

Bound by Love: A Close-Examination of Amatory Curse Tablets or
Defixiones

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Classics Honors Thesis
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Abbreviations

CT	<i>Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World</i> , John G. Gager (New York, 1992).
DT	<i>Defixionum Tabellae</i> , ed. A. Audollent (Paris, 1904).
CE	Common Era
BCE	Before Common Era
PGM	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i>
AE	L'Année Épigraphique

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Benefiel for all of her help, insight, support, and guidance throughout the writing process of this thesis. Thank you, Dr. B., for introducing me to ancient "writing on the walls" through your research and passion for the Herculaneum Graffiti Project. I couldn't ask for a better mentor throughout my time at W&L.

Chapter I: Introduction

Curse tablets

Curse tablets are defined as "inscribed pieces of lead, usually in the form of thin sheets, intended to bring supernatural power to bear against persons and animals against their will."¹ In this case, cursing does not imply the use of foul language to convey a message or point, but rather the "cursing" is manifested as "an utterance consigning, or intended to consign a person or thing to spiritual and temporal evil, the blasting of malignant fate..."(OED). Curse tablets display a particular prevalence throughout the Greco-Roman world. The earliest known tablets from classical antiquity were written in Greek and discovered in Selinus, Sicily, likely dating from the early 5th century B.C.² The practice and tradition of curse tablets as a form of achieving one's goal persisted until the 7th or 8th century AD. While a majority of the tablets were written in Greek, many were written in Latin or a mixture of Latin and Greek. Of the 1600 known tablets discovered so far, approximately 1100 were written in the Greek language. They are identified as *κατάδεσμος*, which derives from the Greek verb "*καταδεν*" meaning to "tie up" or "bind down." Similarly, the word *defixio*, which derives from the verb "*defixere*" is the Latin word, meaning "to fix" or "to fasten," that is associated with ancient curse tablets.³

On what medium were they written and why?

Curse tablets were inscribed on various materials but lead was the most common medium. Lead was a durable material that was readily available. As early as the 5th century BC,

¹ Gager, John G. *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*. Oxford University Press: 1992. 3. Print.

² Ankarloo, Bengt and Clark, Stuart. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999. 5. Print.

³ Bailliot, Magali. *Magie et Sortilèges dans l'Antiquité romaine*. Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2010. 73. Print.

the Greeks noted its functionality as a medium for official documents and civic membership tokens.⁴ For example, lead tokens stamped with the image of armor, which would have been issued to the cavalry, were discovered at the Athenian Agora.⁵ These tokens are thought to date to the third century BC.

Rome, known for its mining of silver, extracted lead from the silver and used it in the place of terracotta for pipes and other architectural purposes. At the pinnacle of power of the Roman Empire, lead production was approximately 60,000 tons per year for 400 years, making Rome its leading producer.⁶ The metal was accessible to various socio-economic classes, and lead functioned as an inexpensive and reliable medium on which to execute a curse. Other mediums such as copper, tin, bronze, limestone, talc, wax, gemstone, cloth, gold, or silver have been associated with tablets. However, most of the surviving tablets are found on lead or lead alloys of lead, copper, and tin.⁷ Lead, albeit a practical material for the tablets due to its ubiquitous availability and ability to be easily inscribed with a stylus or sharp-pointed object, was also believed to possess a magical power. Tablets often cite their nature with specific mention of "*plumbum*" or lead, wishing that a part of the victim may be transformed into lead. One tablet translated by Gager explicitly states:

I have seized Hipponoides and Sokrates and bound their hands and feet and tongues and souls; And if they are in any way about to utter a harsh or evil word about Philon, or do something bad, may their tongues and souls become lead and may they be unable to speak or act (CT no. 66).

⁴ Ankarloo 1999, 11.

⁵ Lang, Mabel. *The Athenian Citizen*. American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2004, 12. Web. (<http://www.agathe.gr/Icons/pdfs/AgoraPicBk-4.pdf>)

⁶ Hernberg, Sven. "Lead Poisoning in a Historical Perspective." *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 38 (2000). 244. Web.

⁷ Ankarloo 1999, 10.

Another example, recorded by Auguste Audollent⁸, a noted epigraphy specialist of the *tabellae defixionum*, states:

*Valentius Sinto inimicus⁹ sic comdi **plumbum** subsidet, sic Sintonem et Martialem Sint[onis] et Adiulorium Sintonis et quisquis contra Rubrium Fr[o]n[tonis] et me Quartionem siqui contraveniet Sintonem et Adiutorium eius Sintonis defero ad infero(s); Sic nusquam contra nos...si respond..nis cum loquantur inferis sic ollumus non paventem tamquam inferos. (DT no. 98, i-ii AD, Germany)*

Valentius Sinto, unfriendly, may he endure the **lead** to be plunged (into him?), thus Sinto and Martialis, (slave) of Sinto, and Adiulorus, (slave) of Sinto, and anyone who was against Rubrius, (slave) of Fronto, and me, Quartus, if anyone will oppose Sinto and Adiutorus of his Sinto I carry to the dead; thus never against us..if [someone] responds..let them speak to those below thus we [...] not just as being terrified at those below/dead.

In these examples, the curser is desirous that the victim's body should become as heavy as lead.¹⁰

Perhaps, lead was thought to be the appropriate writing material given that it is poisonous. The hazardous component of lead has been recorded from as early as the 2nd century by Nikander, a Greek physician:

The harmful *cerussa*, that most noxious thing, which foams like the milk in the earliest spring with rough force...This fluid astringes and causes grave ills...His feeble limbs droop and all motion is still. His strength is now spent and unless one soon aids. The sick man descends to the Stygian shades.¹¹

The Latin word *cerussa* describes white lead; Nikander characterizes the clinical manifestations of lead poisoning and the toxic effects of this lead carbonate. Lead, thus, may have been thought to possess magic powers that would contribute to the downfall of an individual. These texts espouse the idea that the curser wished to render the victim as cold and useless as the lead upon which the curse was written. The heavy, cold, dark colored lead was an ideal medium for the

⁸ *Tabellae Defixionum*, 152.

⁹ Audollent tablet reads: *inimicus*. However, it is likely *inimicus* was intended since the preceding line of this tablet reads: *Valetis Sinto sivi ali inimici?*

¹⁰ Ankarloo 1999, 12.

¹¹ Meurant, Gerard. *Neuroepidemiology: Theory and Method*. San Diego: Academic Press. 1993. 264. Web.

tablets, as these attributes could be transferred unto the victim. Yet, it is important to note that these curse tablets were not written with the intent to kill the victim, but rather with the intent to restrain a person or object by means of employing binding and restraining language.

How were the tablets made?

The tablets were produced in a variety of ways. In one method, the metal was smelted and poured onto a flat surface, creating a metal sheet. This practice did not produce a uniformly flat sheet, as the metal would coagulate in the middle, creating a blob. Tablets could be used in this raw form, but the mass was often hammered out resulting in "cold shuts" or small holes due to imperfect welding. Alternatively, tablets could be produced by placing molten metal between two flat surfaces, which functioned as a mold for the creation of a well-proportioned tablet. Tablets were then inscribed with a sharp object and rolled up or folded over before often being pierced with a nail.¹² This is arguably one reason as to why curse tablets adopted the name "*defixio*," as they were "fixed" with a nail, which symbolized binding or restraint. It is even more remarkable that located tablets have survived and have been deciphered given the complexity of unraveling the scrolled metal. The nail, in essence, functioned as a magical, symbolical constraint by which the victim lost his or her free will from the moment the nail sealed the tablet. The victim, thus, lost his or her ability to act independently and could only combat this immobility by submitting to the desire of the curse.¹³ The inscription was usually placed on one side of the tablet, yet it was also possible for a curse to extend on both sides along either the long or short axes of the medium.

¹² Ankarloo 1999, 13.

¹³ Watson, Lindsay. *Arae: The Curse Poetry of Antiquity*. Leeds: Francis Cairns Publications Ltd., 1991. Print.

Where were they deposited?

Since tablets were often addressed to the gods, they were deposited where those supernatural beings could receive the message. The most common sites of deposition were in a grave, in a chthonic sanctuary, in a body of water, in a place of specific relevance to the curse or its victim, or in a non-chthonic sanctuary.¹⁴ Once inscribed and deposited in special locations, it was believed, their powers took effect. The cold and wet places in which tablets were frequently deposited contribute to the twistedness of the cold, malevolent inscriptions. Deposition in springs, graves or cellars would drag the tablets and their curses downward towards the deities of the underworld. Sherwood Fox describes the efficacy of drowning the tablets, noting:¹⁵

The submersion of the symbol is, therefore, the submersion of the man, and the longer the symbol can be kept under water the more permanent will be the victim's plight. Hence it was desirable to hurl the symbol far out into the current of a stream where it would be safely hidden and subject to rapid corrosion. But it was still more desirable to cast it into the deep waters of the sea where the eye and hand of man would not reach until the day when the sea will give up its magically as well as its literally dead.

Together these different facets may have been thought to "fix" or "bind" the victim, but the degree of literal belief in the power of sympathy is unclear. Instead the curse presented the gods or spirits with an "analogy" for the way in which they should put it into effect. Those spells involving charioteer competitions were often found buried on the floor of hippodromes, as they were often thought to be more effective when in close proximity to the race. For love spells, *defixiones* might be deposited at the home of the desired target.¹⁶ One such example is discussed in the *Life of Saint Hilarion the Hermit*, which was written in the 4th or 5th century C.E. by

¹⁴ Ankarloo 1999, 15.

¹⁵ Fox, Sherwood. "Submerged Tabellae Defixionum." *The American Journal of Philology*. 33.3, (1912): 309. Web.

¹⁶ Ankarloo 1999, 24.

Jerome.¹⁷ It recounts the story of a man, Hilarion, who searches for illicit sex from a virgin. Upon returning from Memphis in Egypt, where we infer he studied magic, he attempts to win over the affection of a young woman.

Therefore after a year, having been taught by the priests of Asclepius, who does not cure souls but destroys them, he came in eager anticipation of illicit sex. He buried under the threshold of a girl's house certain monstrous words and monstrous figures carved into sheets of bronze from Cyprus. The virgin immediately went mad (CT 163).

He buries the curse tablet, described here as bronze, at her home in order for efficacy of his words to grow. This curse above offers insight into the reasons as to why erotic-attraction curses were implemented and demonstrates the effects of its use.

Types of curses and their creation

Who created curse tablets? Was this practice localized to professionals or did it extend to ordinary people as well? It is not quite clear to what extent professionals were consulted in the production of curse tablets, but it is clear amateurs made the majority of examples that have been preserved, on an *ad hoc* basis; it has been noted, however, that the help of a "magician" would have been helpful in manufacturing, inscribing, and depositing a tablet.¹⁸ An element of status accompanied this position, as the client had little choice but to expect that the *magos* possessed a higher power and knowledge, thus, allowing him to understand and implement this unintelligible diction.¹⁹ This language, therefore, was a conduit between the sender and the invoked deities.

Complex texts often employ the *voces mysticae*, also called *voces magicae*—words not immediately recognizable as Greek, Latin, or any other language of the time.²⁰ The

¹⁷ Gager 1992, 261.

¹⁸ Ankarloo 1999, 55.

¹⁹ Gager 1992, 10.

²⁰ Ankarloo 1999, 46.

implementation of the *voces mysticae* drew power from the aforementioned *magos* or professional magicians, who were deemed to be the only individuals with an understanding of these obscure, nonsensical words. Ankarloo explains the origins of the *voces magicae*.²¹

Most were initially corruptions of things recognized as the names of deities or demons in some or other mortal language. The more the individual *voces magicae* were used, whatever their origin, the more familiar they became; and the more they came to be addressed as powers themselves, and correspondingly personalized into the names of demons, the less "unintelligible" and the more genuinely meaningful they would have become. Professionals also probably came to feel quite at home with them.

Although a *magos* might be responsible for creating tablets, the practice of cursing extended to all social classes, even those who could not afford hiring a deemed expert. Due to the fact that anyone could make a tablet, given the availability of lead, it was not uncommon for individuals to formulate and create their own tablets. Indicators, though, do exist that differentiate whether a professional or inexperienced individual created the tablet. Illegible script was often a sign that the inscriber was practically if not completely illiterate and, thus, not a professional, while those tablets created with the help of a professional or *magos* often displayed the *voces magicae*, a practice that secured his vocation and separated him from the "amateurs."²² Ordinary individuals likely would have consulted a professional, who had a certain skillset unique to his trade such as the implementation of magic words, symbols, writing techniques (included writing a Latin curse in Greek letters), and formulas that ensured proper execution of a curse. His most important task was properly naming the victim, as a name functioned as the most fundamental component of the *defixio*. Often, the curser or *magos*, if the

²¹ Ankarloo 1999, 47-8.

²² Ankarloo 1999, 57.

tablet was professionally commissioned, would invoke the deities.²³ In this way, the curser would implore the gods and spirits to act on his or her behalf.

Although the concept of curse tablets is perceived as that of "dark magic," they also functioned as a reflection of quotidian situations and emotions. The tablets cover a wide range of topics, but four categories display themselves as the most prominent. These include: curses against adversaries in lawsuits, curses against competitors, erotic curses of separation and attraction, and prayers for justice. Coursers often avoided naming themselves in the tablets, except in certain prayers of justice or erotic spells of separation and attraction. In doing so, the curser would ensure his or her safety in avoiding retribution from the living and the dead.²⁴ Although the tablets present a wide spectrum of complexity, Gager notes that three main strategies are common:²⁵

1. Direct binding (I bind X)
2. Prayer formulas that appeal directly or indirectly for supernatural assistance (restrain X!)
3. Analogies (As this lead is cold and useless, so may X be cold and useless!)

The efficacy of a curse was often enhanced when a personal object belonging to the victim accompanied the tablet.²⁶ A part of the victim, such as their hair or a fragment of their clothing, would transfer the curse from the part to the whole of the individual. This symbolism was powerful in the execution of a curse, as a part or belonging of the victim invoked the presence of an absent individual. The most striking example of this occurs in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, whereby Photis, the maid of the witch, Pamphile, knowingly brings her the hair of a goatskin in lieu of her

²³ Gager 1992, 12.

²⁴ Ankarloo 1999, 18.

²⁵ Gager 1992, 13.

²⁶ Gager 1992, 18.

beloved's hair to conceal her inability to procure what was asked of her. When the spell takes effect, goatskins come to her door in the place of her beloved.

I saw a man shearing blown goat-skins. Now these were well tied up and blown out, and were hanging up, and the hair he had shorn off was yellow, and much resembled the hair of the Boeotian: and I took a good deal thereof, and dissembling the truth I brought it to my mistress (III.17).

Binding and attraction spells, thus, must be carefully executed in order to properly identify and target the victim. Figurines or dolls were other objects that often accompanied a curse, which contributed to the binding process. Almost all have been discovered with their hands bound behind their backs, signifying a literal binding to their curser. The overall intention of these figures accompanying a *defixio* was to incapacitate the victim while designating him or her as the desired object of one's affection.²⁷ This particular practice was most commonly employed in erotic curses of separation and attraction, as the accompaniment of something in relation to the victim was thought to increase the efficacy of the curse.

Why did the *defixiones* flourish?

