

LOVE MAGIC AND PURIFICATION IN SOPHRON, *PSI* 1214a, AND THEOCRITUS' *PHARMAKEUTRIA*¹

Theocritus' second Idyll describes the incantations of the girl Simaetha, assisted by her maid Thestylis, to regain the affections of her lover Delphis. The use of erotic magic is common in ancient literature, though the precise relationship between the literary sources and actual magical practice remains uncertain. Few of the erotic texts in the magical papyri, for instance, seem to bear much relationship to the ritual described by Theocritus. However, the papyrus texts are significantly later and highly syncretistic of Jewish, Christian, Near Eastern, and pagan Greek beliefs. They are not, therefore, necessarily a reliable guide to earlier practice. By contrast, the literary sources appear in general more unified. This may be due rather to the persistence of a literary *topos* than to any strong connection with actual magical practices. While the particular details of Theocritus' rite have been widely discussed, less has been said of his dependence, clearly indicated by the scholia to Idyll 2, on a mime by the fifth-century Sicilian writer Sophron of Syracuse.

Sophron is a somewhat shadowy figure. None of his mimes survives intact. The extant fragments suggest a type of entertainment involving simple dialogue and everyday subjects, not unlike Theocritus' urban poems or Herodas' *mimiambi*, though in prose.² The Hellenistic world was particularly interested in his work: Apollodorus of Athens, the follower of Aristarchus, wrote a treatise on the mimes in at least four books.³ Possibly it was only in this period that the mimes were divided into *μίμοι ἀνδρεῖοι* and *μίμοι γυναικεῖοι*, mimes for men and women respectively.⁴ Certainly the distinction is standard thereafter. Several mimes are given individual titles: some of these are perhaps early, and possibly Sophron only gave names to a small number of pieces. But they may also be Hellenistic inventions.

The precise relationship between Sophron and Theocritus' *Pharmakeutria* has been only occasionally debated, mostly immediately after the publication of an Oxyrhynchus papyrus fragment in the early nineteen-thirties. Some more recent studies have expressed doubt about the reliability of the scholia and the relevance of the papyrus. In this article I begin by re-examining the evidence of the Theocritean scholia, and argue that there is good reason to connect the scholiastic statements with the papyrus mime.

¹ Fragments of Sophron are cited where possible after G. Kaibel, *Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta I. Doriensium Comoedia Mimi Phylaces*², rev. ed. K. Latte (Berlin, 1958). Kassel and Austin's important edition (*PCG* 1) appeared after the article had been completed, and I have unfortunately been unable to take account of their work.

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² For peculiar attempts to analyse some of the larger fragments metrically, see A. Saija, *Aegyptus* 67 (1987), 27–32, and G. Perrotta, *SIFC* 22 (1947), 93–100.

³ Athen. 7.281ef; *Σ* Ar. *Vesp.* 525. See R. Pfeiffer, *A History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford, 1968), 252ff. Apollodorus also wrote on Epicharmus.

⁴ It is uncertain whether this refers to the actors or the characters. Mimes cited as appearing (ἐν) *Γυναικεῖοις*: frs. 15, 16, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34?, 37, 38; mimes (ἐν) *Ἀνδρεῖοις*: frs. 55, 57, 58, 64, 66, 67, 69?, 71, 72; ἐν *Μίμοις*: frs. 24, 53, 169b. Most other fragments are simply cited under Sophron's name.

I go on to show that Sophron's mime probably depicted a purificatory rite; that erotic magic is a possible aspect of such purifications; and thus, that there is some reason to suspect a connection between the extant fragments of the mime and Theocritus' poem.

I. THE THEOCRITICAN SCHOLIA

The scholia to Theocritus' second Idyll emphasize his dependence on Sophron throughout; one of the Arguments bluntly states that the whole subject of magic was derived from the mimes of Sophron (τὴν δὲ τῶν φαρμάκων ὑπόθεσιν ἐκ τῶν Σώφρονος μίμων μεταφέρει⁵). There is little real reason to doubt the scholiasts' reliability. Although the Theocritean scholia contain the usual hotchpotch of factual material, informed speculation, and wild conjecture, nowhere else in the manuscripts is the influence of Sophron so clearly documented. Thus, though the scholia also indicate that Theocritus imitated Sophron in his *Adoniazousai* (Arg. Theocr. XV [p. 305 W]: παρέπλασε δὲ τὸ ποιημάτιον ἐκ τῶν παρὰ Σώφρονι Ἰσθμια Θεωμένων), no further details are given. Thus, the sentence could mean simply that Sophron wrote a similar work, in which a group of (Syracusan?) women attended and described the Isthmia (unless by ποιημάτιον the internal song at Theocr. 15.100ff. is meant). But there is no suggestion from the scholia that the similarities went any further. Consequently, when they emphasize so strongly the Sophronic background to the *Pharmakeutria* it is worth taking note. Our ancient scholars, who almost certainly should be assumed to include Apollodorus, are unlikely to be completely mistaken.

