

# APHRODITE'S ΚΕΣΤΟΣ AND APPLES FOR ATALANTA: APHRODISIACS IN EARLY GREEK MYTH AND RITUAL

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*In memory of John J. Winkler,  
a mentor and a friend*

EROTIC MAGIC PLAYS A PROMINENT ROLE in many early Greek myths concerned with the dynamics of courtship and marriage. In *Iliad* 14, Hera uses the *κεστός ἰμάς* to facilitate her famous deception of Zeus. Deianeira, in a last-ditch effort to save her marriage, mistakenly and tragically destroys her philandering husband, Heracles, when she employs an aphrodisiac to win him back (Hesiod fr. 25.17–25 MW). In yet another early myth, Pindar tells us how Jason uses a magic ἵνξ-wheel to woo Medea—an act of seduction, which leads to elopement and marriage (*Pyth.* 4.213–219). Elsewhere we hear how apples, quinces, pomegranates and other fruit designated by the Greek word *μήλον* were apparently used to strengthen marital affections; they were regularly offered to brides-to-be, both in myth (e.g., Atalanta, Persephone) and in actual ceremony (e.g., Plut. *Solon* 20.4). In all these Greek legends involving aphrodisiacs, a magic spell is employed to bring about a desired, new marriage, or save a faltering one. Drawing attention to close parallels in Akkadian erotic spells of the Neo-Assyrian period and in the much later Greek magical papyri, I shall argue that in some cases such myths reflect the actual use of aphrodisiacs in early Greek culture, and that awareness of these practices can give us a much deeper insight into the narrative structure of the poetic texts in which they appear.

Different portions of this paper were delivered in January 1989 at the 120th Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association in Baltimore, and at an NEH-sponsored "Workshop for Ancient Societies" at the University of Chicago. It has profited from the comments and questions of both audiences. I should like to thank my hosts at Chicago Professors J. Redfield, M. Roth, and R. Saller for their hospitality and encouragement. Various drafts of the written version have benefited from the comments of W. Brashear, E. Courtney, M. Edwards, R. Janko, C. Patterson, J. Scurlock, J. Winkler, and two anonymous referees, but any remaining imperfections are my own. I use the following abbreviations throughout: *ArOF* = *Archiv für Orientforschung*; *KAR* = E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifturkunden aus Assur religiöse Inhalts*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1915–1923); *PGM*<sup>2</sup> = Karl Preisendanz and Albert Henrichs (eds.), *Papyri Graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*<sup>2</sup> 2 vols. (Stuttgart 1973–74, Sammlung wissenschaftlicher Commentare). All translations of *PGM*<sup>2</sup> are from H.-D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago 1986), hereafter Betz, *Translation*; the abbreviation "NN" in these translations stands for ὁ δεινὰ or ἡ δεινὰ in the original.

I offer here a discussion of only two of the above-mentioned aphrodisiacs, the *κεστός ἱμάς* (which I shall refer to throughout simply as *κεστός*, in accord with later Greek practice) and the apple. In part this choice is dictated by the desire for variety (the former is employed against males, the latter against females) and by the availability of clear Near Eastern parallels.

APHRODITE'S ΚΕΣΤΟΣ:

ANGER, POWER, AND THE ART OF SEDUCTION

In the fourteenth book of the *Iliad*, Hera calls Aphrodite aside and mendaciously makes an urgent request:

- 200 δὸς νῦν μοι φιλότητα καὶ ἥμερον, ᾗ τε σὺ πάντας  
δαμνᾷ ἀθανάτους ἡδὲ θνητοὺς ἀνθρώπους.  
εἶμι γὰρ ὀψομένη πολυφόρβου πείρατα γαίης,  
'Ωκεανόν τε, θεῶν γένεσιν, καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν,  
οἷ με σφοῖσι δόμοισιν ἐὺ τρέφον ἡδ' ἀτίταλλον,  
δεξάμενοι 'Ρείας, ὅτε τε Κρόνον εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς  
205 γαίης νέρθε καθεῖσε καὶ ἀτρυγέτοιο θαλάσσης·  
τοὺς εἶμ' ὀψομένη, καὶ σφ' ἄκριτα νείκεα λύσω·  
ἦδη γὰρ δηρὸν χρόνον ἀλλήλων ἀπέχονται  
εὐνῆς καὶ φιλότητος, ἐπεὶ χόλος ἔμπεσε θυμῷ.  
εἰ κείνω γ' ἐπέεσσι παραιπεπιθοῦσα φίλον κῆρ  
εἰς εὐνὴν ἀνέσαιμι ὁμωθῆναι φιλόττι,  
210 αἰεὶ κέ σφι φίλη τε καὶ αἰδοίη καλεοίμην. II. 14.198–210

Thus Hera, pretending to be worried over the cool marital relations between her parents, asks Aphrodite for help in bringing them back together in their bridal bed. Aphrodite agrees to give Hera her *κεστός ἱμάς*:

- 215 Ἦ, καὶ ἀπὸ στήθεσφιν ἐλύσατο κεστὸν ἱμάντα  
ποικίλον, ἔνθα τέ οἱ θελκτήρια πάντα τέτυκτο·  
ἐνθ' ἐνὶ μὲν φιλότης, ἐν δ' ἥμερος, ἐν δ' ὀαριστὺς  
πάρφασις, ἥ τ' ἔκλεψε νόον πύκα περ φρονούντων.

II. 14.214–217

Despite the four generous lines of detailed description there has been little agreement as to the nature of the *κεστός*, what it looked like, where it was worn or carried, or what was its intended effect. Leaf and most of the older commentators thought that it was an amulet of sorts “set down in” the fold (*κόλπος*) of Hera’s garment (219 and 223).<sup>1</sup> The term *κόλπος*, however, can also mean “bosom,” and in recent years others have argued that the *κεστός* was an article of clothing, either a “saltire” worn about the breasts (cf. 214

<sup>1</sup>W. Leaf (London 1902) *ad loc.*; cf. K. F. Ameis and C. Hentze (Leipzig 1885) and O. Henke (Leipzig 1902). For the opposing minority view that the *κεστός* was a girdle, see F. A. Paley (London 1884).

quoted above: "and from her breasts unbound the . . . κεστός ἱμάς"), or an embroidered girdle placed on the waist.<sup>2</sup>

The outward appearance of the κεστός is equally unclear. It is agreed that κεστός, an adjective formed from κεντέω, "to prick or pierce," refers to a pattern of perforations used to decorate the ἱμάς, a noun which in Homer regularly designates a rather narrow strap of leather, for example the chin-strap of a helmet.<sup>3</sup> The nature of this decoration is, however, rather vague; drawing parallels from Greek art and Homeric *ecphrasis* some envision anthropomorphic representations of the triad: Philotes, Himeros, and Oaristus. Indeed, elsewhere in the *Iliad* in the description of defensive armor, there are close formulaic parallels for three abstract figures appearing together in the same hexametric line, for example Strife (Ἔρις), Battle Din (Κυδοιμός) and Doom (Κήρ) depicted on Achilles' shield (18.535) and Strife (Ἔρις), Strength (Ἀλκή) and Onslaught (Ἰωκή) on Athena's aegis (5.740).<sup>4</sup> One should, however, exercise caution here in assuming that Homer is simply describing superficial decorations on the strap. Hesiod's narrative of the construction and adornment of Pandora painfully reveals the ambiguities in the early Greek concept of abstract qualities such as φιλότης or ἕμερος. Zeus orders Hephaestus to fashion a life-size clay statue and give it voice, strength, and beauty and he bids Athena to teach it various handicrafts. As one would expect, he turns to Aphrodite for the provision of sexual attractiveness:

καὶ χάριν ἀμφιχέαι κεφαλῇ χρυσῇν Ἀφροδίτην,  
καὶ πόθον ἀργαλέον καὶ γυιοβόρους μελεδώνας·      *Op.* 65–66