Defixiones were quite complex. It would be inaccurate to assume they were simply a piece of metal that cursed another individual. Rather, the practice and execution of a curse was precisely planned, as much preparation and thought went into each tablet. While there was a private aspect of drawing up a *defixio*, it was also a recognized public practice within society. Funerary epitaphs, too, directly reference the practice of cursing. A burial inscription, found in North Africa, recounts the misfortunes that arise as a result of an enemy's curse against another individual. It reads:

²⁷ Gager 1992, 15.

...Here lies Ennia Fructosa, most beloved wife, of unmistakable modesty, a matron to be praised for her unusual loyalty. She took the name of wife at age fifteen, but was unable to live with it for more than thirteen years. She did not receive the kind of death she deserved—cursed by spells, she long lay mute so that her life was rather torn from her by violence rather than given back to nature. Either the infernal gods or heavenly deities will punish this wicked crime which has been perpetrated. Aelius Poculinus, her husband, a tribune in the great Third Legion, the Augusta, erected this monument (CT, 136).

Her death is, thus, attributed to misfortune associated with a curse, which ultimately leads to her untimely demise. Ennia Frustosa loses the ability to speak or the defining human characteristic of expression. Though cursed, her misfortune is not dissimilar from that of Ovid's Philomela,²⁸ who is unable to utter any words after the excision of her tongue by Tereus. In both narratives, this violent motif appears as a grotesque means to silence the victim while both physically and mentally affecting her being. While Philomela is silenced so that Tereus' crime may be concealed, Ennia is muted due to an individual's desire, for whatever reason, to enact a curse upon her.

The tablets were considered to work, as the practice persisted from the 5th century BC to the 7th or 8th century AD. Whether or not their powers, in fact, took effect is debatable, but they were thought to work. In asking the same question, Tomlin responds: "they were believed to work; and perhaps, this belief was justified."²⁹ They "removed intolerable tensions" and permitted "a transfer of emotions."³⁰

Resistance to magic

The success of *defixiones* and effectiveness explains why they were treated as dangerous. As noted above with the unfortunate curse upon Ennia, the aspect of physical harm denotes a

²⁸ See Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book 6.401-652 for further detail.

²⁹ Tomlin, R.S.O. *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, II: The Finds from the Sacred Spring*. Oxford. 1988. 101. Print.

³⁰ Gager 1992, 23.

facet of power that lies beyond the bounds of human control. The suffering and demise of victims, attributed to the potency of curses, pervades the practice of the *defixiones*. They worked in ways that could not be controlled by the legal, social, and political centers of ancient society. Power, thus, was beyond control of the guardians of power. It was in the hands of freely negotiating individuals.³¹ The idea that any private person, for nothing but a small fee, could put power to use in a wide variety of circumstances explains why they were so popular. The fact that an individual, who typically stood outside the "legitimate" structure of society, was able to obtain the means to curse another made the display of magic a countercultural practice. It, thus, was blind to gender and social status. These ideas presented a threat to those who saw themselves as guardians of power at the center of society.³² Magic was something that was within reach of anybody desirous of enacting spells or curses. Literary sources confirm the tablets were deemed potent, as Tacitus recounts the death of Germanicus in the *Annals*:

De aegrotante Germanico narrator. 'Saevam vim morbi augebat persuasion veneni a Pisone accepti; et reperiabantur solo ac parietibus erutae humanorum corporum reliquiae, carmina et devotiones, et nomen Germanici plumbeis tabulis insculptum, semusti cineres ac tabe obliti, aliaque malefica, quis creditor animas numinibus infernis sacrari (Tacitus, Annals 6.29)

Soon he [Piso] was detained there by the failing health of Germanicus, but when he heard of his recovery, while people were paying the vows they had offered for his safety, he went attended by his lictors, drove away the victims placed by the altars with all the preparations for sacrifice, and the festal gathering of the populace of Antioch. Then he left for Seleucia and awaited the result of the illness, which had again attacked Germanicus. The terrible intensity of the malady was increased by the belief that he had been poisoned by Piso. And certainly there were found hidden in the floor and in the walls disinterred remains of human bodies, incantations and spells, **and the name Germanicus inscribed on leaden tablets**, half-burnt cinders smeared with blood, and other horrors by which in popular belief souls are devoted so the infernal deities.

³¹ Gager 1992, 24.

³² Gager 1992, 24.

The *Annals*, which recounts the history of the Roman Empire, was written during the second century CE. Tacitus' literary account demonstrates that tablets might be just as effective in the implication of one's death as poison. He directly attributes the death of Germanicus to that of spells and curse tablets, justifying the belief that tablets were believed to work. The efficacy of the curses is not surprising given the tendency for humans to decide what they want to believe rather than what they ought to believe. Magic placed all power in the magician's hands since he, alone, possessed the power to invoke the *voces magicae* in order to make others believe that something could be done over those things which we have no control.

Chapter 2: An overview of the amatory tablets

The Audollent, Gager, and Kropp collections

Three main collections provide the standard resource on *defixiones*; the authors of these texts include Auguste Audolent, John G. Gager, and Amina Kropp. Each collection varies in scope, yet all provide evidence for the practice of magic during antiquity.

Audollent, the main name now associated with the *defixiones*, edited a collection of curse tablets in his dissertation published in Latin in 1904. This work, *Defixionum Tabellae*, contains the text of 305 tablets and elaborated upon Wüsch's previous appendix to *Inscriptiones Graecae*, gathering the curse tablets from Attica.³³ This was the first comprehensive account published on the subject, as he looked beyond Attica and drew from both Greek and Roman world to provide the reader with the most up to date inventory. In turn, he became the most prominent scholar in this field. Most lead tablets have since been lost, damaged, or are now illegible due to corrosion; thus, his material is invaluable to the study of *defixiones*. Each entry contains the text, accompanied by a brief commentary, tablet dimensions, date created, and provenance of the tablet, if known.

A selected collection of *defixiones* was created and published by Gager in 1992. He explains the impetus for his study in the preface:

It seemed clear that the ancient *defixiones* offered a unique body of data. They are largely unknown, as much to general readers as to scholars; unlike the much more familiar spells written on papyrus and preserved in large collections of recipes for use by professional *magoi*,³⁴ *defixiones* survived because they were actually put into use by clients.³⁵

³³ Wüsch, Richard. "Appendix continens defixionum tabellas in Attica regione repertas." *Inscriptiones Graecae*, III.3 *Corpus Inscriptionum Atticarum*. Berlin. 1897. Print.

Wüsch's edition contained 220 Attic lead curse tablets, all written in Greek.

³⁴ *Magoi*, as discussed above, were professional magicians, who authored and sold spells.

³⁵ Gager 1992, v (Preface).

His work systematically divides the curse tablets and binding spells according to the widely established, definable categories³⁶ presented by various scholars³⁷ in order to allow for easier examination within each sphere. Gager's work provides English translations of tablets and relevant literary sources but does not include the text in its original language.

Since Audollent's collection, though expansive, is not categorized and Gager's text does not include the original Latin, I turned to Amina Kropp's collection to locate a corpus of amatory curse tablets.³⁸ Her book, *Defixiones: Ein aktuelles Corpus lateinischer Fluchtafeln*, includes 535 Latin *defixiones*. Each entry includes the material upon which the curse was written,³⁹ the motive,⁴⁰ the corpus from which it originates,⁴¹ the date of creation, its origin, and the Latin text. Most *defixiones* are prayers for justice, unspecified, or denote competition. However, 17 "Liebe" or amatory tablets from antiquity have been identified. These will be examined in further detail in Chapter 3. The focus of this thesis, then, is on binding curses against faithless or reluctant lovers. First, this chapter will provide background information as to where these "Liebe" *defixiones* are found, followed by who is writing these curses, and concluding with what makes them amatory in classification. This information will better situate the tablets in order to proceed with exploring the similar patterns observed through a close analysis of these amatory tablets.

Where were these found?

The popularity of these tablets is evident in their geographic diversity and distribution.

³⁶ Competition in Theater and Circus; Sex, Love, and Marriage; Court; Business; Pleas for Justice and Revenge; Miscellaneous Tablets; Counterspells; Testimonies

³⁷ Ankarloo 1999, 31.

³⁸ I used Audollent's corpus to obtain supplemental information via his commentary for each designated DT "Liebe" tablet in Kropp's collection.

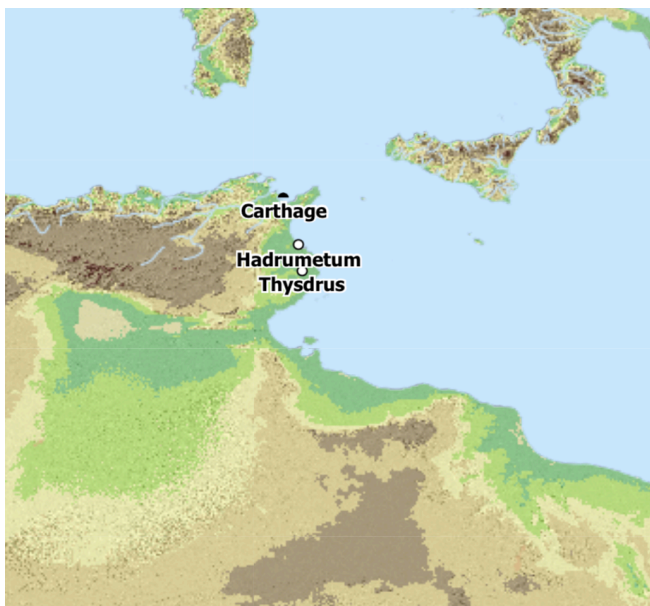
³⁹ Lead is identified by the German word "blei" in Kropp's corpus.

⁴⁰ Amatory tablet is identified by "Liebe."

⁴¹ Audollent, Garcia Ruiz, Besnier, Solin, Tomlin, Woodward/Leach, AE

The various locations of their discovery attest to the widespread acceptance of the curse tablets and their function. The *locus inventionis* or place of discovery, then, is vast; it includes the entire Mediterranean region and ranges from Britain to Asia Minor and includes Egypt, North Africa, Rome, Greece, and Gaul.

Given the large number of extant curse tablets discovered at the site of Aquae Sulis (presently known as Bath, England), approximately 130, it would be logical to conclude that the categorical nature of the tablets would vary. It may be surprising, then, to learn that none pertain to amatory matters. Rather, the tablets found here were directly addressed to the goddess Sulis Minerva, who was venerated both as a Goddess of Healing and as a Goddess of Justice. The thermal spring at Bath, renowned for its curative powers, also became a depository for curse tablets. Sulis Minerva, though recognized for her healing powers, is summoned in all but one⁴² Bath tablet as a Goddess of Justice in order to seek revenge for the return of stolen goods. The tablets, gruesome in content, sought harsh retribution for theft of personal property from patrons of the spa. The Bath curses, then, do not voice a lover's anguish; rather, they were utilized as a



complaint of theft.

There are two major groups of the seventeen amatory tablets analyzed from the "Liebe" collection, both of which are located in North Africa. Three are from Carthage (DT 227, 230, 231) and eleven are from Hadrumetum (DT 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 304; Besnier 13, 14; Solin 42) or

⁴² Ankarloo 1999, 38.

modern Sousse, a strategic Roman seaport in the formerly Carthaginian territory of North Africa. Most tablets were found by archaeologists in the location of their deposition, buried by either the client or magical professional. Given the fact that a majority of these "Liebe" tablets have been found in either Carthage or Hadrumetum, it is clear that a cosmopolitan setting such as these two port cities along the Mediterranean Sea witnessed the highest prevalence and practice of curse tablets. Only three other tablets of the "Liebe" collection remain that have been found elsewhere; they include AE 2000-1611c from Thysdrus, DT 103 from Gallia Belgica, and Solin 11 from Raeting.

The languages employed throughout the *defixiones* in general are just as broad as their geographic distribution. These include Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Coptic, and the non-standard magical language or symbols. However, the "Liebe" tablets from Roman North Africa are the primary concern of this thesis and most manifest themselves in the Latin language with occasional Greek names or as Latin text written in the Greek alphabet. It is certain that the *defixio* was a popular practice that pervaded ancient times regardless of language or geographic location.



Who is writing *defixiones*?

A majority of these tablets are written by men in pursuit of women. Winkler, in his chapter devoted to erotic magical spells, asserts that, "the prescription papyri and tablets are predominantly composed by (or on behalf of) men in pursuit of women."⁴³ A noteworthy example that espouses the idea of male dominance in

⁴³ Winkler, John J. *The Constraints of Desire*. Great Britain: Routledge, 1990. 90. Print.

execution of the tablets and female victimization is a curse figurine of Psyche, located at the Louvre. She is pierced with thirteen nails, and her hands are bound behind her back. A tablet, discovered in Egypt along with the figurine, calls for needles to be placed throughout the body in order to bind Psyche not only spiritually, but also physically. The goal of such a curse is not dissimilar to the "Liebe" tablets analyzed in this thesis. Winkler provides a recipe for the curse accompanying the figurine, which reads, "I pierce such-and-such part of Miss So-and-so, in order that she have no one in mind but me, Mr. So-and-so."⁴⁴ Although this may appear to function as a modern voodoo doll, it was not employed to intend harm upon the victim. Rather, it was a form of all-encompassing control for the male curser over the female's body, soul, and desire. Psychological torment and physiological torment, here, are inseparable just as physique and psyche are mutually necessary for the binding spell's goal of constraint.

From the image, we can discern that nails pierce Psyche's ears, eyes, mouth, head, heart, and reproductive organs. Those piercing her eyes, ears, mouth, and head demonstrate the loss of her cognitive abilities, while the nail through her heart signifies restraint; thus, she must love the agent of the curse. Those throughout the rest of the body may show weakness, as her body has lost strength or these faculties have undergone a paralysis. Not only is she pierced, but she is also bound, showing that she has lost complete agency over both her psyche and physique. This figurine raises the question as to why men wrote a majority of these tablets. Was it solely a method of control for the male? Was a male's desire defined by human bondage, pain, and submission? Whatever the reason may be, Winkler supports that the "submission in question is a "social protocol" that existed "within a cultural system that assumed and demanded a woman's

⁴⁴ Winkler 1990, 94.

submission to the controlling male of her family."⁴⁵ While social implications could, in fact, be a contributing factor to the predominance of male writes, it also could be argued that the tablets were a self-fulfilling means of projecting psychological torment upon the woman whom they desired. Yet, this would imply that only men were capable of falling in love if the curse practice is correlated to men assuaging the uncertainty surrounding their amatory desires. Men, certainly, were not the only ones privy to human emotion. Therefore, it is more likely that these spells were used for males to exert dominance and fulfill their sexual desires.

Although the identity of the curser in the "Liebe" tablets is more often than not unnamed (See Appendix 1), the victim is either explicitly named or the gender is revealed by demonstrative pronouns (*illam, ab illa*) and/or by a direct object (*illam, filium*).⁴⁶ These names, direct objects, and demonstrative pronouns label women as the victims in all but two tablets, DT 103 and DT 270, which indicate male victimage. In the Kropp amatory tablets, then, women are identified as the victim in 13 of the 17 spells (all except Besnier 13, Besnier 14, DT 103, and DT 270). Due to their fragmentary nature, Besnier 13 and 14 do not include the victim's name. From this collection of 17 tablets, DT 270 is the only one that we can conclude was undoubtedly written by a woman.

⁴⁵ Winkler 1990, 96.

⁴⁶ The victim is explicitly named in all tablets with exclusion of seven: DT 103, DT 230, DT 231, DT 268, Besnier 13, and Besnier 14. However, the gender is specified in DT 103 (*filium*), DT 230 (*illam*), DT 231 (*ab illa*), and DT 268 (*illam*). Due to fragmentation, Besnier 13 and Besnier 14 do not include the victim's name.