The scholia point to several particular borrowings. Fragment 4K claims that the Theocritean syncretism of Selene and Hecate was taken from Sophron's mime. Such syncretism is a common feature of later magical texts. Hecate and Selene are particularly frequently identified, but they are also associated with a wide variety of other goddesses, both Greek and non-Greek. The magical papyri particularly emphasize the syncretism of Hecate-Selene with Persephone, Artemis, Mene, the Mesopotamian divinities Ereschigal and Astarte, and the Egyptian Isis.⁶ Even in earlier texts there is a particular connection between magic and infernal gods. A lead tablet from Athens, dated to the fourth century B.C., attempts to bind a girl called Theodora πρὸς [τ]ῇ[ν] παρὰ Φε[ρρε]φάττηι (that is, Hecate) in order to impede sexual relations between her and her lover Charias, and between her and another man, Callias.⁷ In Sicily itself the Gaggera sanctuary of Demeter Malophorus at Selinus was a favourite site for the deposition of such tablets already in the fifth century B.C. The largest of these to have been found (*SEG* 16.573), probably connected with the conduct of a law-suit, seeks to

⁵ Fr. 4K addend. = Arg. Theocr. IIb p. 270 Wendel. Here ὑπόθεσις means little more than 'plot', though at *Quaest. Conviv.* 712e Plutarch contrasts ὑπόθεσις and πλῆγνιον as two different types of mime. This distinction, though the basis of much modern discussions of Greek mime (e.g. H. Reich, *Der Mimos* [Berlin, 1903]; C. Hertling, *Quaestiones Mimicae* [Diss. Strassburg, 1899]; L. Botzon, *Quaestionum mimicarum specimen* [Berlin, 1882]), is not made elsewhere, and Plutarch's testimony is probably only valid for the Imperial period if at all.

In one of the MSS (K) there is a sequence of corrupt letters after μεταφέρει: ὕπο τε το... ὀφίγγα ὄρρο... ποτὲ βληθέν†. The apographs of K have τὸν στρόφιγγα, and Herzog supplemented ὄρρο<βάλλω>; but the corruption is too serious for any firm conjecture.

⁶ See H. G. Gundel, *Weltbild und Astrologie in den griechischen Zauberpapyri*. Münchener Beitr. zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte (Munich, 1968), 26.

⁷ A. Audollent (ed.), *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris, 1904), no. 68. Translation and brief discussion in J. G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford and New York, 1992), no. 22. For Hecate in the later magical material, see also S. I. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira* (Atlanta, 1990).

bind a large number of people 'with the holy goddess' (παρ τὰν ἁγνὰν θεόν).⁸ Although this formula is intended to designate Persephone–Pasikrateia, there are indications that at Gaggera the worship of Persephone was closely associated with that of Demeter Malophorus, Hecate, and Artemis. The position of Hecate's sanctuary at the entrance to the site, for instance, suggests that she may have performed the role of gate-keeper to the main sanctuary.⁹ It is also at Gaggera that we find a tendency (which Zuntz connects with developments at Locri) to identify Aphrodite and Persephone.¹⁰

Another scholion states that Simaetha, in her opening invocation, calls Hecate χθονία (2.12), παρόσον Περσεφόνης τροφός, ἢ παρόσον <νερτέρων> πρύτανιν αὐτὴν τέθεικε Σώφρων.¹¹ Whether νερτέρων refers to the dead or infernal spirits generally is unclear, but the title is evidently apt for a figure also identified with Persephone. At 2.12 Simaetha is beginning her invocation to Hecate. A comparable invocation may have been found in Sophron's mime, which Wilamowitz suggested we may have in a corrupt invocation of Hecate in Doric quoted by Plutarch at *De Superstit.* 170b.¹²

Finally, the Argument states that the character of Thestylis, Simaetha's assistant, was taken over from Sophron's mimes ἀπειροκάλως.¹³ I doubt that Sophron's magician was assisted by a servant actually called Thestylis (as Gow suggests¹⁴), but the adverb is interesting. It could mean that the character of Thestylis, while suitable for the relatively low genre of mime, was unsuitable for Theocritus' more studied poetry; however, this seems unlikely. Elsewhere in the Theocritean scholia the adverb occurs only once, in a scholion on Idyll 5. After the abusive exchange between Lacon and Comatas at 5.116ff., Comatas accuses Lacon of losing his temper and tells him to go and gather squills from an old woman's grave (5.120–1). Lacon's response, κῆγ' ὡ μὰν κνίζω, Μόρσων, τινά· καὶ τὺ δὲ λεύσσεις, | ἐνθὼν τὰν κυκλάμινον ὀρυσσέ νυν ἐς τὸν Ἄλεντα, tends to be taken by the scholia as abusive as well (cf. Σ 5.121a, 121d, 123/4c). Gow and Dover (ad loc.) more plausibly see the plants here as apotropaic: Lacon and Comatas are to collect plants which will save them from their own loss of temper. But another scholion makes a different point (Σ 123/124b p. 182W):

⁸ The 'Great *Defixio*' has been widely discussed: see the translation and bibliography in Gager (n. 7), no. 50.

