questioned whether Roman legal sources and the Roman ideal of marriage present a true reflection of reality. The degree of input individuals could expect to have in the choice of a marriage partner has been assessed through investigations of the average age at first marriage, the probability of living parents at the

¹Winkler (1991), 215.

time of first marriage, and the emotional attachment between parents and children. Furthermore, it has been determined that “romantic love” is not an anachronistic emotion for ancient society; the result is that the rather harsh picture presented by the legal sources and the theoretical ideal of marriage has been somewhat mitigated. Nevertheless, it appears that primary considerations and reasons for matrimony among the Roman elite, at least, differed quite dramatically from those for modern marriages, in which romantic attachment is expected to be the primary, and indeed often the sole, driving force.

But do the habits and ideals of the elite hold true for the non-elite? Evidence for most aspects of life among the lower Roman social classes is scarce. However, the forty-six erotic curse tablets from Italy and the western provinces of the Roman Empire present a rare, albeit small, window into non-elite affective relationships. This body of lead tablets inscribed with formulaic curses spans six centuries, from the second century BC to the fourth (or perhaps even fifth) century AD; while the majority of the tablets come from Italy and the Roman province of Africa, almost every other western province has produced at least one tablet. Though Roman culture had its own magical and cursing tradition, it appears that the convention of cursing by means of a *defixio* was Greek in origin; as such, the *defixiones* of the eastern and the western provinces are often very similar, though there are some aspects which appear to be distinctly Roman.

The western erotic tablets can be divided into two discrete categories based upon the effect of the curse desired by the practitioner: twenty-seven tablets aim to hinder or destroy a relationship or potential relationship, while the remaining nineteen seek to encourage a relationship. The majority of the former group, the “rivalry” tablets, target female victims and thus probably also were composed by female practitioners. In contrast, the nineteen “attraction” tablets were with only two exceptions composed by males and target females. The obvious gender bias of the practitioners in these two categories, considered in combination with the idea that magic was used to give power to the powerless and to circumvent normal social structures, suggests that males and females generally experienced difficulties at different stages in the course of affective relationships.

Since the practitioners of the rivalry tablets appear to regard the victim of the curse as the sole hindrance to success with the object of desire, it is probable that the practitioners were seeking to protect pre-existing relationships from third-party intruders rather than to break up stable relationships in order to begin new involvements with one of the members. The possibility of such a motivating scenario is supported

both by the fact that Roman law gave no power of redress to a wife whose husband was involved with a slave or prostitute, and the probability that a woman could not initiate a relationship unilaterally without incurring loss of reputation. Some women, then, lacked real power to control the direction of their affective relationships and chose to resort to magic in an attempt to maintain them; however, the presence of an emotional factor in such a decision is difficult to assess. While it is possible that love for their partners drove the tablet practitioners to magic, less romantic considerations, such as financial security or protection of honour, might have been more prevalent.

The attraction tablets, on the other hand, sought to instil in the victim the same emotions felt by the practitioner for the victim -- thus, the victims were meant to "burn with desire", to be forgetful of everyone but the practitioner, and so on. This is clearly the language of erotic passion, exactly the condition which the Roman ideal decries. In contrast to the rivalry tablet, the attraction tablets aimed to bring about a relationship not yet in existence. As such, in many ways they closely resemble contemporary tablets from Egypt as well as some of the magical spells found in the *Greek Magical Papyri*. However, they differ from these eastern examples of attraction magic in that they usually just request that the victim become passionate towards the practitioner, only rarely expressing the desire that the victim actually come to the practitioner; one can only assume that this was not the intended effect, since other desired effects are phrased meticulously.

It is difficult to assess the reasons for the composition of attraction tablets which sought to make the objects of desire passionate towards, but not available to, the practitioners. Though parentless or previously married women might have greater say in their choice of marriage partners, women could not initiate relationships without risk to their good reputations. Furthermore, several of the victims of the African attraction tablets appear to have been girls still living in their parents' home. A solution to this dilemma may be found if it is assumed that the African attraction tablets are similar in ethos to ancient *defixiones* in general. *Defixiones* were usually employed to stack the odds in the favour of the practitioner in a competition whose outcome was still unknown at the time the tablet was composed. If it can be accepted that a woman might have several suitors, it may have been the case that the practitioners were seeking to improve their chances of success with the object of desire by making themselves preferred above all other suitors. The loss of honour a male could incur from a rejected suit appears to justify resorting to the extreme measure of magical practice to ensure success; the consequences of refusal could not only be disappointing, they could even be deadly should the suitor choose to avenge his injury.

The two kinds of tablets indicate, therefore, not only that males and females experienced different difficulties, anxieties, and moments of powerlessness in the course of their affective relationships, but also that though passionate relationships might be secretly desired, they were not always achieved, or at least were not always mutually maintained. The practitioners of the erotic attraction tablets appear to have been passionate towards their objects of desire, while the practitioners of the rivalry tablets may perhaps be suspected of harbouring at least a small emotional attachment to their current partner; however, the practitioners of both kinds of tablets found that they were either unable to proclaim their emotions openly, or to little or no avail. As far as may be deduced from the evidence of the erotic curse tablets, then, the non-elite appear to have shared the elite ideal of marriage, in which romantic feelings were less a priority for matrimony than more mundane concerns. While "erotic cursing" was not a contradiction in terms in antiquity, "the power of love" may have been.

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APPENDIX: INVENTORY OF TEXTS

Symbols:

- () letter(s) added to the remaining text
 [] letter(s) emended from original text
 < > letter(s) removed from original text

NB: All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted. Commentaries and other aids used for translation are included in the individual bibliographies.

ITALIA

1. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

- Place: Pompeii, Campania
 Date: Second century BC
 Description: Lead tablet 8 x 5 cm; diptych
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Philematium¹, (female) slave (?)² of Hostilius
Defigens: An unknown female?
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Degrassi (1963), 322 - 323.
 della Corte *CIL* 4.9251 and (1916), 304 - 306.
 Garcia-Ruiz (1967), 56, (#14).
 Rubro and Bejarano (1955), 52.
 Text: Each reading has produced different results, none of them satisfactory.
 The text below is the mostly unamended version produced by della Corte:

Side A

Plematio Hostili³ facia.....
 Capilu cerebru flatus ren(es)
 Ut ilai non succedas.....
 Qui ilaec (?)...odiu u.....
 Ut ilic ilac odiat como.....
 Aec nec agere ne ilai.....
 Qui qua agere posit ula.....
 ?.....os Plematio Hosti(li)..

¹“Little Kiss”; this is a name found in Roman comedy. I am indebted to Professor P. Smith for both pointing out the comic parallels of this name and for his help in dealing with the meaning of this tablet.

²Note that Degrassi (1963), 323, suggests that the victim is the slave of a certain Hostilius. This may not be the only possibility, but appears to be the most probable. The other editors have not made any suggestion as to Philematium’s identity.

³Note that della Corte transcribes “Hostili” in entirely lower case letters.

Side B

Nec agere nec lin.....
 Ula res posit pete.....
 Quai ego uma.....
 comodo is eis desert.....
 Ilaec deserta sit cuno.....
 A.D.N.C.C.N.I. dificdos a
 dic ilaec deser.....

Translation:

I am unable to produce a translation due to the state of the text of the tablet and the lack of a reconstruction which adheres to the remains of the original. I conjecture that the *defigens* is cursing Philematium, the slave woman of a certain Hostilius (as Degrassi suggests); Philematium's various body parts and faculties are bound, and is wished to be unsuccessful in her future ventures; furthermore, it appears that the practitioner desires that she become hateful to Hostilius, and the pair separated from each other. Della Corte suggests that A.D.N.C.C.N.I. stands for "ante diem nonum calendas Novembris."

2. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Rome, Latium
 Date: 75 - 40 BC
 Description: Lead tablet, 31.6 x 11.3 cm
 Language: Latin
 Defixus/a: Plotius, the slave of Avonia
 Defigens: An unknown male?
 Comments: Exact location of find unknown.
 Bibliography: Besnier (1920), 18 - 20 (#33).
 Lommatzsch *CIL* 1.2520.
 Sherwood Fox (1912), 16. - 19
 Text: As reconstructed by Sherwood Fox:

Bona pulchra Proserpina, (P)lut(o)nis uxor,
 seiue me Saluiam deicere oportet,
 eripias salutem, c(orpus, co)lorem, uires, uirtutes
 Ploti. Tradas (Plutoni) uiro tuo. Ni possit cogitationibus
 suis hoc uita(re. Tradas) illunc
 Febri quartan(a)e, t(ertian)ae, cottidia(n)ae,
 quas (cum illo) uict(ent, deluctent; illunc)
 eu(in)cant, (uincant), usq(ue dum animam
 eiu)s eripia(nt. Quare ha)nc uictimam
 tibi trad(o, Prose)rpi(na, seiue) me,
 Proserpin(a, seiue) m(e Ach)eruos iam dicere
 oportet. M(e mittas a)recssitum canem
 tricepitem, qui (Ploti) cor eripiat. Polliciarus
 illi te daturum t(r)es uictimas --
 palma(s, ca)rica(s), por(c)um nigrum --
 hoc sei pe(rfe)cerit (ante mensem)
 M(artium. Haec, P)r(oserpina Saluia, tibi dabo)

cum compotem fe(ce)ris. Do tibi cap(ut)
 Ploti Auon(iae. Pr)oserpina S(aluia),
 do tibi fron(tem Plo)ti. 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. Prosper(pina Saluia, do tibi nare)s,
 labra, or(iculas, nasu)m, lin(g)uam,
 dentes P(loti), ni dicere possit
 Plotius quid (sibi dole)at: collum, umeros,
 bracchia, d(i)git(os, ni po)ssit aliquit
 se adiutare: (pe)c(tus, io)cinera, cor,
 pulmones, n(i possit) senti(re) quit
 sibi doleat: (intes)tina, uenter, um(b)licu(s),
 latera, (n)i p(oss)it dormire: scapulas,
 ni poss(it) s(a)nus dormire: uiscum
 sacrum,⁴ nei possit urinam facere:
 natis, anum, (fem)ina, genua,
 (crura), tibias, pe(des, talos, plantas,
 digito)s, ungis, ni po(ssit s)tare (sua
 ui)rt(u)te. Seiue (plu)s, seiue paruum
 scrip(tum fuerit), quomodo quicqu(id)
 legitim(e scripsit), mandauit, seic
 ego Ploti ti(bi tr)ado, mando,
 ut tradas, (mandes me)nse Februari(o)
 e)cillunc. Mal(e perdat, mal)e exset,
 (mal)e disperd(at. Mandes, tra)das, ni possit
 (ampliu)s ullum (mensem asp)icere,
 uidere, contempla)re.

Translation:

Good and beautiful Proserpina, wife of Pluto, (or) whether it is proper for me to call you Salvia, may you snatch away the health, body, complexion, fitness and strength of Plotius. May you hand (them) over to your husband. May he not be able to avoid this with devices. May you give him over to quartian, tertian, and daily fever, so that they might struggle and wrestle with him; may they conquer and vanquish him, right up to the point that they would rip away his soul. For this purpose I hand this victim over to you, Proserpina, whether I ought to call you Proserpina or Acherusia. May you summon and send to me the three-headed dog to snatch away Plotius' heart. May you promise that you will give him three sacrifices -- dates, sedge, and a black pig -- if he will accomplish this task before the month of March. I will give these things to you, Proserpina Salvia, when you have made him a participant. I give you the head of Plotius, (the slave of) Avonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the forehead of Plotius. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyebrows of Plotius. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyelids of Plotius. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the pupils of Plotius. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the nostrils, the lips, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the teeth of Plotius so that Plotius will be unable to say what grieves him; the neck, shoulders, arms, fingers so that he will be unable to give himself some help; his chest,

⁴*sacrum viscum* can mean "testicles" according to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*; while such a translation is suitable for tablets 2 and 5, which target males, this phrase also appears on tablets 3, 4, and 6, which target females. For the former tablets I have translated this phrase as "testicles", for the latter tablets, I have left the translation as the more ambiguous "innards", one of the primary meanings of *viscus*.