<i>Tablet</i>	<i>Victim</i>	<i>Tablet</i>	<i>Victim</i>
DT 103	filium (male)	DT 268	illam (female)
Solin 11	Gemella	DT 269	Tottina
DT 227	Successa	DT 270	Sextilius
DT 230	illam (female)	DT 304	Tottina
DT 231	ab illa (female)	Besnier 13	?
DT 264	Victoria	Besnier 14	?
DT 265	Victoria	Solin 42	Vera
DT 266	Vettia	AE 2000, 1611c	Patelaria
DT 267	Bonosa		

What is most striking about the gender roles in curse tablets is the comparative relationship to women in literary texts. In these tablets, women are primarily the intended targets, yet literary texts more often portray women as the practitioners of erotic magic. Fritz Graf, in his book entitled *Magic in the Ancient World*, offers insight into this conundrum:

Why, in literature, is it always the women who perform erotic magic? These stories remove erotic magic still further from away from the world of men; they are thus a means for getting rid of what should not exist.⁴⁷

Literature, therefore, demonstrates magic as a predominantly female practice whereas epigraphic sources reveal the opposite. Above, Graf postulates that men should not engage in the realm of magic. He suggests that male authors deliberately chose women as the executioners of magic to distance the association of the male gender from its practice. When he describes it as "a means of getting rid of what should not exist," he implies that it was a disapproving convention for men to use in comparison to women, who would not receive criticism for engaging in sorcery. He does not, though, deny the fact that men did engage in the writing of curse tablets or magical spells. Instead, he illustrates the perception of men in the magical world to theorize why literature excludes them from its practice.

⁴⁷ Graf, Fritz. *Magic in the Ancient World*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997. 189. Print.

Females practicing ancient magic appear in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, 3.17, Ovid's *Fasti* 571-582, Virgil's Eighth Eclogue, Ovid's *Amores* 3.7.29, Ovid's *Heroides*: Letter VI Hypsipyle to Jason, and Seneca's *De Beneficiis*, VI.35.4 (See Appendix 2). A complex question arises: if men are using the tablets to obtain women, why does classical literature envision the reverse situation? Men desire women in the *defixiones* while literary texts portray women as the practitioners of erotic magic to possess men. One could argue that females as magicians in literature highlight what men fear, and therefore, what they address in the *defixiones*: the power of magic and the potential power of women. Texts and tablets alike desire to procure similar effects, yet Ormand notes that in ancient literature "the reason for this inversion of actual practice is not entirely clear, but it reflects both fantasy about and a fear of women's sexual desires."⁴⁸ This would correlate to the idea that men used curse tablets to exert dominance, as they did not want females, who were perceived as the cause of such suffering and pain, to possess such power over their male counterpart.

Literary texts, thus, predominantly cite women as the initiators of magic, as they seek the help of a wizard or a sorceress so that the love spell leads them to the heart of their lover. But as primary evidence suggests, females seem to write approximately 5% of curse tablets. We can conclude that at least one of the seventeen "Liebe" tablets confirms this female role; yet, there simply are not enough to concretely formulate an exact percentage. Rather, these *defixiones* reveal how the amorous spells were composed mainly by or for men in order to win over the affections of a woman. From the 5th century BCE to the 3rd century CE, *defixiones* flourished; throughout this expanse of time, the ultimate goal of the tablets remained unchanged: to satisfy a personal desire. The *defixiones* imply that the goal of erotic magic was, indeed, love. Yet,

⁴⁸ Ormand, Kirk. *Controlling Desires*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009. 110. Print.

nowhere is marriage ever mentioned, as they seem to reference a sexual union. One could infer, therefore, that the goal was erotic passion, lust or sexual intercourse with the desired victim (*amore, coitus, desidero*).

What makes these tablets amatory? How homogenous are they as a group?

Studying the language and expressions of ancient magic in these *defixiones* not only allows us to learn about ancient history, but it also allows us to examine social structures in relation to the accumulation of knowledge outside the bounds of human power. These magical tablets, after all, function as a method of control for the desirer to obtain a goal. Magic, then, is a method of asserting control over a matter beyond human capability. Although the practice of magic has evolved since ancient times, its goals have remained the same.

The tablets analyzed in this next chapter are all characterized as "Liebe" or amatory tablets by Amina Kropp in her book, *Defixiones*. These tablets, although often fragmentary or mutilated, offer insight into the Roman world concerning amatory relationships. Among these *defixiones* categorized as erotic binding spells of attraction and separation, themes include the proclamation of unrequited love, the desire to "bind" oneself to the one whom is desired, and suffering when one who does not reciprocate desire. These tablets are united by nature of their content. Interestingly, all but three (DT 103, 264, 268) of the seventeen tablets directly contain a form of the word to love (*amor/amare*). Of these three, two contain the word "to bind" in the form of *ligo* (DT 103) and *obligate* (DT 268). Although love is not implicitly stated in these two tablets, the binding nature of them implies that the curser is desirous of a compelled union. Thus, all tablets, even the three that do not have the word love unequivocally inserted in the text, are bound by their amatory nature. The last outlier of the three, DT 264, appears to be an exception,

as it does not allude to love. Rather, it only introduces Victoria, denotes her matrilineal descent, and describes her as the "most beloved of the girls." It could be, though, that DT 264 is an introductory text to the next tablet, DT 265, which also names Victoria as the victim.⁴⁹

The forms of *amor/amare* vary, as in some tablets the demonstration of love is one-sided with the curser described in the accusative as "*amantem*" (DT 230). Other forms include the infinitive compelling the desired victim "to love" the curser (DT 267, 304). The most common form of "*amor/amare*" vocabulary, however, is "*amore*" in the ablative. The ablative of means, employed in all tablets without a preposition, describes how the curser wishes to render the victim replete with love for him (DT 227, 231, 265, 267, 269, 270; Bes. 13, 14; Sol. 42). The second most common usage is "*amet*" as an optative subjunctive (DT 231, 266, 269, 304; Bes. 13, 14; Sol. 42). These tablets are written by men in pursuit of women and the verb is followed by the accusative "*me*," "*me solum*," or by the name of the curser himself.

Another eye-catching feature of these tablets is the naming of the same victim in more than one *defixio*. Both DT 264 and 265 name Victoria as the victim while DT 269 and 304 designate Tottina as the victim. While these could be common names, it is also possible the curses pertain to the same individual given the fact that both sets of identical names were discovered in Hadrumentum.

<i>Tablet #</i>	<i>Case of Victim</i>	<i>Selected Text</i>
DT 264	Victoria (Nom.)	<i>Victoria, quam peperit...</i>
DT 265	Victoriam (Acc.)	<i>Faciatis Victoriam...</i>
DT 269	Tottina (Nom.)	<i>Fac, ut Tottina...me amet...me cogitet...</i>
DT 304	Tottinam/Tottina (Acc/Nom)	<i>Cogite Tottinam.../ut me solum, Tottina</i>

DT 264 introduces Victoria in the nominative case as the favored of the girls (*puellarum*)

⁴⁹ DT 264 will be discussed further on the next page.

deliciae). In DT 265, Victoria becomes the object of the curse, as the user summons a demon to ensure that her affections correspond to his desire. Perhaps, DT 265 functions as an extension or elaboration of DT 264 since it is an uncharacteristically short *defixio*, which simply introduces the victim in a single sentence. Similarly, in DT 269, Tottina is presented in the nominative; the imperative preceding the subject provides that Tottina may always think about and love the user (*me amet...semper de me cogitet*), who is represented by the object *me*. DT 304, then, labels Tottina in the accusative since she is the object of whatever higher entity is commanded to bind her (*cogite*). However, her name also occurs in the nominative case, as it prefaces the designation of her matrilineal descent. Perhaps, one could infer that these tablets were written by the same user and meant to work in tandem. By writing more than one amatory tablet characterizing a longing lust for the same woman, the potency and influence of the curse may have been perceived as more efficacious. Or, another possibility may be that they are fragments of the same tablet. While it is uncertain in what manner these tablets are related, if at all, I would like to offer four conjectures:

1. The tablets pertain to different victims, both of whom were named either Tottina or Victoria.
2. The tablets identify different individuals by the name of Tottina and Victoria.
3. The curses were purposefully written on individual tablets and identify the same victim with the intent for them to work synchronously, increasing the strength of the curse.
4. The tablets are identified separately since they are fragmentary in form. When they were whole, though, DT 264 and DT 265 were on the same tablet (same for DT 269 and DT 304).

Love, whether it is used as a noun or verb in the tablets, pervades these *defixiones*. Love is the desired outcome of the Kropp "Liebe" collection, and the tablets were the means by which cursers believed love could be achieved. The desired effects of these tablets, thus, are similar. Additionally, common themes include curses of binding, separation, and attraction. The most prevalent is that of control. The medium of magic serves as a vehicle for individuals to express a

desire for those things they are unable to control, as it allows one to resolve his or her inner crisis. The supernatural powers often called upon function as a secondary means of persuasion to aid the curser in achieving the desired goal. This control becomes the focal point and true intent of the curser; through his/her language, he attempts to manipulate the victim. By denying the victim agency over his/her sleep, wisdom, intellect, or familial relations, the curser assures that he/she is the focal point of the victim's thoughts.

Chapter III: Close examination of amatory curse tablets

Prevalence of violent diction

Curse tablets have the tendency to be violent in nature with the goal of debilitating the victim so that the individual may become the object of the curser's desire. Violence, though not employed with the purpose to harm, is intended to draw the victim closer to the curser via constraint. In this chapter, I will outline the reasons as to why amatory tablets employ violent diction. Secondly, I will analyze the observed, prevalent themes and repeating formulas that accompany their practice.

Gager outlines varying reasons as to why violent words and desires pervade these amatory tablets. First, he cites the historical development of the *defixiones*, noting the striking resemblance they bear to legal tablets. Those labeled as judiciary, respectively addressed to deities rather than individuals, are classified into distinctive category of curses: prayers for justice. The most prominent cache of such tablets was found at Bath and "all but one of the 130 tablets in this cache"⁵⁰ invokes a god to aid in the return of an individual's stolen property. This tablet falls into the judicial realm, as the wronged individual requests the divinity to appropriate repercussions for the crime committed. An example from the spring of Bath in England reads as follows:

Deae Sulis Minerv(a)e Solinus dono numina tuo maiestati paxsa(m) ba(ln)earum et [pal]leum [nec p]ermitta([s so]mnum nec san[ita]tem. Ei qui mihi fr(a)udem [f]ecit si vir si femi[na] si servus s[i] l[ib]er nissi se retegens istas s[p]ecies ad [te]mplum tuum detulerit....

Solinus to the goddess Sulis Minerva. I entrust to your divinity and majesty my bathing tunic and cloak. Do not allow sleep or health to him who has done me wrong, whether

⁵⁰ Ankarloo 1999, 38.

man or woman, whether slave or free, unless he reveals himself and brings those goods to your temple.⁵¹

Here, Sulis Minerva is called upon in order to return the victim's stolen item and punish the thief. This language closely resembles the curser's wish for the target to suffer from a lack of sleep in the amatory tablets. Aggressive language, intended to both physically and psychologically impair the victim, was a common feature in judicial tablets; thus, it may be inferred that the continuation of this twisted language, which permeates the amatory curses, originated from prayers for justice. This formula (*nec permittas...*), calling for the criminal's punishment until Solinus rightfully regains his tunic and cloak, sends a clear message. The victim does not want the thief to live blissfully and decides that he should suffer both physically (*nec permittas sanitatem*) and mentally (*nec permittas somnum*) until (*nissi*) or under the condition that he obtains his goods (*species*).

These debilitating features are not limited to judiciary tablets. In the context of a theft, these threats desire the restitution of stolen goods. Similar means and practices, also, are observed in amatory tablets. In this context, the lover demonstrates aggressive behavior and actions via the written word in order to obtain the love of the one after whom the curser lusts.

Secondly, Gager notes Winkler's theory of cursing as a therapeutic practice that transfers feelings of longing by projecting them onto the desired target. If pining for love is analogized to an illness, then the client is relieved of his malady in reversing the role of who is affected by such sentiments of love. Winkler observes:

The rite assigns a role of calm and masterful control to the performer and imagines the victim's scene as one of passionate inner torment. But if we think about the reality of the

⁵¹ Fagan, Garrett. *Bathing in the Public World*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999. 37. Print.

situation, the intended victim is in all likelihood sleeping peacefully, blissfully ignorant of what some love-struck lunatic is doing...⁵²

This espouses the idea that tablets functioned as a mechanism of control for the curser, yet at the same time, Winkler also views lust as a noteworthy disease. The spell or curse, then, functions as the means by which these passions are disseminated unto the victim. Winkler is not the only one who makes this point, as S.J. Tambiah declares, "Thus, it is possible to argue that all ritual, whatever the idiom, is addressed to the human participants and uses a technique that attempts to restructure and integrate the minds and emotions of the actors."⁵³ Lust, therefore, becomes the impetus of the curse and the violent diction observed "cures" the curser via a transfer of passion from the client to his target. Gager argues that the target of the curse tablet is the disease; while the client's ardent feelings are relieved, the desired target now is now inflicted with the contagion and is rendered helplessly in love with the client through the process of transference and projection. While this idea speaks to the therapeutic effect of the tablets, it seems more likely that this transfer of emotion was an effect of the *defixiones*, which also provided the client with control over his love life. Arguably, this explains the efficacy of curses and why they were so widely practiced.

Obliviscatur, uratur, non somno: Forgetting, Burning, and Lack of Sleep

Curse tablets sought to express a wish or desire by means of submitting to the client's power. They often wish loss of memory, lack of sleep, lack of success, mental suffering, illness, loss of family and house, defeat in athletic competition, and public humiliation.⁵⁴ Are these wishes to be taken literally? All of these methods function with the goal of exerting power over

⁵² Winkler 1990, 87.

⁵³ Tambiah, S. J. "The Magical Power of Words." *Man* 3.2 (1968): 202. Web.

⁵⁴ Gager 1992, 21.

the victim, as they are representative of the ways through an individual becomes dependent upon the curser. Regardless of one's interpretation of the tablets, they were directed for the human participants and their victims.

In the amatory tablets, the user implements threatening or violent practices to obtain the desired effect: reciprocated love. Analysis of the tablets reveals that three elements recur as most common phrases concerning the curser's quest for love. These include forgetting, madness, and lack of sleep for the victim.⁵⁵ First, we will explore the loss of memory, then insanity, and finally, loss of sleep. Approximately half of the Kropp liebe tablets contain either one or more of these elements (DT 230, 265, 266, 268, 270, Besnier 13, 14, and Solin 42). Of the remaining nine tablets, six are fragmentary, missing the lower half or end of the tablet (Solin 11, 226, 231, 267, 269, 304). Since these were not preserved intact, it is possible the continuation of the tablets may have included one or more of these elements. The remaining three tablets (DT 103, 264, AE 2000-1611c) are shorter in length compared to the others and have terminating punctuation, indicating that these elements were never incorporated in the original text.

Obliviscatur: Forgetting

One tablet that calls for the loss of memory is Besnier 13. This tablet wishes upon the victim "that she may forget her mother and father, all relatives, all friends, and all men" (*ut obliviscatur patris et matris et omnium suorum et amicorum omnium et omnium virorum*).

