

Ancient greek love magic by christopher a. faraone: erotic magic representation

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Erotic Magic in the Modern World

In Faraone's Ancient Greek Love Magic, he holds the position that erotic magic strongly reflects gender roles in antiquity. Although Faraone provides compelling evidence including various spells performed by both men and women, it is interesting to think about how those same spells would have been constructed in modern times where gender structures and norms have completely changed.

Faraone claims that the spells women cast are "to maintain or increase affection in men" (Faraone 27). These kinds of spells are highly typical of those that are meant to induce *philia* and are normally casted by "wives or social inferiors" (Faraone 28). Using Faraone's logic, spells of this class reflect the societal standard for women in antiquity because they are passive actions using things such as amulets or love potions which are meant to reduce anger. Furthermore, the usual victims for the spells are men of higher social caliber such as "husbands, kings, and other heads of households" which serves as further evidence that it is mainly women who cast spells to induce *philia* (Faraone 28). This was necessary because not only does a women have to depend on a husband economically, but without a man a women would essentially be shunned by society. However, in modern times this is no longer true and therefore the main victims may not be husbands whom they are trying to repair a relationship with. It is now much more socially acceptable for a women to not marry and to sleep around. Therefore, it would be natural to see an increase in the use of spells meant to induce "eros" among women rather than "philia". In antiquity, the majority of the

victims consisted of men who were considered the “ head of the household” to a certain extent. In the modern world where lesbianism is more accepted and common, it wouldn’t be out of the ordinary to see more and more love spells cast by women to be directed towards other women. Furthermore, since it is possible for many women to achieve a higher social status than men, it also wouldn’t be out of the ordinary to see an increase in love spells being cast by women to men who do not qualify as the “ head of the household”.

Conversely, men in antiquity more commonly perform love spells meant to induce “ eros” in order to “ instill erotic passion in women” (Faraone 27). These spells reflected the expectation for men to be more aggressive and sexual than women which can be seen in the way “ eros” spells are casted. Where “ philia” spells are casted using amulets and potions, “ eros” spells are casted using “ incantations over bound images and tortured animals” (Faraone 28). Furthermore, “ eros” spells result in the victim having an uncontrollable and intense lust for the person casting the spell rather than simply reducing anger in order to heal an existing relationship. In the modern age where men no longer have the same societal pressure to be predatory and sexual, it is likely that there would be an increase of “ philia” spells casted by males. Moreover, it is now recognized that men are just as emotional as women, therefore it follows that they value their relationships as well and would try to cast spells that would attempt to repair them. Just like how lesbianism is much more accepted in society, so is homosexuality and therefore it also makes sense that there would be an increase in spells casted by men and directed towards other men. Lastly, it was much more

common for women to marry upwards in antiquity and therefore it was mostly women who targeted higher class men such as kings. However, in modern times where it is possible for men to be of a lower class than women, it is also possible that they may lust after their status and wealth. This effect would undoubtedly cause more men to cast spells that would force wealthier and more powerful women to fall in love with them much like how women used to do the same.

There is another powerful use that reflects gender besides maintaining or creating relationship however. Back in antiquity, love spells often overlapped with medical aspects such as increasing ones performance or fertility during intercourse. In the modern world, where there have been major innovation in scientific medicine as well as a change in social norms, many of these spells would have either become obsolete or altered in radical ways. For instance, medicines such as Viagra would eliminate the need for many men and women to cast a spell that would increase another man's sexual performance since a scientifically proven drug can already do that. Another set of spells that would most likely change for both men and women are spells that increases fertility. Firstly, there is a large demand to reduce fertility now rather than increase it. Because of this, many spells regarding fertility (especially those by younger men) would become obsolete because there is already quick and easy access to such things as condoms. However, there are still several states that restrict birth control for women and because society has alleviated the pressure for women to remain celibate, there may actually be an increase in spells casted by women to reduce their fertility.

Overall, spells casted in modern times would be much different then ones casted in antiquity due to changed social norms. Women would more commonly cast “ eros” spells whereas men would more commonly cast “ philia” spells and the total number of men and women who cast either spells would be much more mixed than in antiquity. Furthermore, many spells that overlap with medicine regarding sexual performance would either become obsolete or altered to fit with the needs of modern men and women. Because of such changes, it is safe to assume that spells reflecting gender today would be constructed differently than spells reflecting gender hundreds of years ago.