(Auo)nia quid s(i)bi (dol)eat: (collum, umero)s,
 (br)acchia, digito(s, ni) possit ali(quid)
 se adiutare: pec(tus, ioci)nera, cor,
 pulmones, ni (possit) quit sentire
 sibi dolea(t: intest)ina, uenter,
 umblicus,scapul(as), latera, ni po(ssit)
 dorm(i)re: uiscum sac(r)um, ni possi(t)
 urinam f(ace)re: (nati)s, femina,
 anum, gen(ua, crur)a, tibias, pedes,
 talos, (p)la(ntas, digi)tos, ungis, ni
 (po)ssit (stare) su(a uirtu)te. Seiue
 plus, (seiu)e p(ar)uum (scri)ptum
 fuerit, quomodo quicqu(id legiti)me
 scripsit, mandau(it, s)ic ego (Auo)niam
 tibi trado, man(do), ut tradas (illanc
 m)ensi Februario. (Male perdat, male e)xs(eat),
 male disperd(at. Ma)nd(es, tr)adas,
 nei po(s)s(i)t ampli(us) ull(um)
 men(s)em aspicere, ui(dere),
 contemplare.

Translation:

Good and beautiful Proserpina, wife of Pluto, (or) whether it is proper for me to call you Salvia, may you snatch away the health, body, complexion, fitness and strength of Avonia. May you hand (them) over to your husband. May she not be able to avoid this with devices. May you give her over immediately to quartian, tertian, and daily fever, so that they might struggle and wrestle with her; may they conquer and vanquish her, right up to the point that they would rip away her soul. For this purpose I hand this victim over to you, Proserpina, whether I ought to call you Proserpina or Acherusia. May you summon and send to me the three-headed dog to snatch away Avonia's heart. May you promise that you will give him three sacrifices -- dates, figs, and a black pig -- if he will accomplish this task before the month of March. I will give these things to you, Proserpina Salvia, when you have made him a participant. I give you the head of Avonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the forehead of Avonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyebrows of Avonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyelids of Avonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the pupils of Avonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the ears, lips, nostrils, nose, teeth, and tongue of Avonia so that Avonia will be unable to say what grieves her; the neck, shoulders, arms, fingers so that she will be unable to give herself some help; her chest, liver, heart, lungs, so that she will be unable to feel what grieves her; her intestines, stomach, navel, shoulder-blades, and flanks, so that she will be unable to sleep; her innards so that she will be unable to urinate; her buttocks, thighs, anus, cheeks, shanks, shins, feet, ankles, soles (of her feet), fingers, nails, so that she will be unable to stand with her own strength. However and whatever Avonia has written and committed legitimately, whether more or less has been written, thus do I consign and commit Avonia to you, that you may consign and commit her within the month of February. May she perish badly, may she die badly, may she expire badly. May you consign and give her over, lest she be able to see, look upon, or contemplate another month.

4. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Rome, Latium
 Date: 75 - 40 BC
 Description: Lead tablet, 30.3 x 11.5 cm; inscribed on both sides
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Maxima Venonia
Defigens: An unknown female?
 Comments: Exact location of find unknown.
 Bibliography: Besnier (1920), 20 (#35).
 Lommatzsch *CIL* 1.2520.
 Sherwood Fox (1912), 22 - 25.
 Text: As reconstructed by Sherwood Fox:

Bona pulch(ra Proserpin)a, Plutonis uxor,
 seiue me S(al)uia(m dicer)e oportet, eripias
 salutem, c(o)rpus, colorem, uires, uirtutes
 Maximae Vesoniae. Tra(das) Pluton(i)
 uiro (tuo). Ni poss(it co)gitationibus su(eis hoc)
 quicq(uid uitare. Pro)tinu(s) tra(das illanc)
 Febri qu(artanae, terti)anae, (cottidianae),
 quas cum illa luc(tent, delucent; illanc)
 eu(i)ncant, uincan(t, u)sque dum anima(m)
 e(ius) eripiant. Q(uar)e hanc uictima(m)
 tibi trad(o), P(roserpina, sei)ue me, Pros(erpina),
 seiue me (Acherusiam) dicere oportet. Me)
 mitta(s arecssitu)m canem tr(ic)ep(item),
 qui (Maximae Vesonia)e cor er(ip)iat.
 Polli(cearis illi te da)turum tres uictimas --
 palm(as, caricas, porc)um nigrum --
 hoc sei (p)erf(ecerit an)te mensem Martium.
 Ha(e)c, (Salui)a, ti(bi dabo), cum compote(m)
 fece(ri)s. Do tibi ca(put) Max(i)mae Vesoniae.
 P(roser)pina S(a)lui(a), do tibi frontem
 Ma(x)imae (Vesoni)ae. Proserpina S(aluia),
 do tibi super(cilia V)esoniaes. Proserpina
 Saluia, do tibi palpetras Maximae Vesoni(ae).
 Proserpina Saluia, do tibi pupillas Vesoniae.
 Prosperpina Saluia, do tibi oriclas, labras,
 nares, nasum, lingua, dentes Maximae
 Vesoniae, nei dicere possit Maxima
 Vesonia quid sibi doleat: collum,
 umeros, bra(cchia), digitos, ni possit aliquit
 se (adi)utar(e: pectus, ioc)inera, cor,
 pulmone(s, ni possi)t sentire quit sibi
 doleat: i(nte)st(ina), uenter, umb(licus),
 scapulae, (latera), n(i possit dormire):
 uiscu(m sacrum), n(i possit u)rina(m)
 fac(ere: natis, anum, femina),
 genua, (ti)bia(s, crur)a, pedes,
 talos, (plantas, digito)s, ungis, ni
 possit sta(re sua uir)tute. Seiue plus,
 seiue par(uum scriptu)m fuerit,
 quomod(o quicquid legitime scripsit,

man(dauit, seic ego M)ax(im)am
 Veso(niam, Proserpina, tibi)
 trado, m(ando, ut tradas illa)nc
 mensi Februar(io. Male), male,
 male perdat, (male e)x(s)et,
 male disp(e)rdat. Tr(a)das,
 ni possit (a)mpliu(s) ullum
 (m)ensem aspi(c)ere, uid(e)re,
 contemplar(e).

Translation:

Good and beautiful Proserpina, wife of Pluto, (or) whether it is proper for me to call you Salvia, may you snatch away the health, body, complexion, fitness and strength of Maxima Vesonia. May you hand (them) over to your husband. May she not be able to avoid this with devices. May you give her over immediately to quartian, tertian, and daily fever, so that they might struggle and wrestle with her; may they conquer and vanquish her, right up to the point that they would rip away her soul. For this purpose I hand this victim over to you, Proserpina, whether I ought to call you Proserpina or Acherusia. May you summon and send to me the three-headed dog to snatch away Maxima Vesonia's heart. May you promise that you will give him three sacrifices -- dates, figs, and a black pig -- if he will accomplish this task before the month of March. I will give these things to you, Proserpina Salvia, when you have made him a participant. I give you the head of Maxima Vesonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the forehead of Maxima Vesonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyebrows of Maxima Vesonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyelids of Maxima Vesonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the pupils of Maxima Vesonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the ears, lips, nostrils, nose, teeth, and tongue of Maxima Vesonia so that Maxima Vesonia will be unable to say what grieves her; the neck, shoulders, arms, fingers so that she will be unable to give herself some help; her chest, liver, heart, lungs, so that she will be unable to feel what grieves her; her intestines, stomach, navel, shoulder-blades, and flanks, so that she will be unable to sleep; her innards so that she will be unable to urinate; her buttocks, thighs, anus, cheeks, shanks, shins, feet, ankles, soles (of her feet), fingers, nails, so that she will be unable to stand with her own strength. However and whatever (she) has written and committed legitimately, whether more or less has been written, thus do I consign and commit Maxima Vesonia to you, that you may consign and commit her within the month of February. Badly, badly, badly may she perish, may she die badly, may she expire badly. May you consign and give her over, lest she be able to see, look upon, or contemplate another month.

5. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place:	Rome, Latium
Date:	75 - 40 BC
Description:	Lead tablet, 30.4 x 16.5 cm; inscribed on both sides
Language:	Latin
<i>Defixus/a</i> :	A male whose name is missing.
<i>Defigens</i> :	An unknown male?
Comments:	Exact location of find unknown.
Bibliography:	Besnier (1920), 20 (#36). Lommatzsch <i>CIL</i> 1.2520. Sherwood Fox (1912), 25 - 28.

Text: As reconstructed by Sherwood Fox:

(Bona pulchra Proserpina, Plutonis uxor), seiue me
 (Saluam dicere oportet, eripias salutem), c(o)rpus,
 (colorem, uires, u)irt(utes).i. Tra(d)as
 (Plutoni uiro tuo. Ni possit cogitationib)us su(ei)s
 hoc
 (quicquid uitare. Tradas illunc Febri quar)tan(a)e,
 (tertiana, cottidiana, qua)s c(um illo)uctent,
 (deluctent; illunc e)uin(cant, uinca)nt, usque
 (dum animam eiu)s (er)ipia(nt. Qua)re hanc
 (uictimam tibi) tra(do, Proserpina), seiue me,
 (Proserpina, seiue me Acherusiam) dicere
 (oportet. Me mittas arecssitum ca)nem
 (tricipitem, quii cor eri)pia(t. Po)lliciaris
 (illi te daturum tres uictimas -- pa)lmas,
 (caricas, porcum nigrum -- hoc sei per)fecerit
 (ante mensem Martium. Haec, Proserp)ina, tibi
 (dabo, cum compotem fecer)is. Do tibi
 (caputi. Proserpina Salui)a, d(o) tibi
 (frontemi. Proserpina Sa)luia, do tibi
 (superciliai. Proserpina Sa)luia, do tibi
 (palpebrasi. Proserpina Saluia), do tibi
 pupillas
i. Prosperpina Saluia, do tibi n)ares, labra,
 (orículas, linguam, dentes, n)asum,
 (.....i, ni dicere possitius) quid (sibi do)leat:
 (collum, umeros, br)acc(hia), di(gitos, ni) possit
 (aliquid se adiutare: p)ect(us, ioci)nera,
 (cor, pulmones, ni pos)sit sen(tire) quit
 (sibi doleat: intestina, ue)nter, umblicus,
 (latera, ni possit dormire: s)cap(ul)as, ni
 (possit sanus dormire: uiscu)m sacrum,
 (ni possit urinam) f(acere: natis, a)num,
 (femina, gen)u(a, crura, tibi)as, pedes,
 (talos, pla)ntas, digitos, ungis), ni
 (possit stare sua uir)tu(te. Sei)ue
 (plus, seiue paruum scrip)tum
 (fuerit, quomodo quic)quid legitime
 (scripsit, mandau)it, seic ego
 (.....) tibi trado,
 (mando, ut tradas i)llun(c) (m)ensi
 (Februari)o. Mal(e p)erd(a)t, male
 (exseat, male dispe)rd(a)t. Ma(ndes, tra)das,
 (ni possit amplius ullu)m m(ense)m aspicere,
 (uidere, contemplare).