⁵⁵ Urbanová, Daniela. "Uratu furens amore et desiderio meo – alcuni aspetti delle tabellae defixionum di argomento amoroso." *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 14. 1-2 (2009): 352. Web.

Besnier 13:

<p>User: Male(?) / Victim: Female (?)</p> <p><i>Quam peperit Persephone, obligo...incolumitatem, sapientiam, sensus, ut amet me..., quem peperit...ex hoc die, ex hac hora, ex hoc momento ut obliscatur patris et matris et omnium suorum et amicorum omnium et omnium virorum...insaniens, insaniens, vigilans uratur, comburatur...amore et desiderio meo...Hanc obligo...</i></p>	<p>I bind the one whom Persephone bore, I bind the wisdom, feeling, safety so that she may love me, whom she bore...from this day, from this hour, from this moment so that she may forget her mother and her father and her relatives and all friends and all the men, being mad, being mad, vigilant, let her burn, let her burn...with love and for my desire...bind this one...</p>
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In this tablet, first, the curser binds specific elements of Persephone's child such as her safety, wisdom, and feeling (*incolumitatem, sapientiam, sensus*) so that he may possess full agency over her, compelling her to love him alone. This is demonstrated with the use of an *ut* purpose clause (*ut amet me*), explaining why he resorts to such measures to procure her love for him. After that, another *ut* purpose clause follows, which elaborates upon why he has chosen to bind her —so that she may forget not only her immediate family members, but also anyone with whom she has come in contact throughout her life. This component, then, is not limited to her mother and father (*matris et patris*), as it includes not only all of her friends (*omnium amicorum*), but also all of the men in her life (*omnium virorum*), referring to any of her previous lovers. The repetition of *omnium* three times emphasizes the extent to which the user wishes to exhibit control over his victim—to the exclusion of *all* people around her. The use of *me* and *omnium* is juxtaposed in this tablet. She, the victim, must become forgetful of everyone (*omnium...*), except for the author, identified as *me*, in order to fully love him. To do so, she must forget anyone whom she loved up to this point in time. In this way, the tablet restrains the victim's ability to love everyone, as she is confined to love only the user.

It is equally important to analyze what directly antecedes the use of forgetting (*obliviscatur*) in order to situate this element more accurately in relation to the entire curse. In Besnier 13, the element of forgetting is preceded by a specific timeline as to when the curse should go into effect. The curser does not want to suffer any delays, as he desires that she love him (*ut me amet*) "from this day, from this hour, and from this moment" (*ex hoc die, ex hac hora, ex hoc momento*). These three subsequent elements function as a tricolon, denoting a series of increasingly more restricted time. The specificity of time begins in the broad context of the day (*die*), narrows down to a certain hour (*hora*), and concludes with the most precise unit of time, a moment (*momento*). The immediacy invoked in this tablet is striking, as the user desires his victim to love him and be forgetful of any other individual instantaneously. The repetition of the ablative of time three times not only designates the specific time the victim must become forgetful and desirous of the user, but also, perhaps, such exactitude was thought to contribute to the efficacy of the curse.

Following the element of forgetting in the tablet above (Besnier 13), the user wishes to render the victim mad or insane (*insaniens*). The repetition of *insaniens* twice reinforces the victim's complete loss of agency. Perhaps, the use of *insaniens* has two meanings. On the one hand, *insaniens* may refer to the effect of no longer having a memory, as everyone except the curser has been erased from her mind. On the other hand, it is possible *insaniens* introduces the newly aroused madness and frenzy she possesses for the curser. This will be discussed in greater detail in the *insaniens* section below, which addresses the next prevalent element in the lover's crusade.

Although this analysis focuses on one specific example (Besnier 13), there are four other tablets that likewise feature the theme of forgetting (DT 266, 268, Besnier 14, and Solin 42).

Like Besnier 13 above, the purpose clause, "*ut obliviscatur patris et matris et omnium suorum et amicorum omnium et omnium virorum*" appears in these four other tablets. In three of these four tablets, the formula is the same. DT 268, however, is shorter and reads only "*ut obliviscatur patris et matris.*" Although the beginning of the *ut* clause is consistent with the other *obliviscatur* tablets, DT 268 solely calls for the elimination of the victim's parents (*patris et matris*) without specifying the long-term memory loss of individuals outside the family such as friends and previous lovers or men (*omnium suorum et amicorum omnium et omnium virorum*). This tablet, however, is missing text, which is demonstrated by the ellipsis in the transliteration. One could infer, perhaps, that this tablet is not dissimilar from the others possessing this element of forgetting given consistent nature of the diction throughout the five tablets.

Of these four other tablets, all include some variation of "*ex hoc die, ex hac hora, ex hoc momento.*" Three of these four are identical to Besnier 13 in that the ablative of time when precedes the element of forgetting (DT 266, Besnier 14, Solin 42). In both DT 266 and Besnier 14, the ablative appears as "*ex hoc die, ex hac hora.*" The full tricolon of "*ex hoc die, ex hac hora, ex hoc momento*" is present, however, in Solin 42. Although the last element of the tricolon, *ex hoc momento*, is lacking in DT 266 and Besnier 14, it is just as important to note the unchanging order of the sequence of time; it begins within the broad spectrum of a day before narrowing down to the smaller components, such as an hour or moment, that characterize a day. DT 268, the fourth tablet of forgetting, includes a portion of the ablative of time (*ex hoc die ex hac hora*). However, this one is unique in that it does not follow the same pattern as its counterparts given the fact that the sequence of time is placed directly after the *ut* purpose clause desiring forgetfulness rather than before it.

In two of these four tablets (Besnier 14 and Solin 42), the phrase "mad...mad...vigilant" (*insaniens...insaniens...vigilans*) immediately follows the *ut* purpose clause expressing loss of memory. DT 266 also features the diction "*insaniens, insaniens, vigilans*." However, words denoting the birth of the curser are included in the tablet before the user, himself, renders his victim, Vettia, mad. The last of these tablets, DT 268, does not employ this repeated diction. This tablet, though, does seem to be an outlier, as it is inconsistent with the patterns observed on the other *obliviscatur* tablets (DT 266, Besnier 13, 14, Solin 42). Not only does the ablative of time when (*ex hoc die ex hac hora*), signifying the immediacy and effectiveness of the curse in a given time, follow the *ut* clause of forgetting, but the tablet also is not characterized by the state of madness that results from the curser's desires.

Overall, the loss of memory plays an important role throughout these tablets in that memory is what ties individuals to others. Memory, in essence, denotes all social obligations and serves as a locus of kinship. When memory is penetrated, the victim's previous engagements, thoughts, and links become obsolete. In turn, the victim becomes entirely dependent upon the user's desires.

Insaniens et uratur: Going mad and burning

Another feature of these tablets includes rendering the victim mad or insane, demonstrated by the use of *insaniens*. This wish appears in Besnier 13, 14, Solin 42, and DT 266. Besnier 14:

<p>User: Male(?) / Victim: Female(?)</p> <p><i>...sapientiam, sensus, intellectum, voluntatem..., quam peperit Rus..., oblige, ut amet me, ..., quem peperit..., ex hoc die, ex hac hora, ut obliviscatur patris et matris et omnium suorum et amicorum et omnium virorum...insaniens, insaniens, vigilans uratur, comburatur amore et</i></p>	<p>I bind the wisdom, feeling, intellect, and will of the one whom Rus bore so that she may love me...whom she bore...from this day, from this hour, so that she forgets her mother and all her relatives and all her friends and all men...being mad, being mad, let her burn, vigilant, let her</p>
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<i>desiderio meo..ex hoc die ex hac hora...</i>	burn with love and with my desire...from this day, from this hour...
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Besnier 14 possesses many similarities to the aforementioned Besnier 13 tablet. Firstly, the victim's same qualities (*sapientiam, sensus, intellectum*) in addition to her will (*voluntatem*) are bound by the curser. Although the word *obligo* or "I bind" does not precede the accusatives as in Besnier 13, *obligo* appears after the accusatives and the maternal identification of the victim. While this tablet presents itself as more fragmentary in form than Besnier 13 given the numerous ellipses, one could infer that *obligo* is the main verb, indicating the nominative or doer of the action. The element of time (*ex hoc die, ex hac hora*), pinpointing when the curse will reveal itself to the victim, both frames the *ut* clause of forgetting (*ut obliviscatur patris et matris et omnium suorum et amicorum et omnium virorum*) and concludes the curse tablet. Then, the theme of madness (*insaniens*) emerges immediately after the victim has been compelled to lose her memory. The diction signifies that the victim "is mad" or "crazy." Afterwards, another adjective in the nominative (*vigilans*) modifies the victim. This is followed by *uratur* and *comburatur*. The victim is characterized by "burning," marking the effect of the curser's pursuit. She is "burned by/with the curser's desire and love" (*amore et desiderio meo*). Once again, the timeframe appears in descending order, designating when the curse should be implemented.

The element of madness is more complex than it appears. It is quite possible to interpret *insaniens* in different manners. I could not help but wonder whether she is mad with desire or, perhaps, rendered mad due to her complete loss of all familial and amicable connections, which ultimately shape her identity? Madness is also coupled with the idea of burning. Is the victim burning with a passionate desire, having been imposed upon her by the curser? Or is the curser also burning profoundly with love and projects his lustful emotions unto his victim in order to

find solace? This burning, thus, may present itself as a therapeutic exercise for the curser to transfer his feelings, which functions as a temporary relief from the madness that afflicts him.⁵⁶

Interestingly, the vocab about burning (*uro, comburo, ardeo*) is observed in all tablets whereby the victim is rendered mad (DT 266, Besnier 13, 14, and Solin 42). Burning, thus, seems to work synchronously with *insaniens*.

Non somno, non dormiat, et vigilans: Lack of sleep

A final feature includes wishing a lack of sleep for the cursed, thus, completing the triad of commonly appearing tablet elements. In denying sleep, the curser exerts control, rendering the victim dependent upon his desires. One such curse is invoked by Felix against Vettia; he prays for her to forsake all others to only have him in mind (*ut obliviscatur*) and denies her sleep (*non dormiat*), food (*non cibum, non escam accipere possit*) and enumerates the parts of the victim's body upon which the curser wants punishment inflicted (*sensum, sapientiam et intellectum et voluntatem*).

Audollent 266:

<p>User: Felix / Victim: Vettia</p> <p><i>...commendo tibi quod..., ut illam immittas daemones...aliquos infernales, ut non permittatur...me contemnere, sed faciat quaecumque desidero. Vettia, quam peperit Optata, vobis enim adiuvantibus, ut amoris mei causa non dormiat, non cibum, non escam accipere possit. (magic words) Obligo Vettiae, quam peperit Optata, sensum, sapientiam et intellectum et voluntatem, ut amet me Felicem, quem peperit Fructa, ex hoc die ex hac hora, ut obliviscatur patris et matris et omnium, et amicorum omnium et omnium virorum amoris</i></p>	<p>I entrust to you what...so that you may send her spirits...the others infernal...let it not be permitted...to think little of myself but I desire whatever she may do. Vettia, whom Optata bore, for with the one having been helped for you, just as the cause of my love may not sleep; let her be unable to accept food and meat. I bind the feeling and wisdom and intellect and desire of Vettia, whom Optata bore, let her love me, me Felix, whom Fructa bore, from this day and this hour, so that the esteem of the father, of the mother, of all the</p>
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⁵⁶ Gager 1992, 81.

<i>mei gratia, Felicis, quem peperit Fructa. Vettia, quam peperit Optata, solum me in mente habeat insaniens, insaniens, vigilans; uratur frigat...ardeat Vettia, quam peperit Optata, ...amoris et desiderii mei causa...</i>	sisters, and of all friends, and of all men thanks to the love of me. Felix, whom Fructa begot. Vettia, whom Optata bore, let her, being mad, alone have me in mind, being mad, vigilant ; let her roast, and let her burn. Let Vettia, whom Optata bore, burn...for the sake of my love and desire.
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This expression of sleep, here, not only indicates that the victim should be restrained by the curser's action, but first and foremost that the victim must suffer. After having taken away her sleep and food, the user describes the victim: "may she, mad (*insaniens*), forget her father, mother, friends (*ut obliviscatur patris et matris et omnium, et amicorum omnium et omnium viorum*) and all other men from this day, hour (*ex hoc die ex hac hora*) thanks to my love (*amoris mei gratia*) and only have me in mind (*me in mente habeat*). Without sleep, food, and her free will, Vettia becomes dependent upon the curser, who effectively erases her individuality so that she will conform to his desires.

While DT 266, above, denies sleep in the form of *non dormiat* (in addition to DT 267, 270) there are two other means through which this is accomplished in the tablets: *non somno* (DT 230, 265, 270) and *vigilans*, which also appears in DT 266 as well as Besnier 13, 14, and Solin 42. Thus, a verb (*dormio*), noun (*somnus*), and adjective (*vigilans*) function with the same purpose: to impair the victim both mentally and physically. *Vigilans* implies that the victim will be rendered "wakeful." In the four tablets that employ the adjective form, the use of *vigilans* directly follows the element of madness (*insaniens*) and precedes the feature of burning (*uro, comburo, ardeo*). This is witnessed in DT 266, which is the sole tablet to invoke lack of sleep with the combination of both *non dormiat* and *vigilans*.

In denying sleep, the user affects the physical and mental wellbeing of the victim by halting normal bodily functions. Sleep and cognition are often associated, especially in memory

consolidation. Perhaps, the lack of sleep precedes the loss of memory in this tablet to emphasize both the function and effect of sleep upon the body. It may be assumed, however, that these afflictions cease once the wishes of the user are fulfilled.

Tabulated re-occurring features of tablets

These reoccurring features of the coercive curser have been tabulated in this section. Below, you can see the combination of elements varies from tablet to tablet. One tablet from the Kropp collection contains all three elements (*obliviscatur, insaniens, non somno/non dormiat/vigilans*; DT 266). The main element is often associated with a sub-element; for example, every tablet that features *obliviscatur* also displays the descending order of time (*ex hoc die...*). Additionally, each tablet that renders the victim mad (*insaniens*) includes the use of *uro, comburo, or ardeo*.

The most common combination from the triad is loss of memory and insanity. (Besnier 13,14, Solin 42, DT 266). These four tablets also exhibit the descending order of time (*Ex hoc die... ex hac hora*) as to when the tablets' powers should begin, as well as the vocabulary of burning (*uro, comburo, ardeo*). Interestingly, these five most commonly appearing elements (*obliviscatur, ex hoc die..., insaniens, Uro..., non somno...*) occur in a nearly equal ratio with the exception of *non somno, non dormiat, and vigilans*. *Obliviscatur* and *ex hoc die* appear in five of the nine tablets, while *insaniens*, and *uro* are present in four of the nine tablets. Loss of sleep, though, occurs with the highest frequency, appearing in eight of the nine tablets. While the tablets are not identical, a clear formulaic pattern is observed. This is most likely a result of "the

recipes the local *magos* had available in his or her collection of recipes."⁵⁷ Thus, the language, as result of cultural forces, is remarkably formulaic.

Tablet #	1.) <i>obliviscatur</i>	1a.) <i>ex hoc die... ex hac hora...</i>	2.) <i>insaniens</i>	2a.) <i>uro, comburo, ardeo</i>	3.) <i>non somno, non dormiat, vigilans</i>
Besnier 13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Besnier 14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DT 230					✓
DT 265					✓
DT 266	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DT 267					✓
DT 268	✓	✓			
DT 270					✓
Solin 42	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total	5	5	4	4	8

Despite the violence in expression and content, the aim of these sadistic wishes is not to harm the desired target; rather, the purpose is to force the victim to realize the wishes of the pining, amorous individual. In binding via such actions, the curser wishes to constrain the target of his affection so that she may come to him.