⁹ G. Zuntz, *Persephone* (Oxford, 1971), 98–9.

¹⁰ Ibid. 173–7. Peter Kingsley (*Ancient Philosophy, Mystery and Magic* [Oxford, 1995], 243) has more recently suggested that some of the syncretistic elements found in the magical papyri may thus be of Sicilian origin.

¹¹ Fr. 7K = Σ Theocr. 2.11/12a (codd. KAG), b (codd. EAG) pp. 271–2W. In some manuscripts this information is repeated in slightly different language: τὴν Ἑκάτην χθονίαν φασὶ θεὸν καὶ νερτέρων πρύτανιν, καθὰ καὶ Σώφρων. The similarity of phrasing suggests a common source, probably Apollodorus.

¹² U. von Wilamowitz (*Griechisches Lesebuch*¹³ [Berlin, 1936], 1.336, 2.210ff.) proposes the following restoration: αἶτε κα' ἀπ' ἀγχόνας αἶξασα, αἶτε κα' λεχοῦν διακαίσασα, αἶτε κ' ἂν νεκρὸς μολοῦσα περφυρμένα ἐσέλθῃς, αἶτε κα' ἐκ τριόδων καθααρμάτεσσιν ἐπισπωμένα τῷ παλαμναίῳ συμπλεχθῇς. The lines are strongly reminiscent of Simaetha's words at Theocr. 2.11ff. As Robert Parker (*Miasma. Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* [Oxford, 1983], 223) has noted, the language suggests an exploitation of 'the goddess's pollution for shameful ends', but love magic evidently cannot be ruled out.

Plutarch calls the fragment a hymn to Artemis, clearly wrongly as C. Herzog (*Hess. Blätt. f. Volkskunde* 25 [1926], 219, n. 4) observed. For the attribution to Sophron, see U. von Wilamowitz, *Hermes* 37 (1902), 324–5.

¹³ Fr. 5K = Arg. Theocr. IIb pp. 269–70W.

¹⁴ A. S. F. Gow on Theocr. 2, p. 35, n. 1.

κυκλάμινος οὐχὶ πάντως χαλεπῶς δρύσσεται. ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἀπειροκάλως ἐκείνος κατηγάσατο, οὕτω καὶ οὗτος ἀπὸ τοῦ παραπεσεῖν εἰς τὴν κυκλάμινον.

ὥσπερ Wendel: ἐπεὶ codd. ἀπειροκάλως Wilamowitz: ἀπειρολόγως G ἀπρολόγως K παραπεσεῖν Wendel: παραπεσόντος codd. παραπεσόντος αὐτῷ κυκλαμίνου Ziegler

Here the adverb is Wilamowitz's plausible conjecture for the senseless ἀπειρολόγως and ἀπρολόγως of the manuscripts. Despite the difficulties of the text, it is clear enough that the scholion refers simply to the abusiveness of Comatas, not to the fact that this abusiveness is out of place. Possibly, therefore, Sophron's character was portrayed as obscene or indecent in some way. Obscenity was certainly a strong element in other mimes.

II. SOPHRON ON PAPYRUS

From the scholia I turn to a fragment of papyrus that has some claim to be considered in this context. In total, we have only four papyrus fragments from Oxyrhynchus belonging to Sophron's mimes, published by Norsa and Vitelli in 1932.¹⁵ They may all be from the same roll, but are from at least three different mimes.¹⁶ The papyrus, to judge from the script, dates roughly to the first century A.D. A σίλλυβος reading ΣΩΦΡΟΝΟΣ ΜΙΜΟΙ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΙΟΙ shows that his work was available at Oxyrhynchus in the second century A.D.¹⁷ Of the four fragments, (a) is the most relevant. I print the text as laid out in the papyrus:¹⁸

τὰν τράπεζαν κάτθετε
ὥσπερ ἔχει· λάξεσθε δὲ
ἀλὸς χονδρὸν ἐς τὰν χῆρα
καὶ δάφναν πᾶρ τὸ ὦας.
ποτιβάντες νυν πὸτ τὰν
ἰστίαν θωκεῖτε. δὸς μοι τὴν
τῶμφακες· φέρ' ὦ τὰν σκύλακα.
πεῖ γὰρ ἄ ασφαλτος; : οὕτα :
ἔχε καὶ τὸ δαίδιον καὶ τὸν
λιβανωτόν. ἄγετε δὴ

5
10

¹⁵ First published by M. Norsa and G. Vitelli, *SIFC* 10 (1932), 119–24, and *SIFC* 10 (1933), 247–53; republished by the same authors in *Papiri Greci e Latini* 11 (1935), no. 1214. The fragments are now kept in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence; I am grateful to Professor R. Pintaudi for his permission to examine them in July 2000.