Translation:

Good and beautiful Proserpina, wife of Pluto, (or) whether it is proper for me to call you Salvia, may you snatch away the health, body, complexion, fitness and strength of May you hand (them) over to your husband. May he not be able to avoid this with devices. May you give him over immediately to quartian, tertian, and daily fever, so that they might struggle and wrestle with him; may they conquer and vanquish him, right up to the point

that they would rip away his soul. For this purpose I hand this victim over to you, Proserpina, whether I ought to call you Proserpina or Acherusia. May you summon and send to me the three-headed dog to snatch away’s heart. May you promise that you will give him three sacrifices -- dates, figs, and a black pig -- if he will accomplish this task before the month of March. I will give these things to you, Proserpina Salvia, when you have made him a participant. I give you the head of Proserpina Salvia, I give you the forehead of Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyebrows of Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyelids of Proserpina Salvia, I give you the pupils of Proserpina Salvia, I give you the ears, lips, nostrils, nose, teeth, and tongue ofso thatius will be unable to say what grieves him; the neck, shoulders, arms, fingers so that he will be unable to give himself some help; his chest, liver, heart, lungs, so that he will be unable to feel what grieves him; his intestines, stomach, navel, and flanks, so that he will be unable to sleep; his shoulder-blades so that he will be unable to sleep a healthy sleep; his testicles so that he will be unable to urinate; his buttocks, anus, thighs, cheeks, shanks, shins, feet, ankles, soles (of his feet), fingers, nails, so that he will be unable to stand with his own strength. However and whatever (he) has written and committed legitimately, whether more or less has been written, thus do I consign and commit to you, that you may consign and commit him within the month of February. May he perish badly, may he die badly, may he expire badly. May you consign and give him over, lest he be able to see, look upon, or contemplate another month.

6. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Rome, Latium
 Date: 75 - 40 BC
 Description: Lead tablet, 27 x 15.4 cm
 Language: Latin
 Defixus/a: Aquillia
 Defigens: An unknown female?
 Comments: Exact location of find unknown.
 Bibliography: Besnier (1920), 20 (#37).
 Lommatzsch *CIL* 1.2520.
 Sherwood Fox (1912), 28 - 31.
 Text: As reconstructed by Sherwood Fox:

(Bona pulchra) Proser(pin)a, Pl(utonis u)xsor, se(iue
 (me Saluiam dic)ere (oportet, erip)ias s(al)utem,
 (corpus, colorem, uires, uirtutes)ae Aqu(illiae).
 (Tradas Plutoni uiro tuo. Ni) pos(sit cogit)ati-
 onibus (sueis
 hoc quicquid uitare. Tradas i)lla(nc F)ebri
 qua(rt)ana(e),
 tertiana(e), cottidiana(e), quas cum illa l)uctent,
 (deluctent; illanc euincant, ui)ncant, u(sque
 dum animam eius eripiant. Qua)re hanc
 (uictimam tibi) tra(do, Proserpina), seiue me,
 (Proserpina, seiue me Acherusia)m dic(ere oportet.
 Me mittas arcessitum canem) trice(pitem,
 quiae Aquilliae cor eripiat. Polli)ciaris
 (illi te daturum tres uictimas -- pal)ma(s, caricas,

porcum nigrum -- hoc sei perfecerit ante mensem Martium. Haec, Proserpina Salvia, tibi dabo, cum compotem feceris. Do tibi caput Aquilliae). Pro(serpina Salvia, d) o t(ibi) i (frontem Aquilliae. Pro)serpin(a Salvia), do tibi su(percilia Aquilliae. Proserpina Salvia, do tibi palpebras Aquilliae. P)ro(serpina Salvia, do tibi pu)pilla(s Aquilliae. Prosperpina Salvia, d) o t(ibi) nares, labra, oriculas, nasum, linguam, dentes,ae Aquilliae, ni dicere possita Aquillia quid sibi doleat: collum, umeros, bracchia, digitos, ni possit aliquid se a)diuta(re: pectus, cor, iocinera, pulmon)es, (ni possit sentire quid sibi doleat: i)nt(estina, uenter, umblicus, latera, ni possit dormire: scapulas, ni possit sana dormire: uis)cum (sac)rum, (ni possit urinam facere): f(emina, natis, anum, genua, tiuia)s, cru(ra, pedes, talos, plantas, digi)tos, (ungis, ni possit s)tare sua (uirtute. Seiue plus), seiue paru(m sc)riptum (fuerit, quomodo quicquid) leg(itime scri)psi(t, mandauit), se(ic ego Aquilliam tibi trado, mando, ut tra)das, m(andes illanc mense Februario. Male perdat, male exseat, male disp)erd(at. Mandes, tradas, ni possit amplius ullum mensem aspicere, uidere, contemplare).

Translation:

Good and beautiful Proserpina, wife of Pluto, (or) whether it is proper for me to call you Salvia, may you snatch away the health, body, complexion, fitness and strength of Aquillia. May you hand (them) over to your husband. May she not be able to avoid this with devices. May you give her over immediately to quartian, tertian, and daily fever, so that they might struggle and wrestle with her; may they conquer and vanquish her, right up to the point that they would rip away her soul. For this purpose I hand this victim over to you, Proserpina, whether I ought to call you Proserpina or Acherusia. May you summon and send to me the three-headed dog to snatch away Aquillia's heart. May you promise that you will give him three sacrifices -- dates, figs, and a black pig -- if he will accomplish this task before the month of March. I will give these things to you, Proserpina Salvia, when you have made him a participant. I give you the head of Aquilla. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the forehead of Aquillia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyebrows of Aquillia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the eyelids of Aquillia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the pupils of Aquillia. Proserpina Salvia, I give you the nostrils, lips, ears, nose, tongue, and teeth of Aquillia so that Aquillia will be unable to say what grieves her; the neck, shoulders, arms, fingers so that she will be unable to give herself some help; her chest, liver, heart, lungs, so that she will be unable to feel what grieves her; her intestines, stomach, navel, and flanks, so that she will be unable to sleep; her shoulder-blades so that she will be unable to sleep a healthy sleep; her innards so that she will be unable to urinate; her buttocks, thighs, anus, cheeks, shanks, shins, feet, ankles, soles (of her feet), fingers, nails, so that she will be unable to stand with her own strength. However and whatever (she) has written and committed legitimately, whether more or less has been written, thus do I consign and commit Aquillia to you, that you may consign and commit her within the month of February. May

she perish badly, may she die badly, may she expire badly. May you consign and give her over, lest she be able to see, look upon, or contemplate another month.

7. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Rome, Latium
 Date: Late Republic or Augustan era
 Description: Lead tablet, 12 cm x 27.5 cm; inscribed on both sides.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Rhodine (female)
Defigens: An unknown female?
 Comments: Found among some graves.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 197 - 198 (#139)
 Henzen *CIL* 6.140.
 Mommsen *CIL* 1.818.
 Text: As transcribed and emended by Henzen.

(Side A)

Quomodo mortuos, qui istic
 sepultus est, nec loqui
 nec sermone potest, seic
 Rhodine apud M. Licinium
 Faustum mortua sit nec loqui nec
 sermonare possit.
 Ita uti mortuos nec ad deos
 nec ad homines acceptus est,
 seic Rhodine apud M. Licinium
 accepta sit et tantum valeat,
 quantum ille mortuos, quei

(Side B)

istic sepultus est. Dite Pater, Rhodine(m)
 tibi commendo, uti semper
 odio sit M. Licinio Fausto.
 Item M. Hedium Amphionem.
 Item C. Popilium Apollonium.
 Item Vennoniam(m) Hermionam(m).
 Item Sergiam(m) Glycinam(m).

Translation:

Just as the corpse who is buried here is unable to speak or make conversation, thus may Rhodine be corpse-like and be neither able to speak nor make conversation with M. Licinius Faustus. Just as (this) corpse is unwelcome among gods and humans, thus may Rhodine be unwelcome to M. Licinius and may she fare just as well as this corpse who is buried here does.

Father Dis, I commit Rhodine to you, so that she might always be hated by M. Licinius Faustus.

Likewise M. Hedium Amphio.

Likewise C. Popilius Apollonius.

Likewise Vennoniam Hermiona.

Likewise Sergia Glycinna.

8. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Nomentum, Latium
 Date: Augustan era
 Description: Lead tablet, folded up and bound with an iron filament.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Danae, slave of Capito
Defigens: An unknown female?
 Comments: Found in a vineyard.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 195 - 196 (#138).
 Henzen *CIL* 6.141.
 Mommsen *CIL* 1.819.
 Text: As transcribed by Mommsen

Danae ancilla noicia
 Capitonis hanc ostiam
 acceptam habeas
 et consumas Danaene.
 Habes Eutychem
 Soterichi uxorem.

Translation:

(I bind) Danae, the new slave of Capito. May you have this woman as a welcome victim, and may you devour Danae, (as?) you have Eutychia, the wife of Soterichi (previously?).

9. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Cales, Campania
 Date: First half of the first century AD
 Description: On a phallus-shaped lead tablet, 2 cm x 9 cm. Phrases are written at right angles to each other.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: C. Babulius and Tertia Salvia (his lover)
Defigens: Quarta?
 Comments: Found in a grave.
 Bibliography: Adams (1982), 123.
 Audollent *DT*, 252 - 253 (#191).
 Text: As cited in Audollent (Buechler's suggestion); see Audollent for alternative textual reconstructions.

Dii inferi C. Babullium et fotr(icem) eius Tertia(m) Salvia(m): Quartae satiavi[t]: recipite inferis, Dite, [d]omum tuam.

Translation:

Gods below, (I bind) C. Babullius and his lover, Tertia Salvia: he has had enough of Quarta: Pluto, receive (them) into your house among the shades.

10. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place:	Minturnae, Latium
Date:	Second century AD
Description:	Lead tablet, 18.2 cm x 9.9 cm; folded up and pierced with a nail.
Language:	Latin
<i>Defixus/a</i> :	Tyche (or Tychene), the slave (or possibly wife) of Carisus
<i>Defigens</i> :	An unknown female?
Comments:	Found in a grave.
Bibliography:	Audollent <i>DT</i> , 248 - 251 (#190). Mommisen <i>CIL</i> 10.8249.
Text:	As emended in Audollent.

Dii i(n)feri, vobis com(m)e(n)do, si quic[q]ua(m) sa(n)-
ctitat[i]s h(a)bet[i]s, ac t(r)ad<r>o T[y]c(h)ene(n)
Carisi, quodqu[o]d a[g]at, quod i(n)cida(n)t
omnia in adversa. Dii i(n)feri, vobis
com(m)e(n)do il(l)ius . mem(b)ra, colore(m)
fi[g]ura(m), caput, capill[os], umbra(m), cereb-
ru(m), fru(n)te(m), supe[rcil]ia, os, nasu(m)
me(n)tu(m), buc(c)as, la[bra, ve]rbu(m), v[ul?]tu(m),
col(l)u(m), i[e]cur, (h)umeros, cor, [p]ulmones,
i(n)testina<s>, ve(n)tre(m), bra(ch)ia, di[g]it-
os, manus, u(m)b(i)licu(m), v[e]sica(m), fem[i]na,
[g]lenua, crura, talos, planta(s),
[d]i[g]i[t]os.
Dii i(n)feri, si [illam?] vider[o] [t]abesce(n)te(m)
vobis sa(n)ctu(m) il(l)ud lib(e)ns ob an(n)u-
versariu(m) facere dibus par-
entibus il(l)ius....ta
peculiu(m) tabescas.