Diction: *Mea causa et meo desiderio*

The user often distinguishes that the cursed individual is the cause of his or her suffering. The emotions displayed in curse tablets are strong and include feelings of anger, love, and jealousy. In this way, these curses tell us much about the personal lives of individuals.

⁵⁷ Gager 1992, v (Preface).

<i>Tablet #</i>	<i>Desire</i>	<i>Case</i>
DT 227	<i>desiderio</i>	Ablative
DT 230	<i>Desiderii (2x), desiderium</i>	Genitive, Accusative
DT 231	<i>desiderio</i>	Ablative
DT 265	<i>desiderii</i>	Genitive
DT 266	<i>desidero, desiderii</i>	Verb, Genitive
DT 270	<i>desiderio (3x)</i>	Ablative
Besnier 13	<i>desiderio</i>	Ablative
Besnier 14	<i>desiderio</i>	Ablative
Solin 42	<i>desiderio</i>	Ablative

There are three tablets (DT 230, 265, 266) whereby the victim is rendered as the cause (*mea causa*), which functions as the ablative, of the curser's desire (*mei desiderii*). While the woman is addressed as the direct cause of such longings, the ultimate goal of the tablets is to satisfy the curser's desires. This is evidenced by the prevalence of the

term "desire" in nine of the 17 tablets. As seen from the table, the genitive is employed when designating the woman as the cause of the user's desire. The ablative, the most common usage, is witnessed when the user wishes for her to be overcome with his love (*amore*) and desire (*desiderio*). This desired action, then, binds the victim to the user, who exerts his authority and dominance by tormenting or maddening the victim; in theory, this "binding" compels the victim to come to the practitioner and reciprocate his feelings. The desired effect, in turn, is love or affection, which is accomplished with these spells of uncontrollable lust.

Obligo...Cogo

Central to the curse tablets or *defixiones* is the idea of binding. In practice, this was meant in a literal sense. After inscribing the curse and designating the victim, the curser essentially had "bound" that individual, making him/her helpless to resist the curse. Hence, there is a prominence in the tablets to use direct binding diction in the form of *obligo* and *cogo*. While

obligo means "to bind" and *cogo* means "to compel," the two verbs are used for the same purpose: to forcibly draw the victim of the *defixio* to the curser. The verb, compel, may arguably be classified as a form of binding, as the victim is obliged to conform to the curser's desire.

Direct binding diction appears in DT 230, 265, 266, 267, 268, 304 as well as Besnier 13, 14, and finally, Solin 42. Nine of the seventeen tablets, then, contain either *obligo* or *cogo*. The curser repeatedly binds the "feeling, intellect, safety, desire/will, and wisdom" of the victim (*sensum, sapientiam, intellectum, voluntatem, et incolumitatem*; DT 266, 268; Besnier 13, 14; Solin 42). The binding of these defining qualities of humanity signifies the curser's motive to seek fulfillment of his desire. He also compels her "to come to him, to love him, and to think of him" (*venire ad me, ut amet me*; DT 230, 265, 267, 304). These two patterns—to bind the intrinsic characteristics of an individual and to compel an individual to love the presumed, desirous male—account for all "*obligo...cogo*" tablets, once again demonstrating the formulaic nature of the *defixiones*.

Various verb forms of *obligo* and *cogo* are observed. The most frequent include the imperative mood (DT 230, 267, 268, 304) and present tense (DT 266, Besnier 13, 14, Solin 42). It is plausible the commanding to gods functions in two manners. Firstly, it serves as a curser's order to the god to "bind" the victim to him as a requirement of his desire.⁵⁸ Secondly, the imperative also seems to be a plea, rather than an order, to a god or demon to assist in the execution of a binding act. Four other tablets are written in the first person in which the curser possesses agency over his words. The indicative mood states what is happening, as the curser directly employs the present, active *obligo* as a fact. An *ut* purpose clause (DT 265) also is seen as a form of binding diction. In this tablet, the user adopts a competitive tone and describes

⁵⁸ Although the identification of some of the cursers is unknown, a majority of these amatory tablets are written by men in pursuit of women so I will refer to the victim as "her."

Ballincus of Lollii as a threat if he comes before (*ante me venire*) the practitioner of the curse.

The subjunctive below, *ut illam cogas*, expresses a hypothetical wish.

Audollent 265:

<p>User: Male(?) / Victim: Victoria</p> <p><i>Faciatis Victoriam, quam peperit Suavulva, amantem furem prae amore meo neque somnum videat, donec ad me veniat puellarum deliciae. Haud secus Ballincus Lolliorum de curru actus ne possit ante me venire et tu, quicumque es daemon, te oro, ut illam cogas amoris et desiderii mei causa venire ad me.</i></p>	<p>May you make Victoria, whom Suavulva bore, let you see a raging lover before my love and may she not see sleep, until the favorite of the girls may come to me. Not at all let Ballincus of Lollii, having been urged from the chariot, be able to come before me and you, whatever demon you are, I beg you, may you compel her to come to me for the sake of my love and desire.</p>
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Interestingly, the curser of this tablet addresses a demon (*daemon*), whom he invokes with the second person plural of "to make" (*faciatis*); the user, identified by the verb in the first person (*oro*), begs this higher (*te*) power that he may compel her to come to him (*venire ad me*). What makes this tablet so unique is that not only is Victoria compelled to fall in love with the user, but he also wishes for Ballincus to fall from his chariot. Or, perhaps, it could solely be a single curse in that the user solely wishes to gain victory over Ballincus in pursuit of Victoria. Nevertheless, this subjunctive mood differs from the imperative in that it functions more so as a wish or a weaker command.

The last example is the present active participle, *cogens*, of DT 230. This nominative modifies a demon, Νοχθιριψ. The user identifies this specific demon as "compelling" and believes that he, alone, has the ability to command her, the victim, to have sexual intercourse with him (*coge illam mecum coitus facere*). This is the only example where binding diction modifies a noun rather than presenting itself in verb form that expresses agency over the action.

Additionally, the binding diction appears twice in the section devoted to Νοχθιριψ. Not only

does he exemplify "binding" qualities in his character, but he possesses the capability to carry out a compelling action, which is denoted by the verb form *coge*.

Tablet #	Imperative (<i>coge/cogite</i> , <i>obligate</i>)	First person (<i>obligo</i> , <i>cogo</i>)	Present active participle	<i>Ut</i> purpose clause
DT 230	✓		✓	
DT 265				✓
DT 266		✓		
DT 267	✓			
DT 268	✓			
DT 304	✓			
Besnier 13		✓		
Besnier 14		✓		
Solin 42		✓		
Total	4	4	1	1

The word "bind" (variations of *obligo or cogo*) may be interpreted literally and figuratively. The duality is striking: the lover wishes to "bind" the victim to him at the same time as the tablet is nailed and "bound" for higher entities to carry out the message.

Why do tablets cite matrilineal descent?

A recurring element among the Kropp tablets is the repetition of the phrase *quam peperit*, which is used to name the mother of the victim in the tablets. This is an unusual feature of the tablets in that often the mother's name is used instead of the father's, defying the normal social convention of including a filiation as part of a Roman name. Perhaps, the mother's name provided greater certainty in that maternity was a known, identifying feature of a person. This feature of matronymic is quite prevalent, appearing in 12 of the 17 Kropp tablets (DT 230-31, 264-69, 304; Besnier 13-14; and Solin 42). Under Roman law, paternal authority dominated, as family was male-dominated by the *pater familias*. In a broader context of society, women were

not active in the public sphere and were defined by the social class of their fathers and husbands. Consequently, they had limited roles in public life since they could not vote or hold political positions. The wife, functioning under the *manus* or hand of her husband, stood in the shadows of his power.⁵⁹ Her status and identity were often perceived in relation to her husband's. Curse tablets are unique because they are not limited to any social class or gender; though only one of the seventeen 'Liebe' tablets undoubtedly was written by a woman (DT 270), nevertheless, the tablets serve as a medium for females to voice their desires just as men could. This diverges from the customary representation of women's status and role in the ancient world, which is predominantly recorded by male writers. Non-literary evidence such as inscriptions and curse tablets, therefore, offer insight into the lives of ordinary women.

Why is it that women's names were so readily cited in these tablets? The mother's name appears in the nominative in all of these cases, demonstrating the formula *quam peperit* that precedes the naming of matrilineal descent. While one interpretation may be that the *mater certa* dominated the *partes incertus*, it may also be that the custom derived from the conditions surrounding slavery by Roman Law.⁶⁰ A child, born by an enslaved mother or *ancilla*, automatically became a slave regardless of his patrimonial descent. The definition of citizenship, thus, arose due to the certainty of the mother since the father could indefinitely remain undetermined. It was only in marriage the child would be linked to the father; however, slave women were forbidden to marry.⁶¹

In inscriptions, a male Roman citizen's name consisted of five parts: the *praenomen*, *nomen*, filiation, tribe, and *cognomen*. The tablets diverge from this practice in that they do not

⁵⁹ Gardner, Jane. *Women in Roman Law and Society*. Great Britain: Croom Helm, 1986. 11. Print.

⁶⁰ Gager 1992, 14.

⁶¹ Gardner 1986, 210.

contain any reference to the father. This funerary inscription, for example, demonstrates the customary patrilineal representation of descent, highlighting the predominance of a male's name.

*M(arco) Alleio Q(uinti) f(ilio) Men(enia) Minio, Ilv(iro) i(ure) d(icundo), locus sepulturae publice datus ex d(ecreto) d(ecurionum).*⁶²

For Marcus Alleius Menenia Minius, son of Quintus, duovir, the place of the tomb having been given by the public by decree of the decurions.

A women's name, on the other hand, consisted of three parts: the *nomen*, filiation, and the *cognomen*. A slave possessed only one name.

The matronymic function of these tablets of attraction and separation is not dissimilar from Lycian custom. In *The Histories*, Herodotus 1.173 speaks about the Lycians of Asia Minor and discusses the common practice of matronymics:

Their customs are partly Cretan and partly Carian. But they have one which is their own and shared by no other men: they take their names not from their fathers but from their mothers, and when one is asked by his neighbor who he is, he will say that he is the son of such a mother, and rehearse the mothers of his mother. Indeed, if a female citizen marries a slave, her children are considered pure-blooded; but if a male citizen, even the most prominent of them, takes an alien wife or concubine, the children are dishonored. (translation from Perseus).

Herodotus, born in nearby Halicarnassos, would be familiar with Lycia and, therefore, can be considered a credible source. He acknowledges the rarity of this practice in that "it is shared by no other men." Nicolaus of Damascus, a Greek historian and philosopher, espouses this view on Lycians: "The Lycians pay more attention to women than to men. They name themselves after their mothers, and their possessions pass by inheritance to the daughters instead of to the sons."⁶³

⁶² AE 1891, 0166 (EDR071603)

⁶³ McLennan, J.F. *Studies in Ancient History*, chapter on 'Kinship in Ancient Greece.' New York: Macmillan and Co., 1886, 684. Web.

An even more compelling reason as to why women's names appear is that magic functioned as a means to display the countercultural.⁶⁴ The literary evidence above portrays women of the Lycian culture as having the dominant status, yet this hardly reflects the Roman customs. Magical practice was a countercultural practice in that its performance may attribute to undermining the law courts of Rome. Through the tablets, albeit a supernatural practice of power primarily intended for personal advantage, women exhibited an agency that allowed them to escape from the regulations set in place by their gender. The Kropp "Liebe" tablets cite female names that are unassociated with their male counterpart, signifying a violation of Roman naming convention. This revolt against the customary demonstrates the written voice of women, who were traditionally identified by a male counterpart. The use of matrilineal descent, though, seems to conflict between what is actually evidenced in the tablets, as the male voice dominates the practice of cursing.

In a close examination of DT 264 and 265, in particular, the matrilineal descent is attributed to Suavulva. DT 264 contains the magic words $\text{I}\alpha\omega\ \Sigma\alpha\beta\alpha\alpha\theta$, which function as the "*vores magicae*" that precede the curse. Thus, whoever drew up the curse was the sole individual who understood what was intended by these words. Victoria, herself, appears to be a popular victim, as she is the victim in DT 265, a more loquacious spell of attraction. Suavulva is an unlikely name and, perhaps, fictitious name of Victoria's mother, as it is a combination of the two words "*sua*" and "*vulva*," emphasizing that the victim was born from "her womb."

⁶⁴ Ankarloo 1999, 61.

Latin in Greek script

Five of the seventeen Kropp tablets are written in the Greek alphabet, yet the words are in the Latin language (DT 231, 267, 269, 270, 304). The use of the Greek alphabet to write a Latin text was thought to enhance the magical effect of the tablet. Perhaps, if Greek spirits would not respond, the Latin spirits would respond, providing a dual form of vengeance. Audollent offers insight to this conundrum with his commentary on DT 270, which featured Latin written in Greek script. He notes:

Qui tabellam exaravit sermonis potius latini quam graeci fuisse hominem opinanti Brealio adsentior, etenim non raro lapsus est dum utitur insuetis litteris et vocabulis; graecum vero alphabetum adhibuit, cum esset linguae expers, cui magis fiderent ad obligandam deorum voluntatem (373)

Whoever noted down the tablet had been a man more powerful in Latin conversation (*sermonis*) than in Greek; I agree with the opinion of Bréal (cited by Audollent). For seldom, it did not perish then it uses the letters and vocabulary; truly it employed the Greek alphabet, when the one free from language had been, to whom they trust the magician for binding the will of the gods.

Audollent proposes the interesting idea that those tablets written in Greek script with decipherable Latin words directly correlated to the linguistic abilities of the curser or one who wrote the *defixio*.