¹⁶ We do not know how many rolls were needed for Sophron's mimes. We might think of two, one each for the ἀνδρεῖοι and γυναικεῖοι. This is not certain, though the Oxyrhynchus σίλλυβος indicates a separate roll for the γυναικεῖοι. Nor is it clear what is implied by Apollodorus' four-book treatise, the third book of which dealt with the ἀνδρεῖοι (Athen. 7.281ef). At least one of the other papyrus fragments (d) has a reasonable claim to come from the ἀνδρεῖοι.

¹⁷ P. Oxy. 301; Pack² 1481; BM Pap. 801; E. G. Turner and P. J. Parsons, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*² (London, 1987), no. 8. Statius' father taught Sophron's mimes (*Silv.* 5.3.156ff.) in the first century A.D.

¹⁸ I take the papyrus accentuation of πάσαι at 12 to be Doric; the form ὦ at 7 (with rough breathing) to be an equivalent for ὦδε. Gregory Hutchinson suggests (by letter) instead φέρω, but then it is difficult to account for the oddity of the papyrus reading. A scholion on Theocr. 8.49 (p. 209 Wendel) implies that ὦ instead of ὦ was sometimes read there. The translation is based on D. L. Page, *Select Papyri* 3 (Cambridge, MA and London, 1941), 331.

πεπτάσθων μοι ταῖ θύραι
 πάσαι· ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐνταῦθα
 ὀρήτε· καὶ τὸν δαελὸν
 σβήτε ὥσπερ ἔχει· εὐκαμίαν
 νυν παρέχεσθε, ᾧς κ' ἐγὼν
 πὸτ τάνδε π[υ]κταλεύ' σ' ὦ.
 "πότνια, δεῖ[πν]ου μὲν τυ κα[ῖ]
 [ξ]ενίων ἀμεμφένων ἄντα[
 [χα]νδόν· καίκα· αμωνδέπ.[

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A: Put down the table straight away. Take a lump of salt in your hands, and laurel beside your ears. Now go to the hearth and sit down. Give me the axe, you: bring the dog here. Now where is the pitch? B: Here it is. A: Take the taper and the incense. Come, let me have all the doors open for me. You (pl.) watch over there. Put the torch out straight away. Now, let me have silence, while on these women's behalf I do my boxing.—Lady, (you have found) your feast and faultless offerings . . .

A ritual is in progress. It takes place in the inner room of a house, rather than on the roof or in a courtyard, the more usual places for sun and moon magic; the torch indicates that it is night.¹⁹ There is one main speaker with an unspecified number of helpers, some at least of whom, however, would appear from the use of masculine participles to be male. One of these assistants speaks a single word at line 8, but the rest of the passage is spoken by the main character. We cannot infer anything about the number of actors required. Cunningham argues that in the archaic and classical periods mimes would have been performed by solo actors, and that the actor would have imitated other characters as required.²⁰ Despite the lack of firm evidence, this seems improbable. Here we cannot even be sure that the punctuation, which almost certainly does not date to Sophron himself, is correct. The passage could simply be a monologue, and οὔτα the speaker's answer to his or her own question.

The passage is undeniably by Sophron. Two words (δαελός, πυκταλεύω) are attested elsewhere for Sophron, both probably derived from grammatical treatises (or ultimately perhaps from Apollodorus).²¹ If, as seems likely, this was one of his more famous mimes, the references may be to this passage in particular. The whole phrase at line 8, πεῖ γὰρ ἁ ἄσφαλτος, is cited by the grammarian Ammonius as an example of πεῖ 'where'.²² A number of other book-fragments can also be plausibly taken to refer to the piece. A scholion to Lycophron records that Sophron said in his mimes that dogs were sacrificed to Hecate, almost certainly a reference to this passage.²³ Another fragment, κύων πρὸ μεγαρέων μέγα ὑλακτέων, was credibly ascribed to this mime by

¹⁹ J. J. Winkler, in D. Obbink and C. Faraone (edd.), *Magika Hiera* (Oxford and New York, 1991), 224.

²⁰ I. C. Cunningham, *Herodas. Mimiambi* (Oxford, 1971), 6.

²¹ Fr. 116K = Et. Gen.: δαλός . . . λαμπάς . . . λέγεται δὲ καὶ δαελὸς παρὰ Σώφρονι; fr. 111K = Et. Orionis 62.23: καὶ Σώφρων φησὶν ἀπὸ τοῦ πυκτεύω πυκταλεύω.