Here Aphrodite's abstract gifts, πόθος (objective "desire," like ἕμερος in the κεστός; it is the longing to be felt by others for Pandora) and χάρις are

<sup>2</sup>LSJ s.v. κεστός defines it as a "girdle" in this passage. C. Bonner, "ΚΕΣΤΟΣ ΙΜΑΞ and the Saltire of Aphrodite," *AJP* 70 (1949) 1–6, suggests that it was a "saltire" (a kind of cross-your-heart brassiere) of the type worn by eastern goddesses. F. E. Brenk, "Aphrodite's Girdle: No Way to Treat a Lady," *Classical Bulletin* 54 (1977) 17–20, alters Bonner's theory slightly; the κεστός is an embroidered square or loose collar which joins the saltire together at the breast. R. B. Onians, *The Origins of Western Thought* (Cambridge 1951) 368–369, compares it to the magical veil worn by Leukothea and given to Odysseus (*Od.* 5.333–335).

<sup>3</sup>Chantraine, s.v. "κεντέω." To my knowledge only Brenk (above, n. 2) has embraced Bonner's unlikely etymology (above, n. 2) from κείω "to split."

<sup>4</sup>H. A. Shapiro, *Personification of Abstract Concepts in Greek Art and Literature to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* (diss., Princeton 1977) 34–36. These parallels to defensive armor are understandable, when we realize that the overall structure of Hera's preparations reflect the standard arming type-scenes; see L. Golden, "Διὸς ἀπάτη and the Unity of *Iliad* 14," *Mnemosyne* 42 (1989) 1–11, at 5–6. Leaf (above, n. 1) *ad loc.*, suspected that line 217, beginning as it does with πάφρασις without any copula, was a disconnected gloss on ὀφιστός. R. Janko, however, in his forthcoming volume of the new Cambridge commentary on the *Iliad*, suggests that this could just as easily be the result of oral improvisation.

either poured or draped about the head. The former interpretation depends on the use of the same verb to describe similar actions of Athena in the *Odyssey* (e.g., 6.235 and 23.156) where she is said to "pour" either χάρις or κάλλος over Odysseus' head. The verb ἀμφιχεῖν, however, can be used to mean "drape over" (cf. the δέσματα with which Hephaestus entraps Ares and his wife *Od.* 8.278), an image which seems to be corroborated in the narration of the actual creation of Pandora a few lines later; there the commands given to Aphrodite are carried out by her surrogates Peitho and the Charites (i.e., the personifications themselves), who are said to place golden necklaces about the statue's neck (73-74). As in Homer's treatment of the κειτός, here the presentation of abstract seductive powers is depicted in very concrete terms. Although it is unclear in both the Pandora story and the κειτός episode whether qualities such as χάρις or ἔμερος are physically "built into" the strap or necklace, it is an obvious point of both stories that such "gifts" were meant to infuse magically the person who donned them.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, there is some confusion about the expected effects of the κειτός; from Hera's story quoted above, it seems that it could be used to resolve marital discord. If Hera the would-be marriage counselor had kept her word, perhaps the κειτός would have been given to Tethys to wear, in order to seduce her husband in similar fashion, but this is never made explicit. In any event, the ultimate goal would have been the restoration of sexual relations between her parents. As it turns out, Hera's real object is to stimulate desire in Zeus and then (with the help of the god Sleep) to immobilize him. We can thus infer the following constellation of interrelated effects associated with the use of the Homeric κειτός and the necklaces given to Pandora: 1) they were carried or worn by a woman; 2) they enhanced her attractiveness; 3) the κειτός alone could be used to diminish anger between a woman and her husband; and 4) they could both be used to seduce and captivate a male. The necklace is to be employed in anticipation of a new marriage (e.g., the preparation of the "bride" Pandora), while the κειτός is used to renew sexual life in an existing one (Zeus and Hera; Oceanus and Tethys).