Spirits invoked: Demons

Audollent 230:

User: ? / Victim: Female (illam) <i>Καταζιν, qui es in Aegypto magnus daemon, aufer illi somnum, usque dum veniat ad me et animo meo satisfaciat.</i> <i>Τραβαζιαν, omnipotens daemon, adduc amantiem aestuantem amoris et desiderii mei causa Νοχθιριψ, qui es cogens daemon, coge illam mecum coitus facere. Βιβιριζι, qui es</i>	<i>Καταζιν, you are the one who is a great spirit in Egypt, remove the sleep of him, continually until he should come to me and satisfy my mind.</i> <i>Τραβαζιαν, all-powerful spirit, bring to me the lover boiling for the sake of my desire and my love.</i>
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<p><i>fortissimus daemon, urgue, coge illam venire ad me amantem aestuantem amoris et desiderii mei causa. Πικουριθ, agilissime daemon in Aegypto, agita a suis parentibus a suo cubili et aerie quicunque caros habet et coge illam me amare, mihi conferre ad meum desiderium...vi kyrie aut ab...peperit...deum...facias.</i></p>	<p>Νοχθιριψ, you who are a compelling demon, compel her to have sexual intercourse with me. Βιβιριζι, you who are the bravest spirit, press hard, compel her to come to me, the love burning of love and the cause of my desire. Πικουριθ, the most nimble spirit, stir about from her parents, and whoever has the dear ones from his bed and compel her to love me, to unite me to my desire..with strength, Oh lord...from..she bore...god...let you do.</p>
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This is a curse against a woman (*illam*), whose name may have once appeared in portions of the tablet that are now damaged. A would-be lover entreats demons to aid him in arousing her feelings of love and to send her to him. This tablet was found rolled up in one of the tombs of the imperial officials in Carthage.⁶⁵ Additionally, there is writing on the back of the tablet, perhaps, an attempt of the curser to compose it himself. Being a novice, it is plausible he took it to a professional, who completed the legible curse on the obverse. The demonic names, written in Greek, include *Καταζιν*, *Τραβαζιαν*, *Νοχθιριψ*, *Βιβιριζι*, and *Πικουριθ*. The Greek alphabet is employed to name Greek demons, and Audollent writes that it serves as an epithet for each demon.⁶⁶ Interestingly, each spirit above is invoked with a positive tone and attitude. They are addressed with the utmost respect, as each are modified by a complementary adjective (*magnus*, *omnipotens*, *cogens*, *fortissimus*, *agilissime*). These demons are great, all-powerful, compelling, the strongest, and the most agile; since these *daimones* or demons were invoked to carry out the spell, it is possible the efficacy was thought to increase if flattery was employed on the curser's behalf. This favorable, descriptive diction, therefore, reflects the powers or perceived powers of the demons. Yet, it is the user who is commanding these entities, as he orders them

⁶⁵ *Prodiit convolute e quodam sepulcro officialium familiae imperatoriae* (Aud., 301)

⁶⁶ *praeterea suum esse cuique daemioni epitheton et quasi proprium munus* (Aud., 302)

with direct commands to execute his desires (*aufer, adduc, coge, urgue*). One theory as to why the user uses the imperative is to exercise power over the demon, yet this seems unlikely given the complimentary terms employed to identify him. Watson, in describing the nature of the *defixiones*, attests:

They fall into the category of black magic, and it is usual for persons uttering a magical spell to express their wishes in the fullest possible terms, in order to avoid any misapprehension on the part of demons or spirits who will execute it.⁶⁷

It is probable, then, that the imperative mood expresses the user's wish "in the fullest possible terms." The exhortation implies a forceful request, governed by a sense of immediacy. These individual commands to each demon appear brief and brusque, showing the user's steadfast insistence to effect the curse as quickly as possible. The imperative mood's sense of urgency allows the demons "to avoid misapprehension" given the clear, succinct expression of the user's desires.

Diverse array of invocations: Greek, Jewish, Egyptian and *voces magicae*

Voces magicae, the phrase for magical words of power, flourished in curse tablet language during and following the Roman Early Imperial Period.⁶⁸ These were powerful in and of themselves, representing the names of demons and divine epithets. Similar to cultures across the ancient world, the ancient Mediterranean Basin placed power in naming; thus the practitioner employed the *voces magicae* as a declaration of his power and ability to control the demon or deity invoked. The *defixio* used to examine the *voces magicae* differs from the all others in the

⁶⁷ Watson 1991, 12.

⁶⁸ Daniel Odgen, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds," in Ankarloo and Clark, eds. *Magic and Witchcraft in Europe: Greece and Rome*, (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 1999), 38-39.

previously examined ones, as this tablet is not written by a man in pursuit of a woman. This one tablet features a woman, Septima, who attempts to win over Sextilius' love through magic.

Audollent 270:

<p>User: Septima / Victim: Sextilius</p> <p><i>Adiuro...per magnum deum et per Anterotas...et per eum, qui habet accipitrem supra caput et per septem stellas, et ex hora hoc composuero, non dormiat Sextilius, Dionysiae filius, uratur furens, non dormiat neque sedeat neque loquatur, sed in mente habeat me, Septimam, Amoenae filiam; uratur furens amore et desiderio meo, anima et cor uratur Sextilii, Dionysiae filii amore et desiderio meo, Septimae, Amoenae filiae. Tu autem, Abar Barbarie Eloie Sabaoth Pachnouphy Pythiepemi, fac Sextilius, Dionysiae filius, ne somnum contigat, sed amore et desiderio meo uratur, huius spiritus et cor comburatur, Omnia membra totius corporis Sextilii, Dionysiae filii. Si minus, descendo in adytus Osyris et dissolvam την ταφήν et mittam, ut a flumine feratur; ego enim sum magnus decanus dei, magni dei AXRAMMAXALALA: E.</i></p>	<p>I swear by (under curse)...by the great god and by Anteros and by him, who has a hawk above his head, and by 7 stars, I will have collected this from any hour, do not let Sextilius sleep, the son of Dionysia, let him burn, raging, do not let him sleep nor sit nor speak, but let him have me (Septima, the daughter of Amoena) in mind. Let him burn, raging, with love and for my desire. Let the soul and heart of Sextilius burn, the son of Dionysia, with love and for my desire, for Septima, the daughter of Amoena. But you Abar Barbarie Eloie Sabaoth Pachnouphy Pythiepemi, make that Sextilius, the son of Dionysia, do not let him befall sleep, but may he burn with love and for my desire, let his spirit and heart be burned, all limbs of the entire body of Sextilius, the son of Dionysia. If not, I descend into the adytus of Osyris and I will destroy the burial and I will send so that it may be brought from the river, for I am a great imperial officer of the god of the great god AXRAMMAXALALA: E</p>
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In DT 270, Septima invokes magical names such as Anterotas, Abae Barbarie Eloie Sabaoth Pachnouphy Pythiepemi, and Axrammaxalala:e so that all of Sextilius' mind and body will desire her; if anything less is accomplished by the infernal powers, she threatens that she will descend to the secret realms of the great Egyptian god Osiris, shatter his coffin, and let it be carried off by a river. The copious collection of these demonic names and repeated requests represent the extent to which the woman curser, Septima, wanted to secure the fate of Sextilius.

This tablet, written entirely in the Greek alphabet but in Latin words, calls upon Anterotus or Anteros, the god of requited love and avenger of unrequited love. Anteros etymologically originates from the Greek prefix *ant-*, meaning equal to, and the noun *eros*, meaning love. In Greek mythology, Anteros was the son of Aphrodite and Ares and brother to Eros. He was created to assuage the suffering and loneliness of his brother. The fraternity between the two is moving and demonstrates how love cannot persist without it being reciprocated. Eros, then, functions as the god of love while Anteros is the god of its return. One of the earliest accounts of *anteros* used in literary sources is Plato's *Phaedrus*. He states, "And in the lover's presence, like him he ceases from his pain, and in his absence, like him he is filled with yearning such as he inspires, and love's image, requited love (*anteros*), dwells within him."⁶⁹ With this recorded use of *anteros*, whether it refers to the god, himself, or to the personifying of passion, is unclear. However, it is certain that the idea of reciprocated love lies at the heart of this passage. It is fitting that the user of this tablet summons Anteros to guide her in winning over the affections of Sextilius. She, though violent with her amorous desires, wants him to have her in mind (*sed in mente(m) habeat me*), yet she does not possess the knowledge to know whether the feelings are mutual. Thus, Anteros could serve as twofold for Septima in that he could ensure the reciprocity of Sextilius' love or punish him in the case that he scorns her love.

Next, there is a sequence of exotic names called upon to prepare and execute the user's orders (*Abar Barbarie Eloie Sabaoth Pachnouphy Pythiepemi*). They are invoked to ensure that Sextilius may not befall sleep, but that he may be burn with my love and for my desire (*ne somnum contigat, sed amore et desiderio meo uratur.*) Then, the spirit (*spiritus*) and heart (*cor*)

⁶⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 255d; Translation from Perseus

of Sextilius will be burned, denoting the all-encompassing effect the curser possesses over the victim.⁷⁰ Septima's desire to make the victim fall in love with her is juxtaposed with her capability to inculcate harm upon him. Desire, then, is a battle between Eros and its contrary, Anteros. In examining the names, Sabaoth is a term used to describe the god of the Hebrew Bible and its original meaning is "heavenly hosts" though in the *defixiones* it represents an independent deity.⁷¹ Here, the phrase, Eloie Sabaoth, is borrowed from Jewish incantations. Gaston Maspero attests that the phrase not only appears in the magic books in the Greek language, but also in the books written in demonic characters.⁷² He also breaks down the next enigmatic entity invoked, claiming that Pachnoughy is an Egyptian word composed of Pa, meaning "that which appears to [an individual]" and of Khnoughi, which "refers to the old Khnoumou and Agathodemon snake-god with a human head; the entirety signifies, that who appears to Chnoughy."⁷³ The last for which he provides commentary is Pythupemi, perhaps, an epithet for $\pi\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\tau\ \rho\iota\ \pi\epsilon\mu$, signifying the one who is omniscient. The other two spirits, *Abar* and *Barbarie* have not been attested. Interestingly, this tablet combines a classical divinity (*Anteros*) with Jewish incantations (*Eloie Sabaoth*), and then calls upon Egyptian gods (*Pachnoughy*, *Pythupermi*).

⁷⁰ The roles are reversed in this tablet, as DT 270 is written by a woman, Septima, in pursuit of Sextilius. As seen in the Psyche statue (discussed in Chapter 2: Who is writing these tablets), a male figuratively binds his victim with needles. Physique and psyche are invoked to incur both psychological and physical torment upon the victim until he/she submits to the curser's desires. Here, the same theme is observed in that Septima binds the heart (*cor*) and spirit (*spiritus*) of Sextilius.

⁷¹ Gager 1992, 269.

⁷² Maspero, Gaston. *Études de mythologie et d'archaéologie égyptiennes*. Paris, 1893. 300. Print. "Eloie Sabaoth est emprunté aux conjurations juives, et revient, non seulement dans les livres magiques en langue grecque, mais dans les livres écrits en caractères démotiques."

⁷³ Maspero 1893, 300: "*Pachnoughy* est un mot égyptien composé de Pa, <celui qui appartient à>, et du nom Khnoughi, que protent et le vieux dieu Khnoumou et le serpent agathodémon à tête humaine; le tout signifie <celui qui appartient à Chnoughy.>"

Next, Osiris, god of the underworld, is summoned. Septima, the practitioner, alludes to the legend of Osiris directly with: "If not quite, I descend into the adytus of Osiris and I will destroy and I will send the burial so that it may be brought from the river" (*si minus, descendo in adytus Osyris et dissolvam την ταφήν et mittam, ut a flumine feratur*). Plutarch, in his version, recounts the betrayal of Osiris by his deceitful brother, Seth.⁷⁴ Seth, desirous of his brother's kingship, conspired to seize the throne.⁷⁵ To do so, he made a wooden chest, having been constructed with the precise measurements of Osiris' body. Then, at a feast, whatever guest fit inside the chest would thereby acquire it. When Osiris lowered himself into the chest, proving to be the exact match, Seth slammed the chest shut, sealed it, and threw it into the Nile River. The coffin floated into the Mediterranean until it washed ashore in Byblos.⁷⁶ While writer of this *defixio* alludes to this legend, Septima forecasts that her future will not be dissimilar from that of Osiris' if Sextilius does not reciprocate her desires. With such a wide array of invocations in this tablet, Gager observes:

Finally come those highly synchronized spells, primarily from North Africa and Egypt in the third to sixth centuries C.E., where gods, *daimones* with secret names, personified words, *voces mysticae* containing elements of foreign deities, and especially a variety of Egyptian deities come together to form the rich, international blend...⁷⁷

The formulaic threat to Osiris in this tablet appears on nearly identical Greek spells from the 4th and 5th century C.E.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Also known as Set. This name was later associated with Typhon, a monster of Greek mythology, since both were evil forces.

⁷⁵ Hornblower, Simon, "Set," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. Oxford, U.K: Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁷⁶ Armour, Robert A. *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt*. Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 2001. 56. Print.

⁷⁷ Gager 1992, 13.

⁷⁸ Jordan, D.R. *Praktika of the 12th International Congress of Classical Archaeology*, chapter on 'New Archaeological Evidence for the Practice of Magic in Classical Athens.' Athens. 1998b, IV, pp. 273–277. Web.

One final deity or perhaps a *vox magica* remains to conclude this curse⁷⁹—specifically, Axrammaxalala:e, which is most likely a variant or distorted form of the name of the magical divinity Akrammachamarei. This name appears in several attraction spells from Egypt for gaining favor. The Greek Magical Papyri invoke these collective Greco-Egyptian divinities, which appear amid the Latin writing of this tablet as an incomprehensible series of letters. An example is PGM XII.182-9:

Greetings, Lord, you who are means to obtain favor for the universe and for the inhabited [world]. Heaven has become a dancing place [for you], ARSENOPHRE, o King of the heavenly [gods], ABLANATHANALBA, you who possess righteousness, AKRAMMACHAMAREI, gracious [god], SANKANTHARA, ruler / of nature, SATRAPERKMEPH, origin of the heavenly [world], ATHTHANNOU ATHTHANNOU ASTRAPHAI IASTRAPHAI PAKERTOTH SABAOOTH ERINTASKLIOUTH EPHIO MARMARAOTH.⁸⁰

Bohak argues that these names or *voces* are attested in Hebrew or Aramaic texts.⁸¹ He states that Ablanathanalba, Akrammachammarei, Marmaraoth, Pakerboth are *voces* of Greco-Egyptian influence. In the DT 270 tablet, Axrammaxalala:e, thus, is likely meant to invoke the deity, Akrammachammarei. Yet, Maspero argues that it is not the name or epithet of an invoked deity. Rather, he suggests it is a final injunction, and generally, these syllables were chosen to produce a loud cry that states them.⁸² In this way, the voice would carry the message far off. This final word is complex in meaning given that it could function as either the name of a divinity or as a *vox magica* due to its unclear meaning. Pliny the Elder, in the *Natural Histories*, recounts:

⁷⁹ Ankarloo notes that most *voces magicae* were "originally corruptions of things recognized as the names of deities or demons in some other mortal language" (47).

⁸⁰ Betz, Hans Dieter. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demonic Spells*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. 160. Print.

⁸¹ Bohak, Gideon. *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 234. Print.

⁸² Maspero: "c'est plutôt une injonction dernière, et, d'ordinaire, les syllables dont ce mot décisif est formé sont choisies à faire sonner la voix qui les énonce et à la porter au loin."

But it is not easy to say whether the outlandish and unpronounceable words that are thus employed, or the Latin expressions that are used at random, and which must appear ridiculous to our judgment, tend the most strongly to stagger our belief-seeing that the human imagination is always conceiving something of the infinite, something deserving of the notice of the divinity, or indeed, to speak more correctly, something that must command his intervention performe.⁸³

As Pliny suggests, the purpose of a word such as Axrammaxalala:e was to attract the attention of a higher power to command and intervene in ultimately fulfilling the lustful yearning of the longing individual.

Although Bohak and Maspero differ in their analysis and identification of Axrammaxalala:e, it is most likely that the name functions as a *vox magica*, derived from the name of a formerly recognized deity. These names were often distorted, thus creating a less intelligible rendition, as is observed in this tablet.⁸⁴

The presence of Axrammaxalala:e is even more intriguing in that the user employs the practice of self-identification with the higher entity by justifying the authority he exercises over such a spirit, who is perceived as more powerful than him. The Latin reads: *ego enim sum magnus decanus dei, magni dei AXRAMMAXALALA: E*. This translates to: "I am the great chief of the god, of the great god." Though this *vox magica* may be considered untranslatable and of considerable length, the agency of "I am" (*sum*) empowers the user while seeking the help of a deity to implement the spell. The *voces magicae* were considered indecipherable to mortals and solely understood by divinities or higher powers. The more the *voces magicae* were used, though, the more familiar they became; this permitted them to function as power in their own right. This spell, therefore, touches upon many magical traditions given the diverse array of deities invoked in addition to the user assuming the identity of a great god or spirit.