²² Fr. 5K = Ammonius, *Diff.* p. 233V. The same phrase is cited three times by Apollonius Dysc. *De Adv.* pp. 542, 622, 625 Schn.-Uhligh, without ascription but clearly also from Sophron. In the MSS of Ammonius the fragment is followed by the obscure phrase ποῖος εἰλισκοπείται, which Kaibel boldly and completely unreasonably emended to read πῦς, Θεστυλί, σκοπήι τύ; apparently on the basis of Theocr. 2.18–19.

²³ Fr. 8K = Σ Lycophr. 77 p. 45 Scheer. Cf. Ar. fr. 209 K-A; E. fr. 958 N²; Plu. *Mor.* 280c; Paus. 3.14.9; Ov. *Fasti* 1.389, etc.

Kaibel.²⁴ This recalls Theocr. 2.12, where dogs are said to shiver before Hecate; shortly afterwards the goddess's arrival at the crossroads is marked by the howling of the dogs in the town (2.35).²⁵ The rite in the papyrus therefore almost certainly involved Hecate, and she is no doubt the *πότνια* invoked in the lines before the fragment breaks off. At line 17 *δείπνου* may recall the *δείπνα* *Ἐκάτης* that, at least in Athens, were placed at crossroads in order to placate the goddess and keep her away from the town.²⁶ But dogs are also used for purification by Theophrastus' Superstitious Man, and according to Plutarch this involved killing them and rubbing their corpses around the body of the person to be purified.²⁷

Other aspects of the rite indicate purification.²⁸ Salt (because of its preservative value?) and laurel have apotropaic qualities.²⁹ Here in solid form it is held in the hands of those sitting at the hearth, either to be strewn on it later, or held as a *phylakterion* (so Eitrem), as perhaps at [Tib.] 3.4.9–10 *et natum in curas hominum genus omina noctis / farre pio placant et saliente sale*. In the magical papyri, laurel, inscribed with magical formulae, is worn as a protective at *PGM* 7.842, and laurel garlands are used in ritual invocations to Selene and Helios and Apollo.³⁰ The pitch is also probably to be associated with purification (though Latte calls attention to Pliny's assertion at *N.H.* 35.179 that in Sicily it was used to burn in lamps³¹). It is used together with sulphur and water by Melampus in the comic purification of the Proetids at Diphil. fr. 125 K-A.³²

The doors are opened to allow the baleful forces to depart; Eitrem plausibly suggested that those sitting at the hearth like suppliants could be afflicted by an illness caused by Hecate.³³ In particular, Parker compares the behaviour of the Superstitious Man at Theophr. *Char.* 16.7 (*καὶ πυκνὰ δὲ τὴν οἰκίαν καθάραι δεινὸς Ἐκάτης φάσκων ἐπαγωγὴν γεγρονέναι*) and concludes that the papyrus mime represents a ritual procedure to protect a house against magical attack. However, as we shall see, there is some reason to doubt that this is the only possible context for the ceremony.

²⁴ Fr. 67K = J. A. Cramer, *Anecdota Graeca e codd. MSS. Bibl. Oxon.* (Oxford, 1835–7), 1.277 (where the possible reading *Μεγαρέων* is rejected).

²⁵ Cf. also Vergil's punning imitation at *Ecl.* 8.107, *Hylax in limine latrat*, perhaps derived directly from Sophron rather than Theocritus.

²⁶ *Σ* Ar. *Pl.* 594; Plu. *Quaest. Conviv.* 708f–9a; Lucian. *Dial. Mort.* 425. See further Parker (n. 12), 224.

²⁷ Theophr. *Char.* 16.13; Plu. *Quaest. Rom.* 280bc, 290d, 291a. See also N. J. Zaganariis, *Πλάτων* 27 (1975), 322–9.

²⁸ The standard discussion of the details of the ceremony is still S. Eitrem, *SO* 12 (1933), 10–38; see also in general K. Latte, *Philol.* 88 (1933), 259–64; B. Lavagnini, *AC* 4 (1935), 153–5; P. E. Legrand, *REA* 36 (1934), 25–31.

²⁹ Salt: Men. *Phasm.* 50–6, Theophr. *Char.* 16.12 (with Ussher), Theocr. 24.96ff. (with Gow), and see Parker (n. 12), 226–7. At Ov. *Fasti* 2.536 salt is said to be offered to ghosts, again perhaps as an apotropaic. Laurel: Theophr. *Char.* 16.2, *Geopon.* 11.2.5, Hsch. κ 4841. Fumigation by laurel is attested at Plu. *De Pyth. Or.* 5.200, and Simaetha burns it, apparently for apotropaic reasons, at Theocr. 2.1, 23 (see Gow ad loc.).