Translation:

Gods below, I commit and hand over to you, if you have any holiness, Tyche, (the slave of) Carisus, (that) everything she does should turn out against her. Gods below, I commit to you her limbs, complexion, figure, head, hair, shadow, brain, forehead, eyebrows, mouth, nose, chin, cheeks, lips, speech, countenance, neck, liver, shoulders, heart, lungs, intestines, stomach, arms, fingers, mouth, hands, navel, bladder, thighs, cheeks, legs, ankles, soles (of her feet), (and) fingers. Gods below, if I will see her wasting away, I willingly (vow?) to see that her property(?) is dedicated to you, the gods who allow this, on the occasion of the anniversary, so that you might devour it(?).

11. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Ostia, Latium
 Date: Second half of the second century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, inscribed on both sides.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Several women; three men (Solin suggests that the men may be slaves; the women are probably freedwomen or of freedperson stock)
Defigens: Several unknown females and a few unknown males?
 Comments: Solin conjectures that this is an erotic tablet from comparisons with other tablets accepted to be erotic.
 Bibliography: Solin (1968), 2 - 22.
 Text: As transcribed by Solin:

Side A:

(inf)eris (lig)o Tucia Cretcta e(t) Antonia
 a(...) e(t?) Silio e(t)
 D(e)xtera mater
 d n
 oc (...)c (...)no Mne(s)tus peri[ant] rogo Icimas Mevia
 r (...)a(...)er pe(...)lus ocida[nt] Ru[fa?], Papria Unaesi[me]
 v (.....)lu(.....)itine, Lu(p)us
 mno(.....) r(...)a colico mende
tit (...)e Monta lce tabes[cant] Primigenia e[t]
 rm (.....)ace (Re)stuti res<i>pecti Iulia Fort(u)nata
 o (.....) n Epia Scanti(illa?), Iulia Pia peri[ant]
 ...o (.....)ntri. (.....)m (.....)t.....

Side B

	Mucan(a)	
Iucunda	Iucunda (M)aevia	Cuarta et
Mevia	Procla Iu(li)a	Fadia Nereis
E (...)ce	(T)ripe[a] Prote	Po (...)stidia
	Minucia M.....	Aur[elia] M(u)sario
	aep.....

Translation:

I am unable to produce a translation. It appears that several women and three men (Mnestus,lus, and Lupus) are bound as to their faculties (colico mende = colligomentem) and are wished to waste away and die.

12. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Nomentum, Latium
 Date: Late second, early third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 5.2 cm x 9.2 cm, four holes bored into the tablet, apparently for nails; tablet inscribed on both sides.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Malcius, the son or slave of Nicona, and Pulica, the daughter or slave of Rufa

Defigens: An unknown female and/or an unknown male?
Comments: Found in a grave
Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 191 - 193 (#135).
Text: As emended by Audollent:

Side A:

Malcio Nicones oculos
 manus di[g]itos brac(h)ia<s> un[gue]s
 capil(l)o(s) caput pedes femu[r] vent[r]e(m)
 nat[e]s um(bi)licu[m] pectus mamil(l)as
 collu[m] os buc(c)as dentes labias
 me[nt]u[m] oc(u)los fronte(m) supercili(a)
 scap(u)las (h)umerum nerv[o]s ossu(m)
 merilas vent[r]e(m) mentula(m) crus
 qua(e)stu(m) lucru(m) valetundines defi[g]o
 in (h)as tabel(l)as.

Side B:

Rufa(s) Publica(e) manus de(n)tes
 oc(u)los brac(h)ia vent[r]e(m) mamil(l)a(s)
 pectus os(s)u(m) m[e]rilas vent[r]e(m)
 ..crus os pedes fronte[m]
 un[gue]s di[g]itos vent[r]e(m)
 um(bi)licu[m] cun(n)u[m]
 (v)ulva[m] il(i)a<e> Rufas Pulica(e) de(f)i[c]o
 in (h)as tabel(l)as.

Translation⁵:

Side A:

In(to) this tablet I bind the eyes of Malcius (the son or slave) or Nicon, (his) hands, fingers, arms, nails, hair, head, feet, thigh(s), stomach, buttocks, navel, chest, nipples, neck, mouth, cheeks, teeth, lips, chin, eyes, forehead, eyebrows, shoulder blades, shoulders, sinews, bones, *merilas*⁶, stomach, penis, shin(s), (his) profit, wealth, (and) health.

Side B:

In(to) this tablet I bind the hands of Pulica (the daughter or slave) of Rufa, (her) teeth, eyes, arms, stomach, nipples, chest, bones, *merilas*, stomach, shin(s), mouth, feet, forehead, nails, fingers, stomach, navel, genitals, (and) the womb of that woman, Pulica (daughter or slave) of Rufa.

⁵Gager (1992), 172 (#80), offers a translation of this tablet, though he categorises it as a tablet of business competition. Audollent has categorised it as erotic.

⁶This word is untranslatable (see Gager [1992], 172); however, Professor P. Smith has suggested that *medullas* (that is, *ossum medullas*) could possibly be meant. Jeanneret (1917), 9, notes “*d et r étaient des sons très voisins en italique...*” and cites Consentius (*GL* 5.392), who reports that “in usu cotidie loquentium” *pedes* would be pronounced *peres*. While bone marrow is not mentioned on any of the other tablets in this catalogue, see *PGM* 109.1 - 8 for a curious curse formula which mentions marrow (though the translation for this text is controversial -- see Betz [1986], 312, for bibliography).

13. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Cumae, Campania
 Date: Second or third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet.
 Language: Greek
Defixus/a: Valeria Quadrilla
Defigens: An unknown female, or alternately, Felix Vitruvius?
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 271 - 275 (#198).
 Text: As given in Audollent:

[magical signs]

Ο...αια όφιοφόριος γλω[σσ]
 η[s] τούτω σε υπ' έμ[όν] δεσ[μόν] άγω ?]
 δαίμονες και πνεύματα οί έν [τώ] τό
 πω τούτω θηλικών και άρρενικ[ών],
 έξορκίζω ύμάς τό άγιον δυομ[α]
 ερηκισθφρη αραραραχααρα⁷ ηφθισ[ικηρε]
 Ιαω Ιαβεζεβιθ λαναβισαφλα[ν...]
 εκτιπαμμου ποφδητιναξο.....
 ό τών όλων βασιλεύς έξεγέρθητι [και]
 ό τών φθιμένων βασιλεύς έξαφη[θητι]
 μετά τών καταχθονίων θεών· ταύτα γάρ
 γείνεται διά Ούαλερίαν Κοδράτιλλαν
 ήν έτεκεν Ούλερία Εύνοια ήν έσπει-
 ρε Ούαλέριος Μυστικός· ώς [σ]αφώς άγγελ-
 λω] πάσι έχθιστα [τά ύπο σ]κότος κατεπράγην
φο...φορμα.....μενορσεπχενθσ
 μενθ διακόψ[ω ?τ]ήν όργήν τήν
 φ.....δεον τήν.....[π]αρά τοϊς
 [...ε]ν φωτί [φ]ίλοι[s ει]s μεϊσο[s] είς χ[ό]
 λον θεών είσω.....έλ[θ]έτω
 ή Ούαλερία Κοδράτιλλα ήν έτεχκεν
 Β[α]λερία Εύνοια ήν ε[σπ]ειρε Βαλέριος
 Μυστικός· μεισει[ίτω] αύτήν, λήθην
 αύτῆς λαβέτω Βετρούβις
 Φη[λ]ιξ όν έτεκεν Βετρουβία Μαξιμιλ-
 [λα ό]ν έσπει[ρε Βετρου]βιος Εύέλπιστος
οχημ Τυφών
 ...μ.....ωχι βάρβαρα ουθ
 δα.....ιαχων, δότε είς μ[εϊ]
 σος Βετρουβίω Φήλικι όν έ[τεκ]ε Βε-
 τρουβία Μαξιμιλλα όν έσ[π]ειρ[ε Βετρ]ού-
 βιος Εύέλπιστος είς μεϊσος έλθεϊν
 και λήθην λαβεϊν τών πόθ[ω]ν

⁷This is a common magical word; see Brashear (1995), 3579: "Arara is a decan."

Οὐαλερία[s] Κοδρ[α]τίλλης ἦν ἔσ[π]ειρε
 Βα[λέριος] Μυστικὸς ἦν ἔτεκεν Βαλερία
 [Εὐνοια και ἵ]ποκατέχετε ὑμεῖς
 [αὐτήν ταῖς ἐ]σχ[άτ]αις τειμωρίαις
s ὅτι πρώτη ἠθέτησε
 τὴν πίστιν πρὸς Φ]ήλικα τὸν ἑαυτῆς ἀνδρα
αιακουατημτοσ.....τα

Translation:

O....of the serpent-bearing (?) tongue, I bring you under my constraint with this (tablet); daemons and spirits which are in this place, both female and male, I beseech you by the holy name (magical words) Iao Iabezebyth....rise up....king of all, be awakened and king of the dead, come forth with the gods of the underworld; these things are brought about because of Valeria Quadrilla, whom Valeria Eunoia bore and Valerius Mysticus engendered; I am reporting as clearly as possible to all her hateful deeds, accomplished under the cover of darkness....I will strike her into (?) the anger....of her friends who are alive, and may she, Valeria Quadrilla, whom Valeria Eunoia bore and Valerius Mysticus engendered come into the hatred and anger of the gods of the dead; may Vitruvius Felix whom Vitruvia Maximilla bore and whom Vitruvius Euelpistos engendered hate her and be forgetful of her....allow it to Vitruvius Felix whom Vitruvia Maximilla bore and whom Vitruvius Euelpistos engendered to enter into hatred and forgetfulness of his yearning for Valeria Quadrilla, whom Valerius Mysticus engendered and whom Valeria Eunoia bore; and you, restrain her below with terrible vengeance....because she was the first to break her pledge with (or to set aside her love for?) her own husband Felix.....

14. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry⁸

Place: Bolonia, Gallia Cisalpina
 Date: Fourth to fifth century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 10 x 8 cm
 Language: Latin with Greek *ephesia grammata*
 Defixus/a: Porcellus, a doctor, and his wife Silla
 Defigens: An unknown female and/or an unknown male?
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Besnier (1920), 6 (#1).
 Garcia-Ruiz (1967), 56.
 Olivieri (1899), 194.
 Text: As transcribed by Olivieri:

ΦWPBH	ΦΥΙΑΑ	ΤΙWP
ΦWPBEΘ	ΒΡΑΙ	ΒΑΡΙW
ΦWPBEN	W	ΒΑΘΑΚΑΡ
ΦWPBI		ΚΑΜΦΙ
ΦWPBW	Por	ΦΗΘ
ΦWPBI	cel	ΑΥΛΑΚ
ΦWPPA	lus	ΘΗΘ

⁸Note that Garcia-Ruiz is the only scholar to have classified this and the following three tablets as erotic.

Porcellu mo
 lo medicu Porcellu
 medicu

molo medicu interficite om
 corpus caput tente oculu
 ...tas.facite.porcellu et
 silla usure ipsius..ite
 bis et octo <?> Porcelli qui ice.d
 t (magical symbol) Lar..ut etru

Translation:

NB: I cannot offer an accurate or complete translation for obvious reasons. I conjecture that the text must mean something along the lines of:

Kill Porcellus the bad doctor, Porcellus the bad doctor, Porcellus the bad doctor -- attack (?) his whole body, head, his eyes...make (or perhaps see to it that) Porcellus and his wife Silla...sixteen times (?)...Porcellus who....

15. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Bolonia, Gallia Cisalpina
 Date: Fourth to fifth century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 11.5 x 6.4 cm
 Language: Latin with Greek *ephesia grammata*
Defixus/a: Porcellus, a doctor, and his wife Silla
Defigens: An unknown female and/or an unknown male?
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Besnier (1920), 7 (#2).
 Olivieri (1899), 195 - 196.
 Text: As transcribed by Olivieri:

ΦWPBH	ΦΥΙΑ	TIWP
ΦWPBEN	BIPA	BAPIW
Φ(W)PBEO	W	BAΘACWP
ΦWPBI		KANΦI
ΦWPBW		PHΘ
ΦWPBI	TIY	OEHPNB
ΦWPPA	TU	IasaaKEPBE
.isturina	occi	LHO fistu
tuse occi	dit	sinator d
.ini	inic	caecen
	ade	tiuocci
		Lun

tion.....
 stus difloiscutontulli
 ergututdisulus.omni
 menbra omnis uis..aip
 .tus fistidis olbi...
 brabis cidala.....

runpiae binas sivr.u
 runpiae omnis mo...
 ..i sinator.....

Translation:

NB: I am unable to provide a translation. I conjecture that the *defigens* is binding Porcellus' limbs.

16. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Bolonia, Gallia Cisalpina
 Date: Fourth to fifth century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 7.8 x 4.5 cm
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Porcellus, a doctor, and his wife Silla
Defigens: An unknown female and/or an unknown male?
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Besnier (1920), 6 (#3).
 Olivieri (1899), 196.
 Text: As transcribed by Olivieri:

(Po)rcel	molo porce
mo	Lo.molo.medico
me	interficite eum occidite eni
	te profucate Porcellu et mall (?)
	silla usore ipsius anima cor
	atu.epar.....
	tius

Translation:

NB: I am unable to provide a full and accurate translation. I conjecture that the text reads something like: Porcellus the bad doctor Porcellus the bad doctor (Porcellus the bad doctor) - kill him, slay him, strangle him and his bad(?) wife Silla -- (her) soul, her heart....

17. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Bolonia, Gallia Cisalpina
 Date: Fourth to fifth century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 5.5 x 4.3 cm
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Porcellus, a doctor, and his wife Silla
Defigens: An unknown female and/or an unknown male?
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Besnier (1920), 7 - 8,(#4).

Olivieri (1899), 196 - 197.

Text: As transcribed by Olivieri:

.....
 tercianas quartana
 Luris frigora morbu em
 (P)orcellus.molo.medicus
 erdos autur aton....a..
 arcimi.....aliace
 gymnia morfus part
 meras ceos..macas
 trias cata pomas si
 as.e.fructus ierom
 eis podisos.....
 n.tos os.....
 (por)cellu

Translation:

NB: I am unable to provide a translation. I conjecture that the *defigens* is cursing Porcellus to be attacked by various illnesses and fevers.

PANNONIA

18. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Poetovio
 Date: Second century AD
 Description: Lead tablet; inscribed on both sides; letters written right to left and occasionally upside down.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Paulina Firmina (possibly two different women?)
Defigens: An unknown female?
 Comments:
 Bibliography: *AE* (1907), 30 (#99).
 Besnier (1920), 10 - 11 (#9).
 Premerstein (1906), 192 - 198.
 Text: As transcribed in Besnier:

Side A
 Paulina aversa sit
 a viris omnibus
 et deficsa sit ne quid

Side B
 possit mali facere
 Firminam [cl]od[as] ab o-
 mnibus humanis

Translation:

May Paulina be turned away from all men, and constrained lest she (Side B) be able to do some harm; may you shut Firmina up away from all humans (ie. men?)

19. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Flavia Pannonica
 Date: Fourth or fifth century AD
 Description: Terracotta tablet, 8.2 x 7.6 x 3 cm.
 Language: Greek
Defixus/a: Zimia
Defigens: An unknown female?
 Comments: Found in a Roman tomb.
 Bibliography: Barisic (1970), 23 - 28.
 Text: As reconstructed by Barisic:

Γοροφό[ν]ος Γοργῶ διώξη Ζιμίαν μιξιφιλι[τ]ας

Translation:⁹

Would that gorgon-killing Athene pursue Zimia (because of her) sexual debauchery.

NORICUM

20. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Mautern (Favianae)
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Aurelius Sinnianus Caeserianus
Defigens: An unknown male?
 Comments:
 Bibliography: *AE* (1950), 41 (#112).
 Egger (1948), 112 - 120.
 Garcia-Ruiz (1967), 56 (#2).
 Text: As emended by Egger:

Pluton sive<m> Jov-
 em infernum dici oportet<no>-

⁹Barisic (1970), 26, has produced a translation in French: "que la Gorgone Gorgonophone (sc. la déesse Athéna) supprime Zimia pour sa débaûche."

tet Eracura Juno
 inferna acciet(e) ia(m) c(e)lerius
 infra scribtum e(t) tradite <i>
 Manibus (written upside down) Aurelium Sinnianum Ceserianum
 Sic, Silvia inversu(m) m-
 aritu(m) c<e>ernis quom
 modi nomen ilius
 scribtum est.

Translation:¹⁰

Pluto, or if I should call you infernal Jove, (and) Eracura, infernal Juno, quickly fetch (him whose name) is written below and hand him over to the shades below:

Aurelius Sinnianus Caeserianus.

Thus, Silvia, do you perceive you husband turned upside-down, in the same way as his name has been written.

RAETIA

21. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Peitig (Schongau)
 Date: Second to third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 17 x 4 cm; inscribed on both sides; written right to left and bottom to top.
 Language: Latin
 Defixus/a: Gemella
 Defigens: Clemens
 Comments: This is the only western tablet of erotic attraction found to date in a location other than Africa.
 Bibliography: *AE* (1960), 53 (#180).
 Garcia-Ruiz (1967), 56 (#3).
 Nesselhauf (1960), 76 - 80.
 Text: As emended by Nesselhauf:

Side A

Gemella, supra mensuram naturae
 domini tui Clementis iaces, qu..... ut
 te patitur, sic tu pateream eius
 ram, patere audacter, quod te iuve(t).

Side B

Somnus te tuetur, Gemella, sub
 iugum missa q(u)iesce .. contineas te
 non pe(cca?)s, ama Clementem

¹⁰Egger (1948), 118, has produced a German translation: "Pluto, oder wenn man ihn Juppiter der Unterwelt nenner muß, Eracura, Juno der Unterwelt, ziehet schon recht rasch den unten Aufgeschriebenen herbei und übergebt den Totengeistern den Aurelius Sinnianus Ceserianus. So, o Silvia, siehst du den Gatten umgekehrt, wie der Name desselben geschrieben worden ist."

sic ut ubi eum non videbis,s, quaplumbum ...a..

Translation:

(Side A) Gemella, you lie beyond the capacity of your master Clemens' nature; as it endures you, thus you endure his (true concern?); endure it boldly, because it pleases you. (Side B) Sleep watches over you, Gemella; having been sent under the yoke, rest easy (so that?) you might control yourself and not err(?); love Clement thus, so that when you do not see him....as lead (?)

GERMANIA

22. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Crucinacum, Germany
 Date: First century AD.
 Description: Lead disc, 48 cm in diameter, inscribed on both sides.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Silonia, Surus, Caenus, and Secundus(?)
Defigens: Secundus?
 Comments: Found in a tomb containing incinerary urns.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 153 (#100).
 Text: As reported by Audollent:

Side A

Nomina data [manda-]
 ta l[igata]
 ad inferos;
 [ad] illos per vim
 [c]onr[u]ant.

Side B

Silonia
 Surum Caenu[m]
 Secundum
 ille te
 [s]ponsus pro(vo-)
 ca[t] eum am[a].

Translation:

Side A

The names given have been consigned and bound to the shades below; may they fall together to them through force.

Side B

Silonia, Surus, Caenus, Secundus; that man as bridegroom (?) calls you (ie. Silonia?) forth; love him.

23. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Crucinacum, Germany
 Date: Late first to mid-second century AD.
 Description: Inscribed on a vase 17 cm high.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Artus, son (or slave) of Dercomognius
Defigens: An unknown male?
 Comments: Found in a cemetery.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 155 (#103).
 Text: As reconstructed in Audollent:

(letters written backward:) abcdefghiklmnoprrstvx¹¹
 Art(um) ligo Dercomogni (filium), Artus (enim) fututor (est)
 Aprilis Kaesio

Translation:

I bind Artus, son (or slave) of Dercomognius, for Artus is a fucker.

NB: Audollent suggests that Aprilis Kaesio is the name of one, or the names of two, other enemies who are cursed besides Artus.

BRITANNIA

24. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: London, Britain
 Date: Second or third century AD?¹²
 Description: Lead tablet, 17.5 x 11.8 cm; pierced with seven nails.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Tretia Maria
Defigens: An unknown female?
 Comments: Found under a modern street.
 Bibliography: *AE* (1936), 29 (#87).
 Collingwood (1935), 225 - 226.
 Collingwood and Wright (1965), 3 - 4.
 Garcia-Ruiz (1967), 56 (#4).

¹¹Note that there are two r's and no q.

¹²I am unable to find reference to the date of this tablet and the tablets which follows; I suggest the 2nd or 3rd century on the strength of the fact that this is the time to which most British tablets date (Tomlin [1988], 60).

Text: As emended by Collingwood and Wright:

Tretia(m) Maria(m) defico et
 illeus vita(m) et me(n)tem
 et memoriam [e]t iocine-
 ra pulmones inter<x>ix<i>
 ta fata cogitata memori-
 am sci(=sic) no(n) possitt loqui
 (quae) sicreta¹³ si(n)t neque SINTA
 MERE possit neque..
CL VDO

Translation: As translated by Collingwood and Wright:

I curse Tretia Maria and her life and mind and memory and liver and lungs mixed up together, and her words, thoughts, and memory; thus may she be unable to speak what things are concealed, nor be able...nor...

25. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Old Harlow, Britain
 Date: Second or third century AD?
 Description: A lead tablet, 5.4 x 7.2 cm; pierced by a nail. Inscribed on both sides.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Eterna (and Timotneus?)
Defigens: An unknown male?
 Comments: Found in a well.
 Bibliography: Tomlin (1988), 60.
 Wright and Hassall (1973), 234 - 327.
 Text: As emended by Wright and Hassall:

Side A

Dio M(ercurio) dono ti(bi)
 negotium Et -
 <t>ern(a)e et ipsam,
 nec sit i(n)vidi(a) me(i)
 Timotneo san -
 gui[n]e suo.

Side B

Dono tibi
 Mercurius
 aliam neg[o -
 tium NAVIN

 NII[.....

¹³In the other publications of this text, the word given by Collingwood and Wright here as "sicreta" actually appears on the transcription of the text as "sic...ita".

MIN[....]SANG[..
SVO.

Translation: As translated by Wright and Hassall:

(Side A) To the god Mercury, I entrust to you my affair with Eterna and her own self, and may Timotneus feel no jealousy of me at the risk of his life-blood. (Side B) I entrust to you, O Mercury, another transaction....

HISPANIA

26. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Carmona, Spain
Date: Late republic or early Augustan era
Description: Lead tablet, 5 x 32 cm; pierced with two holes.
Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Luxia, daughter of Aulus Antestius
Defigens: An unknown female?
Comments: Information as to the exact location of the find unavailable.
Bibliography: Corell (1993), 261 - 268.
Text: As emended by Corell:

Dis imferis vos rogo utei recipiatis nomen
Luxsia A(uli) Antesti filia caput cor co(n)s(i)lio(m) valetudine(m)
vita(m) membra omnia accedat morbo cotidiea et
sei faciatis votum quod faccio solva(m) vostris meritis

Translation:¹⁴

Gods below, I ask you to receive the name of Luxia, daughter of Aulus Antestius -- may daily illness attack her head, heart, understanding, health, life, and all of her limbs; and if you do what I request, I will reward you, since you deserve it.

27. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Saguntum, Spain
Date: Later first century AD (c. 70)

¹⁴Corell (1993), 262, has produced a German translation: "An die Unterweltgötter; ich beschwöre euch, daß ihr meinem Gesuch gegen Luxia, Tochter des Aulus Antestius stattgebt, daß Krankheit ihren Kopf, Herz, Verstand, Gesundheit, Leben und alle ihre Körperteile jeden Tag angreift. Und wenn Ihr die Bitte, die ich mache, erhört, werde ich euch für eure Gunst belohnen."

Description: Lead tablet; dimensions unavailable
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Quintula (Quintilla)
Defigens: An unknown female?
 Comments: Exact location of the find unavailable.
 Bibliography: Corell (1994), 280 - 286.
 Text: As edited by Corell:

Quintula cum Fortunali sit semel et numquam

Translation:¹⁵

May Quintula never again be with Fortunalis.

AFRICA

28. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
 Date: Second century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 19.5 x 11.5 cm
 Language: Latin transliterated into Greek
Defixus/a: Sextilius, son of Dionysia.
Defigens: Septimia, daughter of Amoena
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 370 - 373 (#270).
 Text: As transliterated into Latin by Audollent:

Ad[iur]o....per magnum deum et
 per Anterotas et per uem qui habet
 accipitrem supra caput et per se-
 ptem stellas, ut, ex qua hora
 hoc composuero, non dormiat Sex-
 tilius, Dionysiae filius, uratur
 furens, non dormiat neque sedeat
 neque loquatur, sed in mentem hab-
 eat me Septimam, Amoenae filiam; ura-
 tur furens amore et desiderio
 meo, anima et cor uratur Sexti-
 li, Dionysiae filius, amore et deside-
 rio meo Septimes, Amoenae filiae. Tu au-
 tem Abar Barbarie¹⁶ Eloë Sabaoth
 Pachnouphy¹⁷ Pythipemi, fac Sexti-

¹⁵Corell (1994), 282, has produced a German translation: "Daß Quintula niemals wieder mit Fortunalis zusammenkommt!"

¹⁶Brashear (1995), 3582, notes that words beginning with "barbar" are "inspired" by *βάρβαρα ὀνόματα*.

lium, Dionysiae filium, ne somnum contigat, sed amore et desiderio meo uratur, huius spiritus et cor comburatur, omnia membra totius corporis Sextili, Dionysiae filius. Si minus, descendo in adytus Osyris et dissolvam τῆν ταφήν et mittam ut a flumine feratur; ego enim sum magnus decanus dei magni dei Achrammachalala . e

Translation:

I entreat the great god and the Anti-eroses and he who has a falcon head, and the seven stars, that, from the hour when I have composed this, Sextilius, son of Dionysia, will not sleep (but) will be maddened and enflamed; he will not sleep nor sit nor talk, but will have me, Septimia, Amoena's daughter, in his mind, and will burn, maddened by love and longing for me; may the heart and soul of Sextilius, son of Dionysia, burn with love and longing for me, Septimia, daughter of Amoena. Moreover, you, Abar Barbarie Eloie Sabaoth Pachnouphy Pythipemi, see to it that Sextilius, son of Dionysia does not sleep, but burns with love and longing for me, that the heart and soul burn up (as well as) all the limbs of the whole body of Sextilius, son of Dionysia. If not, I (will) go down into the innermost sanctuary of Osiris' temple and I will destroy the tomb and throw it into the river to be carried away; for I am the great decan of the great god.

ACHRAMMACHALALA

29. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
 Date: Second century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 90 x 7.2 cm.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Vettia, daughter of Optata
Defigens: Felix, son of Fructa
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 364 - 365 (#266).
 Text: As emended by Audollent:

.....ope commendo tibi quo[d?]
mella ut illan inmittas dae-
aliquos infernales ut non pes
is me contemnere sed faciat
 [quodcu]mque desidero Vettia quem peperit
 Optata, vobis enim adiubantibus
 ut amo[r]is mei causa non dormiat non cibum
 non escam accipere possit.

¹⁷A Coptic word (Brashear [1995], 3596).

ΚΑΡΚΕ ΓΕΥΘΙ ΜΟΙ ΜΑΚΘΙΕ ΩΔΔ...
 ΩΚΕ ΕΝΤΙ ΜΟΙ ΘΕΨΕ
 [magical symbols] obligo Vetti(a)e [quam]
 peperit Optata sensum sap[i]entiam et [intel-]
 lectum et voluntatem ut amet me Fe[licem]
 quem peperit Fructa ex ha[c] die ex h[ac ora,]
 ut obliviscatur patris et matris et [propinquo-]
 rum suorum et amicorum omnium [et aliorum]
 virorum amoris mei autem Fe[licis quem]
 peperit Fructa; Vettia que[m peperit Optata]
 solum me in mente habeat [.....dormi-]
 ens vigilans uratur frigat.....
 ardeat Vettia quam peper[it Optata.....
 a]moris et desiderii m[ei causa.]

Translation:

I commit to you....that you might cast her....some infernal (gods?) so that (she?) might not....d disdain me, but Vettia, whom Optata bore will do whatever I desire, and with your help, that she will not sleep nor be able to take nutrients or food because of love for me. I bind Vettia, (whom) Optata bore -- her senses, her knowledge, her understanding, and her will, so that she will love me, Felix, whom Fructa bore; from this day, from this hour, so that she will forget her father and her mother and her relatives and all of her friends and other men because of love for me, Felix, whom Fructa bore; may Vettia whom Optata bore have me alone in her thoughts, and (both) sleeping and awake be burning and freezing.....may Vettia whom Optata bore burn with love and desire for me.

30. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
 Date: Second century AD
 Description: Lead tablet 9 x 8.5 cm
 Language: Latin transliterated into Greek
 Defixus/a: Bonosa, daughter of Papte
 Defigens: Oppius, son of Veneria
 Comments: Found in a tomb. The text is quite fragmentary; the first fourteen lines contain a lengthy invocation of various daemons.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 365 - 366 (#267).
 Text: As transliterated back into Latin by Audollent:

Cogite Bonosa(m) quam peperit Papte amare .e Oppium, quem peperit Veneria, amore sacro sine intermissione; non possit dormire Bonosa neque esse.....B[onosa], neque aliud...se abrumpatur et me soad.....videret omnibus diebus ad x.....usque ad diem mortis suae.

Translation:

Compel Bonosa whom Papte bore to love Oppius, whom Veneria bore, with sacred love without interruption; may Bonosa not be able to sleep nor be.....Bonosa, nor anything else.....but may (she?) be torn from....and (be persuaded?) to see (me?) every day.....right up to her dying day.

31. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 12 x 10 cm; in addition to the curse text, the tablet contains magical symbols and pictures of nails or swords and two intertwined ropes.
 Language: Latin with ephesia grammata written in Greek
Defixus/a: Victoria
Defigens: Unknown male
 Comments: Found in a tomb; text is terribly fragmentary.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 362 - 363 (#264).
 Text: As transcribed by Audollent:

...ξαλαχ..σουμιμαρει
 ...χειωσων αβαωθ
 ...[five magical signs] νπξπλγ.νγ
αων σαβαωθ αρφειμαξε
ενοναρφαλαμ
αρα..ε.γε.ιαω
αμεικω σαβαωθ

 Iω
 ιωια σαβαωθ ιωια
 αββηλολωρ
 .αλεχμειωθ

Victoria
 quem peperit
 Suavulva

puella[rum deliciae?]

Translation:

.....Victoria whom Suavulva bore....(darling?) girl...

32. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 11 x 9.5 cm; inscribed on both sides.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Victoria and Ballincus
Defigens: Unknown male
 Comments: Found in a tomb; the *defixa* appears to be the same woman as in the previous tablet.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 363 - 364 (#265).

Text: As transcribed by Audollent:

Side A
 Alimbeu
 columbeu
 petalimbeu
 faciatis Victoria
 quem peperit Sua-
 vulva amante fu-
 rente pre amore
 meo neque somnu
 videat donec at me
 veniat puella[r]u d[eli-]
 cias.

Side B
 Desecus Ballinc-
 um Lolliorum
 de curru actus
 ne possit ate me
 venire; et tu quicum-
 que es demon
 te oro ut illa cogas
 amoris et desiderii
 [mei] causa veni-
 [re at me]

Translation:

(Side A) Alimbeu, columbeu, petalimbeu, see to it that Victoria whom Suavulva bore does not sleep, loving and maddened with love for me, until she, darling girl, comes to me. (Side B) Just so, (see to it that) Ballincus, thrown from the chariot of the Lollii, is unable to come to me; and you, whatever daemon you are, I beg you that you compel her to come (to me) because of love and desire (for me).

33. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, approximately 23 x 9.5 cm
 Language: Latin
 Defixus/a: Bonosa
 Defigens: Unknown male
 Comments: Found in a tomb; not likely the same Bonosa or the same *defigens* as Audollent #267 (not found together); very fragmentary.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 366 - 368 (#268).
 Text: As reconstructed by Audollent:

.....Persefina oblegate illa im sensem et isapientiam [e]t inte[llectum]....sebmen per me
 tialu.....a recipiatisque nos per Bonosa qun peri Bonosa demado.....t
 voluntatem ut.....ateme.....[ut obliviscatur] patris et mtris.....am ex hac

diem ex ha[c ora].....[p]er deo meo vivum.....de
im.....d.....or...me.ea.....te.....[c]elum et mare..r.....li.....quit sit sub.....os
coronnos arissore hoc enobr.....eramg.....s quis v.er t...rae.t damatameneus
cemesilla[m].....de meos ades limi ut...tuarasaote.....itiae.....lon....li Bonosa
quem vobis ego il...commendo lileca reci[piatis?].....nas e. pi. lar.....vo..vovis
re.....

Translation:

.....(and) Proserpina, bind her, her senses, her knowledge, her understanding.....may
you receive (from?) us, I commit Bonosa, whom Bonosa bore.....(her) will, so that (she
will come to me?); so that she will forget her father and her mother....from this day, from
this hour.....(I beseech you?) by my living god (?).....(you, who created?) the sky
and the sea.....I commit to you Bonosa, that you might receive (lilacs?).....

34. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
Date: Third century AD
Description: Lead tablet, approximately 16 x 13 cm
Language: Latin transliterated into Greek, with Greek *ephesia grammata*.
Defixus/a: Tottina
Defigens: Unknown male
Comments: Found in the same tomb as Audollent #268. Very fragmentary.
Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 368 - 370 (#269).
Text: As transliterated by Audollent:

Side A

[Greek *ephesia grammata*]

Side B

Fac Totti[na]...me amet....[semper?] de me cogitet Tottina qu[am] peperit....na....ni liquet
[li(n)quat?] animo tu ob....t ama[r]e me[c]um fecit...a et tu domi[na?....a]more...

Translation:

(Side B) Make Tottina love me....(and always?) be thinking of me, Tottina
whom....bore....(you see to it that thought of me?) do not leave her mind....(until this
has?) made her love me....and you, mistress (?).....with love....

35. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
Date: Third century AD
Description: Lead tablet fragment
Language: Latin transliterated into Greek
Defixus/a: Tottina
Defigens: Unknown male

Comments: Probably a fragment of the foregoing tablet.
Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 424 - 425 (#304).

Text: As transliterated into Latin by Audollent:

....Tottina me a[mare]....sine mend[acio?]....ut [ame]t me solum....[ut a]met me [solum]
Tottina qu[am peperit....].videret....[n]on pos(s)it quandi[u?]....[omnibus dieb]us vixerit
[usque ad diem mortis suae....].

Translation:

(Make) Tottina love me...truly...so that she loves me alone....so that Tottina whom....bore
loves me alone....(so that she will have to see me) every day she lives (up to her dying
day)...

36. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
Date: Third century AD
Description: Lead tablet, 25 x 25 cm; pierced with a nail.
Language: Greek, with the first and fifth lines transliterated from Greek into Latin letters.
Defixus/a: Urbanus, son of Urbana
Defigens: Domitiana, daughter of Candida
Comments: Found in a tomb.
Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 373 - 377 (#271).
Text: As emended in Audollent:

Horcizo se daemonion pneumn to enthade cimenon to onomati to agio Αωθ
Αβ[α]ωθ, τὸν θεὸν τοῦ Αβρααν καὶ τὸν τοῦ Ιακου, Ιαω
Αωθ Αβαωθ, θεὸν τοῦ Ισραμα, ἄκουσον τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐντείμου
καὶ φ[οβ]εροῦ καὶ μεγάλου, καὶ ἄξον αὐτὸν πρὸς τὴν
cae apethe pros ton Orbanon hon ethecn Urbana,
Δομιτιανὴν, ἣν ἔτεκεν Κ[αν]διδά, ἐρώντα μαινόμενον ἀγρυπνοῦν
τα ἐπὶ τῇ φιλία αὐτῆς καὶ ἐπιθυμ[ι]α καὶ δεόμενον αὐτῆς ἐπανελθεῖν
εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ σύμβιο[ν] γενέσθαι. Ὀπκίζω σε τὸν μέγαν θεὸν
τὸν αἰώνιον καὶ ἐπαιώνιο[ν] καὶ παντοκράτορα τὸν ὑπεράνω τῶν
ὑπεράνω θεῶν· ὀρκίζω [σ]ε τὸν κτίσαντα τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν θά
λασσαν· ὀρκίζω σε τὸν διαχωρίσαντα τοῖς εἰσεβεῖς: ὀρκίζω σε
τὸν διαστήσαντα τὴν ῥάβδον ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ, ἀγαγεῖν καὶ ζεῦξαι
τὸν Οὐρβανόν, ὃν ἔτεκεν Οὐρβανά, πρὸς τὴν Δομιτιανάν, ἣν ἔτεκεν
Κανδιδά, ἐρώντα βασανιζόμενον ἀγρυπνοῦντα ἐπὶ τῇ ἐπιθυμία αὐ
τῆς καὶ ἔρωτι, ἵν' αὐτὴν σύμβιον ἀπάγη εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν ἑαυτοῦ· ὀρκί
ζω σε τὸν ποιήσαντα τὴν ἡμίονον μὴ τεκεῖν· ὀρκίζω σε τὸν διορίσαν
τα τὸ φ[ῶς] ἀπὸ τοῦ σκότους· ὀρκίζω σε τὸν συντρίβοντα τὰς πέτρας·
ὀρκί[ζω] σε τὸν ἀπορ(ρ)ήξαντα τὰ ὄρη· ὀρκίζω σε τὸν συνστρέφοντα τὴν
γῆν ἐ[πὶ τ]ῶν θεμελίων αὐτῆς· ὀρκίζω σε τὸ ἅγιον ὄνομα ὃ οὐ λέγεται· ἐν
τῷ ἰσα ω ὀνομάσω αὐτὸ καὶ οἱ δαίμονες ἐξεγερθῶσιν ἔκθαμβοι καὶ περὶ

φοβοι [γ]εινόμενοι, ἀγαγεῖν καὶ ζεῦξαι σύμβιον τὸν Οὐρβανόν, ὃν ἔτεκεν Οὐρβανά, πρὸς τὴν Δομιτιανάν, ἣν ἔτεκεν Καντιδά, ἐρώντα καὶ δεόμενον αὐτῆς· ἦδη, ταχύ. Ὀρκίζω σε τὸν φωστῆρα καὶ ἄστρα ἐν οὐρανῷ ποιήσαντα διὰ φωνῆς προστάγματος, ὥστε φαίνειν πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις· ὀρκίζω σε τὸν συσεῖσαντα πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην καὶ τὰ ὄρη ἐκτραχηλίζοντα καὶ ἐκβράζοντα, τὸν ποιοῦντα ἔκτρομον τὴν γῆν ἅπασ(αν καὶ) καινίζοντα πάντας τοὺς κατοικοῦντας· ὀρκίζω σε τὸν ποιήσαντα σημεῖα ἐν οὐρανῷ κ[αὶ] ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης, ἀγαγεῖν καὶ ζεῦξαι σύμβιον τὸν Οὐρβανόν, ὃν ἔ[τ]εκεν Οὐρβανά, πρὸς τὴν Δομιτιανήν, ἣν ἔτεκεν Καντιδά, ἐρώντα αὐτῆς καὶ ἀγρυπνοῦντα ἐπὶ τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ αὐτῆς, δεόμενον αὐτῆς καὶ ἐρωτῶντα αὐτὴν ἵνα ἐπανέλθῃ εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ σύμβιο[s] γενομένη· ὀρκίζω σε τὸν θεὸν τὸν μέγαν τὸν αἰώνιον καὶ παντοκράτορα, ὃν φοβεῖται ὄρη καὶ νάπαι καθ' ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην, δὲ ὃν ὁ λείων ἀφείησιν τὸ ἄρπασμα καὶ τὰ ὄρη τρέμει καὶ [ἡ γῆ] καὶ ἡ θάλασσα, ἕκαστον ἰδάλλεται ὃν ἔχει φόβον τοῦ Κυρίου α[ι]ω[νίου] ἀθανάτου παντεφόπτου μεισοπονήρου ἐπισταμένου τὰ [γενομέ]να ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ καὶ κατὰ θάλασσαν καὶ ποταμοὺς καὶ τὰ ὄρη καὶ [τῆν] γῆ[ν], Αωθ Αβρωθ, τὸν θεὸν τοῦ Αβρααν καὶ τὸν Ιαω τὸν τοῦ Ιακου, Ιαω Αωθ Αβρωθ, θεὸν τοῦ Ισραμα, ἄξον ζεῦξον τὸν Οὐρβανόν, ὃν ἔτεκεν Οὐρβανά, πρὸς τὴν Δομιτιανάν, ἣν ἔτεκεν Καντιδά, ἐρώντα μαι[ν]όμενον βασανιζόμενον ἐπὶ τῇ φιλίᾳ καὶ ἔρωτι καὶ ἐπιθυμίᾳ τῆς Δομιτιανῆς, ἣν ἔτεκεν Καντιδά, ζεῦξον αὐτοὺς γάμω καὶ ἔρωτι συμβιοῦντας ὀλω τῷ τῆς ζωῆς αὐτῶν χρόνω, πόλησον αὐτὸν ὡς δοῦλον αὐτῇ ἐρώντα ὑποτεταχθῆναι, μηδεμίαν ἄλλη[ν] γυναῖκα μήτε παρθένον ἐπιθυμοῦντα, μόνην δὲ τὴν Δομιτια[νάν], ἣν ἔτεκεν Καντιδά, σύμβιον ἔχειν ὀλω τῷ τῆς ζωῆς αὐτῶ[ν] χρόνω] ἦδη ἦδη, ταχύ ταχύ.

Translation:¹⁸

I entreat you, daemonic spirit you lies here, by the holy name of Aoth Abraoth, the god of Abraham and Iao, the god of Isaac, Iao Aoth Abraoth, the god of Israel, hear the honoured, fearsome and great name, and go off to Urbanus, whom Urbana bore, and drive him to Domitiana, whom Candida bore, passionate, crazed and sleepless because of love and longing for her, and begging her to return to his house and become his partner. I beseech you, great god, who are everlasting and eternal and all-mighty and above the other gods; I beseech you who have created the sky and the sea; I beseech you who have divided the holy rites; I beseech you who have parted the sea with a wand to drive and bind Urbanus, whom Urbana bore, to Domitiana, whom Candida bore, passionate, tormented and sleepless because of love and desire for her, so that he will lead her to his own home as his partner; I beseech you who have made the mule barren; I beseech you who have separated the light from the darkness; I beseech you who breaks rocks; I beseech you who have shattered the mountains; I beseech you who gather the earth upon its foundations; I beseech you, the holy name which is not spoken;..... (may it which?) I will name and the daemons be awakened, amazed and fearful, and drive and bind Urbanus, whom Urbana bore, to Domitiana, whom Candida bore, passionate and wanting her; now, quickly. I beseech you, the sun and the stars in the sky who have brought visibility about for all humans, through a spoken command; I beseech you who have shaken the entire inhabited world, tossing and throwing mountains over your head, the one who makes the whole earth

¹⁸A translation of this tablet is also to be found in Gager (1992), 112 - 115.

tremble and makes new the inhabitants; I beseech you who have made a sign in the sky and upon the land and the sea, to drive and bind Urbanus, whom Urbana bore, as a partner to Domitiana, whom Candida bore, loving her and sleepless because of desire for her, begging and asking her to return to his house and become his partner; I beseech you, the great god who is eternal and almighty, whom the mountains and the glades throughout the entire inhabited world fear, because of whom the lion lets go his catch and the mountains and the land and the sea tremble, each one reflecting (?) the fear which it has of the everlasting, immortal, trouble-hating(?) Lord, who understands the good and the bad happenings on the sea, in the rivers, on the mountains and on the land, Aoth Abaoth, the god of Abraham, and Iao, the god of Isaac, Iao Aoth Abaoth, the god of Israel, to drive and bind Urbanus, whom Urbana bore, to Domitiana, whom Candida bore, passionate, crazed and tormented because of love, desire, and longing for Domitiana, whom Candida bore; join them as partners in marriage and love for the entire time of their lives; make him in his love subjected to her like a slave, desiring to have as a partner no other woman or girl, only Domitiana, whom Candida bore, for the entire time of their lives; now, now, quickly, quickly.

37. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 8 x 5 cm
 Language: Greek
Defixus/a: Unknown
Defigens: Unknown
 Comments: Found in a tomb; terribly fragmentary.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 410 - 411 (#296).
 Text: As transcribed by Audollent:

....α.....
 ...χασ.....
υχο....
 ...βαδ....
 φθωβαλ.....
 .αθα.ανο
 .υζεοχυχχ....
 ..ονη.ετη....
ταεταρε...
 αβξονα
 .βροδοα...ετη..
 .ἀπό τῆς ο....
 ι δε τωλα . ν
 ..πατι νησ...
 .ἡμέρα ἀπό τῆ[s]....
 ...ψυχὴν τοῦ π.....
σο....σα ἀπό.....
α . τη
α.....

Translation:

.....away from (her?)....(from this) day, from this (hour).....(his) soul.....away....

38. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Ammaedara, Byzacena
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 5 x 17 cm; inscribed on both sides.
 Language: Greek
 Defixus/a: Unknown
 Defigens: Unknown
 Comments: Found in a tomb. Terribly fragmentary.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 413 - 414 (#299).
 Text: As emended in Audollent:

. ν.γειρεσον σεαυτῶ καπε..ντιαχτου [δοτι]s ουλ εἴ δαίμων διακονη
 κ.....ι.οκε.....νω ὄν ἔτεκεν Καλ[πουρ]νία προστησασ.οικον.ουιτπ
 κη....κερτα....ωθσιου σεβετα.....εα.ειπον...κατυπιο..δο.
 ουε αλια.....ακιωδν.αι.....ατον και εἰμάτια
 να.ταραρε...ιου.π ραμετα....πέμπο σε....τπχνυια
 .αι πκεφιαντ.υ.πολιοι.σ.με...α ἀνανκα. ειραβορροροβ.κω
 α.οκοιευπανφορπ..κανφοβι.ον.....ποτιν...ωδυμοι και...ισο
 ...σε κατά τῶν ὀνομάτ[ων]...ρου δυν.παρακυν.....νιων π...ημαρε.
 σπ.χελν μοι διακ[ό]νη....κωσα.και σο[ι]μν.σ.....σωσοι....δ....ω
 οσ τωλμ...σοχυββιν..παπαλιουρσιν και απου....να.....
 ...ικ..ωι ωι λογο...