⁸³ Pliny, *Natural Histories*, 28.4.14; Perseus translation

⁸⁴ Ankarloo 1999, 47.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Parallelism amongst tablets

The formulaic parallelism of these tablets could indicate that a magician copied the spell onto a tablet and used it as a model for other similar curses.⁸⁵ While these tablets are not exactly identical, the quest for the victim's desire is often less romantic than it appears. While the curser is desirous of the victim, the victim does not have a voice in the matter. Not only do these tablets wish to make the victim reciprocate these feelings, but the diction reflects the coldness of the lead on which they are inscribed. While binding the victim to him, the curser wishes that she might undergo the same suffering that compelled him to vie for her likely unreciprocated affection.

Winkler has noted the curative function of curse tablets, which he analogizes to that of a "disease." The curser's desire represents the illness that he therapeutically transfers unto the victim to alleviate himself from his internal passions and torment.⁸⁶ The emotional state of the victim and the curser, thus, is reversed. The curser is freed from his emotional turmoil while the victim is called to perform and fulfill the desires of the client.⁸⁷ These twisted commands of the curser, in turn, function as a byproduct of his desires, which essentially motivate the creation and utterance of such a tablet. The victim most notably is called to forget her family (*obliviscatur*), to think only of her pursuer (*ut me amet*), and to lose any agency over her free will in being denied sleep, food, and desire among other things. Whether or not the target of the spell is the so-called "disease" or the turbulent passion of the client, it is certain the curser's goal is to win over the

⁸⁵ Meyer, Elizabeth. *Legitimacy and Law in the Roman World: Tabulae in Roman Belief and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 78. Print.

⁸⁶ Gager 1992, 81.

⁸⁷ Ankarloo 1999, 37.

affections of his desired love. The spell, then, is the mean by which these passions are disseminated unto the victim.

The outliers

Of these seventeen tablets, three remain undiscussed (DT 103, Solin 11, AE 2000-1611c). These tablets appear to be outliers, as they do not possess formulaic similarities to the others.

<p>Audollent 103 Gallia Belgica (Maar)</p>	<p>User: Fututor (?) / Victim: son of Dercomognus <i>Arte ligo Dercomogni filium. Fututor, artus fututor.</i></p>	<p>I bind the son of Dercomognus with skill. I, the doer, I am the doer of the body.</p>
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DT 103 identifies a male victim, the son of Dercomognus (*Dercomogni filium*), making it one of the two tablets from the amatory *defixiones* to identify a victim as male (the other is DT 227). It also differs from the other seventeen tablets since it the only one to contain specifically erotic diction (*fututor*).

<p>Solin 11 Peiting</p>	<p>User: Clementus / Victim: Gemella <i>Gemella supra mensuram naturae domini tui Clementis iaces, quare ut te patitur, sic tu patere veram eius mensuram, patere audacter, quod te iuuet. Somnus te tuetur, Gemella, sub iugum missa quiesce...contineas te, non peccas. Ama Clementem. Sicut ibi eum non videbis, sic...qua plumbum...</i></p>	<p>Gemella, you lie down above the measure of nature of the master, Clemens, to you. Wherefore he endures you, thus, endure the true measure of him, endure boldly, because it may help you. Sleep protects you, Gemella, keep quiet, having been sent under the yoke. May you secure yourself, do not sin. Love Clementius. Jast as, thereupon, you will not see him, thus...in what lead...</p>
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Solin 11 introduces the idea of sleep as a protector for the victim, Gemella (*somnus te tuetur*). This is the only tablet in which sleep is not deprived from the victim, thereby rendering the individual mad (*insaniens*) and wide-awake (*vigilans*). This tablet is also unique in that the word for lead, *plumbum*, concludes the fragmentary curse. Although all 17 of these amatory *defixiones* were inscribed on lead, this is the sole tablet of the group that acknowledges the medium on which they were written.

AE 2000, 1611c	User: ? / Victim: Patelaria	
El Jem/Tunisia	<p><i>Hoc opera: Retine mihi Patelariam Minorem. Amor piger nobis. Ex officina magica Donatus tuis. Hoc tibi optamus te videre, Victor Colonus Coloniae Novae instrumentarius. Hoc nobis optamus...ave Mater ave.</i></p>	<p>This work: Hold back Patelaria the younger for me. A lazy love for us. Donatus, from the magic office of you. We wish for you to see yourself, Victor Colonus, of the new colony (a dealer of tools). We wish this for us...Be well Mother, be well.</p>

AE 2000, 1611c is, perhaps, the most striking of the outliers since it directly cites the practice of magic with mention of the "magic office" (*ex officina magica*). This is the lone tablet to directly recognize the means through which *defixiones* were executed: magic via cursing. Love, too, is described as *piger* or lazy, a descriptive adjective not associated with any form of love observed throughout this close-examination.

While these outliers are amorous in nature, the way in which they are written does not parallel those tablets that contain commonly appearing elements; these include loss of sleep, burning, rendering the victim mad, identification of matrilineal descent, and precise mention of the curser's desire. However, this is likely due to the fact that these tablets were not discovered in Hadrumetum or Carthage. Rather, they were unearthed in Gallia Belgica, Peiting, and Thysdrus. The geographic distribution of these three tablets ranging from Belgium to Germany to present-

day Tunisia explains why they do not adhere to the same format as the fourteen others from Carthage and Hadrumetum. It is curious, then, that only one tablet was located in Thysdrus, an important city of Roman Africa connecting port towns such as Hadrumetum with the interior. Of the 535 tablets in the Kropp collection, including all categories of the *defixiones*, only one tablet—a "Liebe" one—originates from Thysdrus (AE 2000, 1611c). Though this tablet is amatory in content, its unique discovery suggests that Thysdrus has not been excavated to the extent as in the provinces further north in Africa.

Roughly 18% of the examined amatory tablets, three of the seventeen, differ from the rest. The small number of "outliers" shows that 82% possess formulaic and thematic similarities. It may be concluded that the amatory tablets found in Carthage and Hadrumetum, then, display a formulaic standardization contingent upon their geographic localization. The synchronization of these spells represents the widespread practice of curse tablets in Carthage and Hadrumetum, as multiple curses employ the same diction and thematic elements that are proven to be characteristic of the amatory curse genre.

Literary Sources

Roman literature represents women as the practitioners of magic, not men. This is refuted by epigraphic evidence, otherwise known as the *defixiones*, of the Roman world. Literature, then, reverses what is observed in tangible, firsthand documentation in demonstrating that women had the knowledge to formulate and vocalize harmful spells used against male victims. Appendix II contains a wide array of authors such as Ovid, Apuleius, Seneca, and Vergil, whose texts exhibit a complete role reversal in comparison to the *defixiones* given that women possess magical powers in these literary sources. From these selected passages that portray women as

practitioners of magic, there are two examples that will be explored in further detail—Ovid's *Amores* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.

A popular author of erotic spells, Apuleius, depicts a witch by the name of Pamphile in his work entitled "The Golden Ass." This work is redolent with witchcraft and magic; Lucius, the main character, begins an affair with Photis, Pamphile's maid. Photis informs Lucius of Pamphile's transforming abilities, revealing her to be a witch. After having witnessed her take the form of a bird, Lucius begs Photis to procure the same potion so that he too could be a bird. By mistake, though, he snatches the wrong potion, which turns Lucius into an ass. In this excerpt, Pamphile draws up the necessary materials to facilitate her transformation into a bird. The description of her workshop (*feralem officinam*) includes fumigations (*aromatis*), unintelligible curse tablets (*ignorabiliter lamminis litteratis*), and remains of human bodies (*cadaverum expositis multis admodum membris*). Here, Pamphile, a malevolent witch, subjects men to her ill-enchating spells, as Lucius falls victim to her transformative powers.⁸⁸

Another text, Ovid's *Amores*, introduces the idea of women possessing magical tactics used against men. In the Book 3, Elegy 7, the author recounts his frustrations with impotence, attributing it to the intervention of witchcraft—specifically the accompaniment of a voodoo-like object transferring physical harm unto him. The widespread acceptance of witchcraft is proven here, as the author directly cites magic as a causal component of his physical struggle: "Does a song and herb harm poor me, or has a Phoenician witch fixed my name in wax and driven thin needles into the middle of my liver?" (*num misero carmen et herba nocent sagave poenicea defixit nomina cera et medium tenuis in iecur egit acus?*) The use of red wax, Ankarloo notes, was a feature of curse tablets discovered at a cache near Pompeii seeing as they were coated with

⁸⁸ Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 3.17.

red "gum lac."⁸⁹ The witch demonstrates her power to subjugate the corpus of the male, specifically the phallus, which functions as a synecdoche for his entire body.

While these are solely two specific examples, others have been selected in Appendix II to further explicate and justify the prevalence of women magicians in literary texts. A discrepancy, thus, exists between magical evidence created by women and the portrayal of magical women in literature. Through an analysis of the *defixiones*, it is clear that men were the practitioners seeking to bind a woman or to drive away a rival for a woman as seen in DT 265. Perhaps, women, though aware of the power of *defixiones*, chose not to create them. Literature, then, does not accurately reflect the reality of ancient society. This gender reversal observed in these texts in comparison to the physical evidence of male authorship in curse tablets concurs with Graf's theory that a male practicing magic "steps over the borderlines of male behavior" since a "true man does not need erotic magic."⁹⁰ The lack of physical, epigraphical evidence of female agency in the *defixiones* refutes the idea that women were solely the practitioners of magic as the literary sources suggest.

How well did people know about curse tablets?

The use of curse tablets was well known and extensively practiced in the Greco-Roman world for centuries. The lead curse tablets, primarily written by men, were utilized to induce feelings of passion unto the female victims. Though this differs from literary sources, whereby women were represented as magicians, the *defixiones* flourished since they were believed to work. Literary evidence, too, testifies to the acknowledged fear surrounding the prevalent use of tablets. Pliny, in the *Natural Histories*, writes: "There is no one who does not fear to be

⁸⁹ Ankarloo 1999, 11.

⁹⁰ Graf 1999, 189.

spellbound by curse tablets."⁹¹ Thus, the effect and use of tablets was widely recognized, speaking to the idea that they did, in fact, work. Not only does the literary evidence further supplicate this claim, but also the omnipresence and duration of their practice suggests they were efficacious. Whether or not the victim succumbed to the curser's desires, Winkler attests that, at the least, they provided a therapeutic transfer of emotions by removing intolerable tensions from the lustful curser.

What is even more fascinating is how these tablets, dating from over 2000 years, offer insight into the Roman world. They present the audience with a realistic portrait of the troubles and concerns plaguing everyday life; whether the *defixiones* pertain to fulfilling amatory desires or reacquiring stolen goods, they show us what individuals felt and viewed as being within either their control or that of higher spirits.

⁹¹ Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.4.19.

Appendix 1: Kropp "Liebe" Tablets

<p>1. Audollent 103 Gallia Belgica (Maar)</p>	<p>User: Fututor (?)/ Victim: son of Dercomognus <i>Arte ligo Dercomogni filium. Fututor, artus fututor.</i></p>	<p>I bind the son of Dercomognus with skill. I, the doer, I am the doer of the body.</p>
<p>2. Solin 11 Peiting</p>	<p>User: Clementus / Victim: Gemella <i>Gemella supra mensuram naturae domini tui Clementis iaces, quare ut te patitur, sic tu patere veram eius mensuram, patere audacter, quod te iuuet. Somnus te tuetur, Gemella, sub iugum missa quiesce...contineas te, non peccas. Ama Clementem. Sicut ibi eum non videbis, sic...qua plumbum...</i></p>	<p>Gemella, you lie down above the measure of nature of the master, Clemens, to you. Wherefore he endures you, thus, endure the true measure of him, endure boldly, because it may help you. Sleep protects you, Gemella, keep quiet, having been sent under the yoke. May you secure yourself, do not sin. Love Clementius. Just as, thereupon, you will not see him, thus...in what lead...</p>
<p>3. Audollent 227 Carthage</p>	<p>User: Successus / Victim: Successa <i>(magic words) Uratur Successa aduratur amore vel desiderio Successi</i></p>	<p>He burns for Successa, he is consumed with love or with desire of Successa.</p>
<p>4. Audollent 230 Carthage</p>	<p>User: ? / Victim: Female (illam) <i>Καταζιν, qui es in Aegypto magnus daemon, aufer illi somnum, usque dum veniat ad me et animo meo satisfaciat. Τραβαζιαν, omnipotens daemon, adduc amantem aestuantem amoris et desiderii mei causa Νοχθιουψ, qui es cogens daemon, coge illam mecum coitus facere. Βιβιουζι, qui es fortissimus daemon, urgue, coge illam venire ad me amantem aestuantem amoris et desiderii mei causa. Ρικουριθ, agilissime daemon in Aegypto, agita a suis parentibus a suo cubili et aerie quicunque caros habet et coge illam me amare, mihi conferre ad meum desiderium...vi kyrie aut ab...peperit...deum...facias.</i></p>	<p>Καταζιν, you are the one who is a great spirit in Egypt, remove the sleep of him, continually until he should come to me and satisfy my mind. Τραβαζιαν, all-powerful spirit, bring to me the lover boiling for the sake of my desire and my love. Νοχθιουψ, you who are a compelling demon, compel her to have sexual intercourse with me. Βιβιουζι, you who are the bravest spirit, press hard, compel her to come to me, the love burning of love and the cause of my desire. Ρικουριθ, the most nimble spirit, stir about from her parents, and</p>

		whoever has the dear ones from his bed and compel her to love me, to unite me to my desire..with strength, Oh lord...from..she bore...god...let you do.
5. *Audollent 231 Carthage	User: Martialis / Victim: Female (ab illa) <i>Quorum..magna ut..quomodo..annutio regis..mortuus ab illa..detinetur anima..in hoc loco, sic et..cuius est mater..te, detineatur in omne tempus in amore et desiderio Martialis, quem peperit Coronaria. Adiuro vos per hunc praepositum super necessitates terrae sic et te..dominus..ut, ex hoc die, ex hoc momento,..illas..amet Martialem, ut omni muliebri hora me in mente habeat et totum diem in animo habeat amorem meum..magna tu..dominum iam, iam...</i>	Of whose...great to...in what way...the announcer of the king...dead by her...the soul is held back..in this place..thus and..., of who the mother is...you, let time be held back for all and in love and desire of Martialis, who begot Coronaria. I swear by you to this one, having been placed in command above the necessities of the earth thus and you..master..from this day, from this moment..let her love Martialis, let the hour have me in mind for all womanly things and may he have the entire day in the spirit and my love...
6. Audollent 264 Sousse (Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)	User: Male(?) / Victim: Victoria <i>(magic words) Victoria, quam peperit Suavulva, puellarum deliciae.</i>	Victoria, whom Suavulva bore, the favorite/beloved of the girls.
7. Audollent 265 Sousse (Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)	User: Male(?) / Victim: Victoria <i>Faciatis Victoriam, quam peperit Suavulva, amantem furentem prae amore meo neque somnum videat, donec ad me veniat puellarum deliciae. Haud secus Ballincus Lolliorum de curru actus ne possit ante me venire et tu, quicumque es daemon, te oro, ut illam cogas amoris et desiderii mei causa venire ad me.</i>	May you make Victoria, whom Suavulva bore, let you see a raging lover before my love and may she not see sleep, until the favorite of the girls may come to me. Not at all let Ballincus of Lollii, having been urged from the chariot, be able to come before me and you, whatever demon you are, I beg you, may you compel her to come to me for the sake of my love and desire.