³⁰ *PGM* 2.1–64; 64ff. (Selene, Helios); *PGM* 1.262–347 (Apollo). Cf. also Branchus' purification by laurel at Callim. fr. 194.28–31 Pf. (*Iamb.* 4) with S. Eitrem, *Gnomon* 4 (1928), 194ff.; Plu. *Symp.* 693f; Virg. *Ecl.* 8.82, and see Parker (n. 12), 228–9. For the use of laurel in magic, see further L. Deubner, *Kl. Schr.* (Königstein, 1982), 401–3.

³¹ Latte (n. 28).

³² Pitch (*kupru*) is also a purifying substance in Akkadian texts (because of its preservative and protective qualities?); see W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 61–2.

³³ For the idea of magical attack by Hecate, cf. E. Hipp. 142, [Hippocr.] *Morb. Sacr.* 1, Plu. *De Superstit.* 166a, and (in the later period) Johnston (n. 7), 146.

III. ΤΑΙ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΣ ΑΙ ΤΑΝ ΘΕΟΝ ΦΑΝΤΙ ΕΞΕΛΑΝ

The subject of purification has suggested to many scholars a connection with one of the few mimes by Sophron for which we have a title. Athenaeus, to illustrate the meaning of *κθαίς*, quotes at 11.480b a line from Sophron's (ταὶ) *Γυναῖκες αἱ τὰν θεόν φαντι ἐξελάν*.³⁴ The quotation itself (fr. 3K), *ὑποκατώρκεται δὲ ἐν κθαίδι τρικτὺς ἀλεξιφάρμακων*, probably refers to a mixture of protective drugs placed in a cup of, for example, wine, though at Men. fr. 313 Körte *Ἐφέσια τοῖς γαμοῦσιν οὗτος περιπατεῖ | λέγων ἀλεξιφάρμακα, ἀλεξιφάρμακα* obviously demands the sense 'apotropaic words'. Nevertheless, written spells could occasionally be placed in a cup. In *PGM* 1.232–47 *voces magicae* are written on hieratic papyrus and then washed off into spring water from seven springs; the mixture, intended to aid the memory, is then drunk over seven days. The formula for a love potion at *PGM* 7.969–72 is less clear. Here more *voces magicae* are to be written on hieratic papyrus, and a spoken request is made that a woman fall in love with the speaker when she has drunk an unspecified draught.³⁵ No further instructions are provided, but probably the words on the papyrus were also to be washed off into a cup of wine or water to make the potion.³⁶

The simplest translation of the mime's title is 'The women who say they will expell the Goddess', taking τὰν θεόν as the object of ἐξελάν, with the verb understood as at Plu. *Symp.* 693f τῶν οἰκετῶν ἓνα τύπτοντες ἀγνῆναις ῥάβδοις διὰ θυρῶν ἐξελαύνουσιν ἐπιλέγοντες "ἐξω βούλιμον, ἔσω δὲ πλούτον καὶ ὑγίειαν".³⁷ The mime will have depicted a group of women who were performing a purificatory rite to counteract the malign influence of a particular goddess. This sounds remarkably like the subject of the papyrus fragment we have been looking at, and would certainly justify the use of the apotropaic substances. A further connection can perhaps be made. At line 16 in the papyrus text πὸτ τὰνδε (so accented in the papyrus) could be taken to mean 'on behalf of these women (i.e. those who are afflicted)'.³⁸ Vitelli, however, suggested the plausible emendation πὸτ τάνδε 'against this (goddess)', comparing, for example, Anacr. *PMG* 396 ὥς δὴ πρὸς Ἑρωτα πυκταλίζω, Corinna *PMG* 666 περὶ τεύς Ἑρμᾶς πὸτ Ἄρεα | πουκτεύει.³⁹ On either reading it seems extremely obtuse not to connect the title of this mime with the papyrus fragment, unless sound counter-arguments are forthcoming. The contention that the title indicates a *μίμος γυναικείος*, while the papyrus mime requires the presence of some men, is hardly conclusive. There is no reason to suppose that a mime in which the main character was a woman could not have included minor male characters.⁴⁰ Admittedly, there is no indication that the main speaker in the papyrus is female; but we cannot argue from this that the speaker must be male.

³⁴ The title is also quoted as an example of Doric ταί at Apollon. *De Adv.* p. 592 Schn.

³⁵ Trans. E. N. O'Neill, in H. D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago, 1986), 144.

³⁶ Contrast *PGM* 7.385–89, another spell to inspire love, in which a charm involving *voces magicae* and an invocation of Aphrodite is simply spoken over a cup seven times.

³⁷ For other explanations, see e.g. R. Wünsch, *Jahrb. f. Klass. Phil. Suppl.* 27 (1902), 111–22; R. Herzog, *Hess. Blätt. f. Volkskunde* 25 (1926), 218ff.; Latte (n. 28); R. Arena, *PP* 30 (1975), 217–19; and see Parker's lucid note on the subject (Parker [n. 12], 223, n. 87).