Translation:

Rouse yourself.....whatever daemon you are, to do me service.....he whom Calpurnia bore.....and a garment (?).... I send you....and force (?)....according to the names (by which you are able to understand?)...serve me.....with thorns (?)....

39. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
 Date: Third century AD (?)
 Description: Lead tablet, 36 x 27 cm
 Language: Latin
 Defixus/a: Unknown female (?)
 Defigens: Unknown male (?)
 Comments: Very fragmentary; found in a necropolis.
 Bibliography: Audollent (1908), 291 - 294.
 Besnier (1920), 13 - 14 (#13).

Text: As emended by Audollent:

.....Perse)phone oblig
o illius quam peperit illa.....inc)olumitatem
.....ex h)ac die ex hac
ora ut obliviscatur patris et matris et) omnium suo
rum.....amor)is insani e(a
m?.....sed) amore et d
esiderio meo uratur.....ha)nc obl(ligo....
.....

Translation:

.....Persephone, I bindwhombore...unhurt.....from this day, from this
hour, so that she will forget her father and her mother and all of her friends.....because
of insane love (for me).....and will burn with love and longing for me....I bind her.....

40. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena
Date: Third century AD (?)
Description: Lead tablet, 32 x 37 cm.
Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Unknown female
Defigens: Unknown male
Comments: Very fragmentary; found in a necropolis.
Bibliography: Audollent (1908), 294 - 296.
Besnier (1920), 14 (#14).
Text: As emended by Audollent:

.....sapientia) sensus
.....illa quam pepe)rit Rus....ob(li
go eam?.....ut oblivisc)atur patr(i)s et ma-
tris et omnium suorum et amicorum omnium et alior)um viror(um
.....uratur (amore
et desiderio meo.....ex h)ac di(e ex hac
ora.....

Translation:

I bind her whom Rus.... bore, her knowledge, her senses.....so that she will forget her
father and mother and all of her relatives and all of her friends and other men.....may
she burn (with love and desire for me).....from this day, (from this hour).....

41. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Hadrumentum, Byzacena (?)
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet 15 x 6 cm
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Vera, daughter of Lucifera
Defigens: Optatus, son of Ammia...Saphonia
 Comments: Exact location of find unknown. Text very fragmentary.
 Bibliography: *AE* (1931), 42 (#132).
 Audollent (1930), 16 - 28.

Text: As transcribed and emended by Audollent:

.....ns metia
ex hac die ex) hac hora ex hoc m(omento obliviscatur patris
 et matris et suorum omn)ium (et amicu)r)m omnium et omnium vi(rorum)
 ...n(...in)sanien(s...ins)aniens vigilan(s....ur)atur comburatur ardeat sp(iritus?)
 amore et
 de)siderio meo obli(go) caelum terram aq(uas?...) et haera immobile set
 dom(.....)
 amoris huiis Veram adiuro te (p)er mag(na...n)omina eiius dei qui sub terra
 (.....)
 osornophri¹⁹ oserchochlo²⁰ erboonthi im...hr...mnre phiblo²¹ chnemeo²²
 sar(basmisarab...de)
 tinentem sempiternum amorem qui (...) ego Optatus commendo deo (...Veram
 quam
 peperit Lucifera <et> nulli ali attendat nis(i) mihi soli neminem alium (in mente
 habeat nisi me) Optatum quem peperit Ammia P..ia...a Saphonia consummatum
 consu(mmatum consummatum) coliga in sempiterno tempore.

Translation:

.....from this day, from this hour, from this moment, may she forget her father and her
 mother and all of her relatives and all of her friends and all men.....crazed, crazed and
 wakeful may her spirit be enflamed and burn with love and desire for me; I bind Vera
 (by?) the sky, the earth, the waters and the unmoving.....I beseech you by the great names
 of that god who (rules?) beneath the earth osornophri oserchochlo erboonthi im...hr...mne
 phiblo chnemeo sarbasmisarab...(who?) keeps eternal love...I, Optatus, commit to you
 Vera whom Lucifera bore, that she will pay attention to no one else, only me, and will have
 no one else in her thoughts except me, Optatus whom Ammia...Saphonia bore....bring
 (it?) together united united united, for all and everlasting time.

¹⁹*Ὀσορωνφρις*: "benefactor" (Brashear [1995], 3595).

²⁰Probably a reference to Osiris; see Brashear (1995), 3595, for similar words beginning with "ὄσερχ".

²¹This may mean the ibis (Brashear [1995], 3600).

²²Coptic for "resentment" (Brashear [1995], 3602).

42. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Carthage, Provincia Proconsularis
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 6.8 x 5 cm
 Language: Latin, with a border of Greek letters
Defixus/a: Successa
Defigens: Successus
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 299 - 300 (#227).
 Schmidt *CIL* 8.12507.
 Text: As emended by Audollent:

Uratur
 Suc(c)es(s)a
 aduratur
 amo[re] et
 desider(i)o
 Suc(c)es(s)i.

Translation:

May Successa be burned up; may she burn with love and desire for Successus.

43. Tablet of Erotic Rivalry

Place: Carthage, Provincia Proconsularis
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 13 x 25 cm; inscribed on both sides.
 Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Julia Faustilla, daughter of Marius
Defigens: Unknown female?
 Comments: Found near a tomb.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 300 - 301 (#228).
 Schmidt *CIL* 8.12505.
 Text: As emended by Audollent:

Side A
 Te rogo qui infer-
 nales partes tenes, com-
 mendo tibi Iulia(m) Faustil-
 la(m), Marii filia(m), ut eam cele-
 rius abducas et ibi in num-
 erum tu (h)a[b]ias.

Side B
 Te rogo qui infernal-
 es partes tenes, commen-
 do tibi Iulia(m) Faustillia(m)
 ut eam celerius abduca-

s infernales partibus
in numeru(m) tu (h)a[b]ias.

Translation:

(Side A) I call upon you, who occupy the regions below; I commit to you Julia Faustilla, daughter of Marius, that you might take her away very quickly and keep her there among your number. (Side B) I call upon you, who occupy the regions below; I commit to you Julia Faustillia, that you might take her away to the regions below very quickly and keep her there among your number.

44. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Carthage, Provincia Proconsularis
Date: Third century AD
Description: Lead tablet, 8 x 7 cm; contains a picture of a headless demon(?) holding a saucer in his right hand, and in his left, a burning lamp which has been pierced with a stick.
Language: Latin
Defixus/a: Unknown female (?)
Defigens: Unknown male (?)
Comments: This text is terribly fragmentary.
Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 301 (#229).
Text: As transcribed by Audollent

occid[as]....
facias pe[r]...
facias demo[n]...
loquto da...
.abliuoni cit[o]
me teneat a
ta ata
.....et exta
[ia]m iam cat...[d-]
[ci]to cito onec et c
facias [iam] iam
ex oc die
ex [a]c ora
iam iam cito
cito cito
facias
.....m [d]onec et
.....e.eat

Translation:

May you torment.....may you make.....may you make....forgetful(?).....may (she?) regard me.....now, now, quickly, quickly, do this; from this day, from this hour, now, now, quickly, quickly, do this...until (she?) comes (to me?)...

45. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Carthage, Provincia Proconsularis
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 7.7 x 19.5 cm; inscribed on both sides.
 Language: Mostly Latin, with the names of the daemons invoked written in Greek.
Defixus/a: Unknown female
Defigens: Unknown male
 Comments: Found in a tomb.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 302 - 303 (#230).

Text: As edited by Audollent:

Side A

Καταξιν [q]ui es Aegypto magnus daemon
 et aufer illae somnum usquedun veniat at me
 et animo meo satisfaciat; *Τραβαξιν* omnipotens daemon adduc
 amante aestuante amoris et desiderii mei causa;
Νοχθιριφ qui cogens daemon coge illa
 m[ec]un coitus facere; *Βιβιριξι* qui es
 f[or]tissimus daemon urge [c]oge illam venire ad me amante
 aestuante amoris et desiderii mei
 causa; *Ρικουριθ* agilissime daimon in Aegypto et agita
 a suis parentibus a suo cubile et aerie quicumque
 caros habes et coge illa me amare, mihi conferre ad meu[m]
 desiderium.

Side B

Unreadable.

Translation:

(Side A) Kataxin, you who are a great daemon in Egypt, take sleep away from her until she comes to me and satisfies my soul; Trabaxian, the all-powerful daemon, lead (her), burning with love and because of love and desire for me (to me); Nochthiriph, you who are the compelling daemon, compel her to have sex with me; Bibirixi, you who are the strongest daemon, force and compel her to come to me, burning with love and because of love and desire for me; Rikourith, the most nimble daemon in Egypt, drive (her) from her parents, from her bed, and (from anyone she holds dear?), and force her to love me, and to give me my desire.

46. Tablet of Erotic Attraction

Place: Carthage, Provincia Proconsularis
 Date: Third century AD
 Description: Lead tablet, 14 x 8.4 cm
 Language: Latin transliterated into Greek
Defixus/a: Unknown female
Defigens: Martialis, son of Coronaria

Comments: Fragmentary.
 Bibliography: Audollent *DT*, 303 - 305 (#231).
 Text: As transliterated back into Latin by Audollent:

.....quorum.....magna ut.....quomodo.....an(n)untio regis.....mortu(u)s ab
 illa.....inetur anima.....(h)oc loco sic et.....cuius est.....te detineatur in omne tempus in
 amore et desiderio Martiali[s] quem peperit Coronaria. [Magical words]. Atiuro vos per
 (h)unc prepositu(m) super necessitates terr(a)e sic et te.....dominus.....ut ex (h)ac die
 (h)oc momento.....ate illas.....amet Martiale(m) ut omni muliebri (h)ora me in mente
 (h)abeat et tota die in animo (h)abeat amore(m) meum.....tis magna tu.....dominum
 iam iam.....

Translation:

.....whose.....great as...somehow.....by an announcement of the king (?).....a corpse
 to be....by that soul...thus, in this place, and ...whose is....may (she) be occupied for all
 time in love and desire for Martialis, whom Coronaria bore....I beseech you by this
 leader, who is thus above the constraint of the earth and....master.....so that from this
 day, from this minute....them....she might love Maritalis, and might have me in her mind
 every womanly (?) hour, and might have love (for me) in her soul for the every
 day....great.....master, now, now.....

UNPUBLISHED TABLETS²³

I have found reference to the following tablets which have yet to be published. This being
 so, I have not included them in my discussion.

A. Source of reference: Jordan (1985a), 182.

Place: Rome, Latium, Italy
 Date: Third century AD
 Language: Greek
Defixus/a: A female
Defigens: A male?
 Comments: The tablet seeks to make a female hate a male.

B. Source of reference: Jordan (1985a), 186 - 187.

Place: Carthage or Hadrumentum, Africa
 Date: Not given
 Language: Greek

²³Note that the latest edition of *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* may contain publications to
 newly discovered erotic curse tablets of the Roman West in the form of the following article by J.B.
 Curbera: "Vernista and Her Owner in Four Curse Tablets from Morgantina, Sicily" (110[1995]: 295ff).
 However, I have not been able to gain access to this volume prior to the completion of this thesis.

Defixus/a: Four females
Defigens: A male
Comments: The tablet seeks to "win four women for one man."

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Publications:


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Title of Thesis:

Love and Magic: A Social Study of Roman Erotic *Defixiones*

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