<p>8. Audollent 266</p> <p>Sousse(Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)</p>	<p>User: Felix / Victim: Vettia</p> <p><i>...commendo tibi quod..., ut illam immittas daemones...aliquos infernales, ut non permittatur...me contemnere, sed faciat quaecumque desidero. Vettia, quam peperit Optata, vobis enim adiuvantibus, ut amoris mei causa non dormiat, non cibum, non escam accipere possit. (magic words) Obligo Vettiae, quam peperit Optata, sensum, sapientiam et intellectum et voluntatem, ut amet me Felicem, quem peperit Fructa, ex hoc die ex hac hora, ut obliviscatur patris et matris et omnium, et amicorum omnium et omnium virorum amoris mei gratia, Felicis, quem peperit Fructa. Vettia, quam peperit Optata, solum me in mente habeat insaniens, insaniens, vigilans; uratur frigat...ardeat Vettia, quam peperit Optata,... amoris et desiderii mei causa...</i></p>	<p>I entrust to you what... so that you may send her spirits...the others infernal...let it not be permitted...to think little of myself but I desire whatever she may do. Vettia, whom Optata bore, for with the one having been helped for you, just as the cause of my love may not sleep; let her be unable to accept food and meat. I bind the feeling and wisdom and intellect and desire of Vettia, whom Optata bore, let her love me, me Felix, whom Fructa bore, from this day and this hour, so that the esteem of the father, of the mother, of all the sisters, and of all friends, and of all men thanks to the love of me. Felix, whom Fructa begot. Vettia, whom Optata bore, let her, being mad, alone have me in mind, being mad, vigilant; let her roast, and let her burn. Let Vettia, whom Optata bore, burn...for the sake of my love and my desire.</p>
<p>9. *Audollent 267</p> <p>Sousse(Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)</p>	<p>User: Oppius / Victim: Bonosa</p> <p><i>(magic words) Cogite Bonosam, quam peperit Papte, amare me, Oppium, quem peperit Veneria, amore sacro sine intermissione; non possit dormire Bonosa neque esse...Bonosa neque aliud...sed abrumpatur et me solum...videret omnibus diebus ad x...usque ad diem mortis suae...</i></p>	<p>Compel Bonosa, whom Papte bore, to love me Oppius, whom Veneria bore, w/a sacred love without pause. Let Bonosa be unable to sleep and not to be...Bonosa and not another...but she might be separated...she would only see me with all the day to x...up to the day of her death...</p>
<p>10. Audollent 268</p> <p>Sousse(Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)</p>	<p>User: Male (?) Victim: Female (illam)</p> <p><i>Persefina, obligate illam in sensu sapientia et intellecto...per me...recipiatisque nos per Bonosam, quam peperit Bonosa, demand...et voluntate ut...me, ut obliviscatur patris et matris...ex hoc die ex hac hora...per</i></p>	<p>Persefina, bind her in feeling and in wisdom and in intellect...and with desire. May you recover us through Bonosa, whom Bonosa bore, I demand...from this day and from this hour...let her forget the</p>

	<i>deum meum vivum...caelum et mare...ac ligo caelum terram eum...qui sit sub...hoc...quis...terrae et (magic words)...meos ades...ut...tu...Bonosa, quam vobis ego...commendo,...recipiatis...vobis...</i>	mother and the father. By my living god...the sky and sea...I bind the sky, ground, and god...which may go under...the lands...be present from my...you Bonosa, I entrust for you...may you keep back...for you.
11. *Audollent 269 Sousse(Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)	User: Male(?) / Victim: Tottina <i>Fac, ut Tottina...me amet...semper de me cogitet Tottina, quam peperit...liquet tuo amorem mecum fecit...et tu domina...amore...</i>	Make so that Tottina may love me...let Tottina always think about me, who [someone] bore, it is proven that love made me for your spirit/soul and you mistress...with love.
12. *Audollent 270 Sousse(Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)	User: Septima / Victim: Sextilius <i>Adiuro...per magnum deum et per Anterotas...et per eum, qui habet accipitrem supra caput et per septem stellas, et ex hora hoc composuero, non dormiat Sextilius, Dionysiae filius, uratur furens, non dormiat neque sedeat neque loquatur, sed in mente habeat me, Septimam, Amoenae filiam; uratur furens amore et desiderio meo, anima et cor uratur Sextilii, Dionysiae filii amore et desiderio meo, Septimae, Amoenae filiae. Tu autem, Abar Barbarie Eloie Sabaoth Pachnoughy Pythiepemi, fac Sextilius, Dionysiae filius, ne somnum contigat, sed amore et desiderio meo uratur, huius spiritus et cor comburatur, Omnia membra totius corporis Sextilii, Dionysiae filii. Si minus, descend in adytus Osyris et dissolvam την ταφην et mittam, ut a flumine feratur; ego enim sum magnus decanus dei, magni dei AXRAMMAXALALA: E.</i>	I swear by (under curse)...by the great god and by Anteros and by him, who has a hawk above his head, and by 7 stars, I will have collected this from any hour, do not let Sextilius sleep, the son of Dionysia, let him burn, raging, do not let him sleep nor sit nor speak, but let him have me (Septima, the daughter of Amoena) in mind. Let him burn, raging, with love and for my desire. Let the soul and heart of Sextilius burn, the son of Dionysia, with love and for my desire, for Septima, the daughter of Amoena. But you Abar Barbarie Eloie Sabaoth Pachnoughy Pythiepemi, make that Sextilius, the son of Dionysia, do not let him befall sleep, but may he burn with love and for my desire, let his spirit and heart be burned, all limbs of the entire body of Sextilius, the son of Dionysia. If not, I descend into the adytus of Osyris and I will destroy the burial and I will send so that it may be brought from the river, for I am a great imperial officer of the god of the great god

		AXRAMMAXALALA: E
13. *Audollent 304 Sousse(Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)	User: Male(?) / Victim: Tottina <i>Cogite Tottinam me amare... sine mendacio... ut amet me solum... ut me solum, Tottina, quam peperit... videret... non possit quamdiu... omnibus diebus vixerit, usque ad diem morits suae...</i>	Bind Tottina to love me... without falsehood... let her only love me... let her only love me, Tottina, who begot... she would see... may she not be able as long as... she will live in all days, up to the day of her death.
14. Besnier 13 Sousse(Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)	User: Male(?) / Victim: Female (?) <i>Quam peperit Persephone, obligo... incolumitatem, sapientiam, sensus, ut amet me..., quem peperit... ex hoc die, ex hac hora, ex hoc momento ut obliviscatur patris et matris et omnium suorum et amicorum omnium et omnium virorum... insaniens, insaniens, vigilans uratur, comburatur... amore et desiderio meo... Hanc obligo...</i>	I bind the one whom Persephone bore, I bind the wisdom, feeling, safety so that she may love me, whom she bore... from this day, from this hour, from this moment so that she may forget her mother and her father and her relatives and all friends and all the men, being mad, being mad, vigilant, let her burn, let her burn... with love and for my desire... bind this one...
15. Besnier 14 Sousse(Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)	User: Male(?) / Victim: Female(?) <i>... sapientiam, sensus, intellectum, voluntatem..., quam peperit Rus..., obligo, ut amet me..., quem peperit..., ex hoc die, ex hac hora, ut obliviscatur patris et matris et omnium suorum et amicorum et omnium virorum... insaniens, isaniens, vigilans uratur, comburatur amore et desiderio meo... ex hoc die ex hac hora...</i>	I bind the wisdom, feeling, intellect, and will of the one whom Rus bore so that she may love me... whom she bore... from this day, from this hour, so that she forgets her mother and all her relatives and all her friends and all men... being mad, being mad, let her burn, vigilant, let her burn with love and with my desire... from this day, from this hour...
16. Solin 42 Sousse(Africa Byzacena/Hadrumetum)	User: Optatus / Victim: Vera <i>...obligo..., quam peperit..., sapientiam..., ut amet me..., ex hoc die, ex hac hora, ex hoc momento, ut obliviscatur patris et matris et suorum omnium et amicorum omnium et omnium virorum... insaniens... insaniens</i>	I bind... whom [someone] bore, wisdom, let her love me from this day, from this hour, from this moment, may she forget the mother and father and all sisters and all friends and all men... being mad... being mad, watchful, she

	<p><i>vigilans...uratur, comburatur, ardeat spiritus amore et desiderio meo. Obligo caelum, terram, aquas...et aera immobilem, sed...amoris huius Veram. Adiuro te per magna...nomina eius dei, qui sub terra sedet (magic words) detinentem sempiternum amorem qui...Ego, Optatus, commendo deo... Veram, quam peperit Lucifera. Nulli ali attendat nisi mihi soli, neminem alium in mente habeat nisi me Optatum, quem peperit Ammia...Saphonia. Consummatum, consummatum, consummatum. Colliga in sempiterno tempore.</i></p>	<p>burns; let her spirit burn with love and for my desire. I bind the sky, land, waters and the immobile air, but...of this love (VERAM?). I swear by you through the great...name of that god, who sits under the land (magic words) detaining a perpetual love which...I, Optatus, I entrust to the god... Veram, whom Lucifera bore, let her pay attention to no other unless only me, may she have nobody else if, no other in mind except me, Optatus, whom Ammia bore...Saphonia. Consummated, Consummated, Consummated. She, having been bound in perpetual time.</p>
<p>17. AE 2000, 1611c El Jem/Tunesien (Africa Byzacena/Thysdrus)</p>	<p>User: ? / Victim: Patelaria</p> <p><i>Hoc opera: Retine mihi Patelariam Minorem. Amor piger nobis. Ex officina magica Donatus tuis. Hoc tibi optamus te videre, Victor Colonus Coloniae Novae instrumentarius. Hoc nobis optamus...ave Mater ave.</i></p>	<p>This work: Hold back Patelaria the younger for me. A lazy love for us. Donatus, from the magic office of you. We wish for you to see yourself, Victor Colonus, of the new colony (a dealer of tools). We wish this for us...Be well Mother, be well.</p>

Key: Latin words written in Greek

Key: magic words

... Spaced dots indicate a series of unreadable letters in the original text; in general, the number of missing letters has not been specified.

Appendix 2: Women as Practitioners of Magic (selected texts)

<p>Apuleius, Metamorphoses/The Golden Ass, 3.17</p>	<p><i>Priusque apparatu solito instruit feralem officinam, omne genus aromatis et ignorabiliter lamminis litteratis et infelicium avium durantibus damnis, defletorum, sepultorum etiam, cadaverum expositis multis admodum membris</i></p>	<p>First she prepared for the deadly rite, with the usual equipment, setting out aromatic spices of every kind, metal plaques with unintelligible inscriptions, the surviving bits of birds of ill-omen, and numerous pieces of corpses from funerals and tombs: here noses and fingers, there flesh-covered spikes from crucified bodies, preserved blood from murder victims, and shattered skulls wrenched from the jaws of wild creatures.⁹²</p>
<p>Ovid's <i>Amores</i> 3.7.29</p>	<p><i>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? carmine laesa Ceres sterilem vanescit in herbam, deficiunt laesi carmine fontis aquae, ilicibus glandes cantataque vitibus uva decidit, et nullo poma movente fluunt. quid vetat et nervos magicas torpere per artes?</i></p>	<p>Now my cursed body weakens with a Thessalian poison? Does a song and herb harm poor me, or has a Phoenician witch fixed my name in wax and driven thin needles into the middle of my liver? She turns the wheat, having been struck, into barren grass with a song, the waters, having been struck, die out at their source with the song, and with the things having been sung, the acorns fell from the oaks, and the grape from the vines, and the apples fall with no movement. What through magic arts forbids the nerves to be numb?</p>
<p>Ovid, <i>Heroides</i>: Letter VI Hypsipyle to Jason</p>	<p><i>Nec facie meritisque placet, sed carmina novit diraque cantata pabula falce metit... ..per tumulos errat passis discincta capillis</i></p>	<p>Nor is she pleasing in appearance and with merit, but she knows songs and the cruel things, having been sung, she measures the food with a sickle...among tombs</p>

⁹² Translation from "Poetry in Translation."

	<i>certainque de tepidis colligit ossa rogis. devovet absentis simulacraque cerea figit et miserum tenues in iecur urget acus.</i>	she stalks, wearing loose clothes, with hair having been spread out and gathers the fixed bones from the tepid funeral pyre. She curses those who are absent, she fastens waxen images and urges the thin needles into the liver of the miserable one.
Virgil's Eighth Eclogue v.64-67 (Example 1)	<i>"Effer aquam, et molli cinge haec altaria uitta, uerbenasque adole pinguis et mascula tura, coniugis ut magicis sanos auertere sacris experiar sensus: nihil hic nisi carmina desunt. (64-67)</i>	Bring out water, and surround these altars with a soft ribbon; and burn rich herbs and male frankincense, that I may try with magic rites to turn the sensible feeling of the spouse/lover. Nothing is lacking here if not songs.
Virgil's Eighth Eclogue v.80-83 (Example 2)	Limus ut hic durescit, et haec ut cera liquescit uno eodemque igni, sic nostro Daphnis amore. Sparge molam et fragilis incende bitumine laurus. Daphnis me malus urit; ego hanc in Daphnide laurum	As this clay hardens and as this wax melts in one and the same flame, thus may Daphnis melt with our love [with my love]. Sprinkle millstone, and burn the frail laurels with pitch. Cruel Daphnis burns for me; for Daphnis I burn this laurel.
Ovid's Fasti, II v.571-582	<i>Ecce anus in mediis residens annosa puellis sacra facit Tacitae (vix tamen ipsa tacet), et digitis tria tura tribus sub limine ponit, qua brevis occultum mus sibi fecit iter: tum cantata ligat cum fusco licia plumbo, et septem nigras versat in ore fabas, quodque pice adstrinxit, quod acu traiecit aena, obsutum maenae torret in igne caput; vina quoque instillat: vini quodcumque relictum est, aut ipsa aut comites, plus tamen ipsa,</i>	Look an old, aged lady, sitting in the middle of the girls, performs sacred things for Tacita, and with three fingers she places three frankincenses under the threshold, where the little mouse has made for itself a short journey: then she binds enchanted threads with dark lead, and turns seven black beans in her mouth; and she roasts head of a small fish, having been sewn up, which she pierced with a bronze needle and which she bound with pitch; she also drops in wine: and whatever was left of wine, either she or her

	<i>bibit. 'hostiles linguas inimicaque vinximus ora dicit discedens ebriaque exit anus.</i>	companions drink, she drinks more nevertheless herself. Then leaving, she says, "We bound the hostile and unfriendly tongues" and the drunken old woman exits.
Seneca, De Beneficiis, VI.35.4	<i>Exsecraris enim illum et caput sanctum tibi dira precatone defigis. Nemo, ut existimo, de immanitate animi tui dubitaret, si aperte illi paupertatem, si captivitatem, si famem ac metum imprecareris. Aliquid interest utrum vox ista voti sit tui?</i>	For you curse him, and you fix the sacred head with a cruel prayer. No one, just as I guess, would doubt about the brutality of your spirit, if you openly invoked poverty, or captivity, or hunger and fear for him. But what difference does it make whether that it is a voice or of a silent prayer?

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