³⁸ So P. Chantraine, *RPh* 9 (1935), 22–32.

³⁹ Norsa and Vitelli (n. 15), 248.

⁴⁰ Cf. the description of male antics (frs. 11–12K) in *Νυμφοπόνος*, which we know to have been one of the *γυναικείοι* from Hsch. ν 725, where the title is glossed as ἡ περὶ τὴν νύμφην πονομένην.

For Parker the title, since the women only *say* they are expelling the goddess, further implies some condemnation on Sophron's part: 'Their haste in assuming bewitchment, their folly in attempting to constrain the gods by magical means, the impiety of supposing that gods pollute men: one of these, perhaps more than one, may have been the target of Sophron's irony.'⁴¹ This (generally accepted) reading further implies that the connection between Sophron's mime and Theocritus' *Pharmakeutria* is illusory or negligible. 'The purpose of exorcism is, of course, very different from Simaitha's, but Theocritus may have been the first after Sophron to offer a detailed literary portrayal of a magical procedure.'⁴² However, this argument is not conclusive, and in the next section I shall adduce evidence for the use of purifications in the context of erotic magic.

IV. MAGICAL PURIFICATIONS

At Tib. 1.2 the poet describes for Delia's benefit an encounter with a witch. The latter is credited with various occult powers: the ability to control the stars (Tibullus claims to have seen her drawing them down from the sky), to summon the dead, to control the weather, and so on (Tib. 1.2.45ff.). Thus she is a fairly typical representative of her profession. Tibullus alleges that she has given him a spell which will enable Delia to escape detection by her husband if she deceives him with Tibullus. He then goes on to say that the witch even promised to cure him of his love by magical means (1.2.61–2 *nempe haec eadem se dixit amores / cantibus aut herbis soluere posse meos*). Although Tibullus expresses no desire to be relieved of his love, he purports to undergo a rite intended to achieve this result: *et me lustravit taedis, et nocte serena / concidit ad magicos hostia pulla deos* (1.2.63–4). The fumigation and the nocturnal sacrifice to infernal gods are strikingly reminiscent of the details of the rite in the Sophron papyrus.

Lucian provides an even clearer description of the type of ritual involved. The fourth of his *Dialogues of the Courtesans* begins with Melitta asking her friend Bacchis whether she knows where to find a witch. She explains that she has lost her lover Charinus, who has become enamoured of another hetaera, Simiche. Bacchis says that she knows a Syrian witch (*Dial. Meret.* 4.288), and describes a past occasion on which she herself made use of the witch's services. Her lover Phantias had deserted her for a woman called Phoebis, and Bacchis had gone to the witch for a spell to force him to return to her. The rite is then described in some detail. The witch took sulphur, a torch, some salt, a bowl of wine (drunk by the witch), and an item possessed by the man in question, such as his boots or clothing, or some of his hair. She fumigated the latter with the sulphur, sprinkling salt over the fire and muttering incantations in which both the woman's and the man's names are mentioned. She then used a *rhombos* and recited further incantations, which were, in Bacchis' case, effective almost immediately.

The *rhombos* is attested elsewhere in Greek love magic.⁴³ But the fumigation of the man's clothes or hair is less usual, and the sulphur and salt again recall the purificatory

⁴¹ Parker (n. 12), 223–4.

⁴² K. J. Dover, *Theocritus. Select Poems* (London, 1971), 97; cf. Page (n. 18), 330–1; G. O. Hutchinson, *Hellenistic Poetry* (Oxford, 1988), 154 with n. 19. Significantly the Sophron papyrus features neither in F. Graf's recent study of ancient magic (*Magic in the Ancient World* [Cambridge, MA and London, 1997], nor in C. Faraone's study of Greek love magic (*Ancient Greek Love Magic* [Cambridge, MA and London, 1999]).

⁴³ For the use of the *rhombos*, cf. Eupol. fr. 83 K-A, Ar. fr. 315 K-A, Theocr. 2.30, etc.; and see Faraone (n. 42), 8, 150–2; Graf (n. 42), 179–80; A. S. F. Gow, *JHS* 54 (1934), 1–13.

materials in the Sophron papyrus. A further interesting detail in Lucian's account is that the witch also provided Bacchis with a charm to turn Phanias against Phoebis. For this spell, Bacchis was to stamp on Phoebis' footprints, and say the words: ἐπιβέβηκά σοι καὶ ὑπεράνω εἰμί (4.289). The language suggests that of the *defixiones*; but the hostile charm also implies that part of the magical rite is to turn Phanias away from Phoebis. The purpose of the fumigation is now clearer: like the purification performed by Tibullus' witch, it is intended to drive out love, and thus to make the subject receptive to further enchantments.⁴⁴

Other cases of spells designed to cure or impede love abound in ancient literature,⁴⁵ and many of the lead *defixiones* are also designed to impede sexual relationships, usually for the benefit of the person casting the spell. For example, the Attic *defixio* mentioned above (p. 165) is an attempt to bind Theodora to remain unmarried; and in particular it is concerned to impede her relations with Charias and Callias. Charias is the more frequently mentioned individual, and the hostility expressed towards Theodora indicates that the *defixio* was written for a woman. We cannot certainly state that this person was in love with Charias or Callias; Theodora sounds like a courtesan, and another *hetaera*, concerned about her custom, may well have had the *defixio* made.⁴⁶ A shorter tablet, also from Attica and dating to roughly the same period (fourth century B.C.), simply binds a man called Aristocydes not to achieve sexual union with any other woman or boy.⁴⁷ Clearly this *defixio* was made on behalf of another woman, perhaps a prostitute worried about her source of income and (relative) stability.⁴⁸ The reasons erotic magic might be used can be quite varied; as Dickie has shown, not all cases are inspired by simple sexual jealousy. But of course there is in part an economic motivation even to Simaetha's imprecations.⁴⁹

V. CONCLUSION

The evidence of literary portrayals of love magic thus suggests that purificatory ceremonies were thought to be a common element in the magical curing of love. Further evidence indicates that such ceremonies could be preludes to rites designed to induce love. The differences in magical detail between Sophron's fragmentary mime and Theocritus 2 do not, therefore, preclude the possibility that the second depends

⁴⁴ Cf. the use of sulphur and other purifying substances to protect sheep against disease at V. *Georg.* 3.449.

⁴⁵ Cf. e.g. Prop. 1.12.9–10, Hor. *Epod.* 5.71–2, C. 1.27.21–2; Verg. *Aen.* 4.478ff.

⁴⁶ Persuasively argued by M. W. Dickie in his detailed investigation of erotic magic in both literature and everyday life (*CQ* 50 [2000], 576).

⁴⁷ Gager (n. 7), no. 23 (*IG* 3.78): (sc. καταδῶ) Ἀρι[σ]τοκύδη καὶ τὰς φανο(υ)μένας αὐτῶι γυναικας μήποτ' αὐτὸν γῆμαι ἄλλην γυναι(κα) μηδὲ παῖδα. For the sense and translation, see E. Voutiras, *REG* 109 (1996), 57 and n. 132. γαμέω is frequently used of sexual intercourse rather than just marriage.

⁴⁸ So Dickie (n. 46), 576.

⁴⁹ The magical papyri, however, while providing many charms meant to promote love, contain only a few for its prevention or cure. *PDM* 12.108–18 [*PGM* 12.466–8] is a Demotic spell to make a woman hate a man. A list of *voces magicae* are written on a papyrus, which is then treated with a noxious preparation of dung, hair, and other materials; the whole is then placed in water of some sort (the text is lacunose). It is unclear whether this is a cure to be performed with the woman's knowledge, or a spell designed solely for the benefit of the magician or his client. There is no suggestion that the charm should make the woman love another person, nor does it involve purificatory rites. Another Demotic spell (*PDM* 14.366–75) provides a method for separating a man from a woman, or a woman from her husband. Again, the spell seems performed solely to cause the subjects harm.

on the first. I suggest that Sophron's mime depicted a situation very similar to that described in Lucian's Dialogue. One of their number had perhaps (comically) lost her lover to another woman; the purpose of the rite was to restore her to his affections. We cannot be sure that the papyrus fragment contains the beginning of the mime; possibly the situation was outlined in an earlier section, or, more probably, it was described in the magician's invocation as Simaetha describes hers in Theocr. 2. The women of the title are more likely to be connected with a rite of this sort that one involving a central male character like that supposedly undergone by 'Tibullus'. The women may even have been *hetaerae*, as are Bacchis and Melitte (and as is Simaetha).⁵⁰

One final point remains: why is the title *γυναῖκες αἱ τὰν θεὸν φαντι ἔξελαῖν*? Why not simply 'The women who are expelling the goddess'? Parker's suggestion that Sophron had a religious or moral point rings hollow: from what we know of his mimes he had little interest in such satire. The other fragments of Sophron's work indicate that a good deal of their humour derived from obscene language and imagery. A guess (and it can be no more than that) is that the ritual failed to work; a botched ceremony is more obviously comical than a successful one, and would allow for much of that horse-play of which Sophron seems so fond.

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⁵⁰ Nor can we discount the possibility that Lucian is in part imitating Sophron, though the influence of New Comedy and Hellenistic poetry is more widely recognized. Dependence on Theocritus 2 is instead assumed for *Dial. Meret.* 4 by e.g. C. Robinson, *Lucian and His Influence in Europe* (London, 1979), 21. Lucian himself lists Old Comedy, satyr-play, and Menippean satire among his influences (*Bis. Acc.* 33), though not mime or New Comedy.