To what extent does the story in *Iliad* 14 reflect actual magical practices in the ancient world? A cuneiform tablet from Ashur dating to around 1000 B.C. contains a Neo-Assyrian magical spell of great interest:<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>It has long been known that Hesiod's descriptions of the adornment of Pandora (in both the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony*) contain numerous echoes of the Homeric Διὸς ἀπάτη, leading many scholars to conclude that Hesiod has used the episode as a model of sorts. For the large bibliography and renewed debate, see H. Neitzel, *Homer-Rezeption bei Hesiod: Interpretation ausgewählter Passagen* (Bonn 1975) 20-34. Like the κειτός, these necklaces may have also been part of Aphrodite's regular wardrobe; cf. the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* 61 ff. and 86 ff. for her own preparations to seduce Anchises. A. Henrichs, *Die Phoinikika des Lollianos* (Bonn 1972) 22, points to the east as the source for these rich ornaments—especially in the descriptions of Astarte and Inanna.

<sup>6</sup>V. Scheil, "Catalogue de la Collection Eugène Tisserant," *RAssyr* 18 (1921) 21-27 no. 17; O. R. Gurney and J. J. Finkelstein, *The Sultantepe Tablets* (London 1957)

Incantation à réciter lorsque le mari d'une femme est courroucé contre elle. Le rite à accomplir: tu tresses des tendons d'une gazelle, du [chanvre] et de la laine rouge dans un seul fil, tu y noues quatorze noeuds, et chaque fois que tu noues un noeud, tu récite l'incantation (qui précède). La femme mettra (cette corde) autour de sa taille, et elle sera aimée. (tr. E. Reiner)

The incantation to be used with this recipe is hopelessly fragmentary; we can, however, make out that it invokes Ishtar, a goddess who so very often is equated with Aphrodite, the owner of the Homeric *κεστός*. This Assyrian procedure, moreover, seems to be designed for a situation quite similar to that of Oceanus and Tethys described above; a specially made strap worn by a woman heals a marital rift by assuaging anger.

The underlying magical activity in the Near Eastern spell is the tying of knots. Thus it seems to be related to another, much larger class of Neo-Assyrian magical spells, the so-called *egalkura* spells, which often involve the use of knotted or beaded cords to enhance one's attractiveness in the eyes of a superior.<sup>7</sup>

Incantation of the type *egalkura*.

Ritual: You repeat this spell seven times over a three-stranded cord of lapis-colored wool, you knot it (and) you bind it in your hem. Then you will enter into the presence of the prince and he will welcome you (var. "whoever looks upon you will be glad to see you"). (tr. J. Scurlock)

Another spell of this type involves a more elaborate cord strung with semi-precious stones (*KAR* 71.1–11 = Spell D.5–8 Scurlock):

Incantation of the type *egalkura*.

You thread *ianibu*-stone and carnelian on a cord, (and) you repeat the spell three times. You place it on the teaseled side of your garment. (And then) you will enter into the presence of the prince and he will welcome you. (tr. J. Scurlock)

Neither recipe even hints at the prospect of increasing the erotic desire of the prince; the cord is simply designed to make a superior better disposed toward one of his subjects or underlings. Nevertheless, the erotic spell used by a wife against her husband would seem to have much in common

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no. 257, publish a duplicate text. I give the French translation of E. Reiner, "La Magie babylonienne," in *Le Monde du sorcier* (Paris 1966, Sources Orientales 7) 93, as there are no English versions available.

<sup>7</sup>All the translations of *egalkura* incantations are from "E.GAL.KU.RA Rituals," an as yet unpublished study by Prof. J. Scurlock, who has kindly allowed me to quote short portions of it here. The spell quoted is *KAR* 71.21–25 = Spell B.11–15 Scurlock. For a discussion of the ambiguous nature of these spells, which are often found in collections of spells which range from explicitly erotic purposes to purely political or economic ones, see J. Scurlock, "Was There a 'Love-Hungry' *Entu*-Priestess Named *Etirtum*?, " *ArOF* 36 (forthcoming). Spells labelled *egalkura* are not limited to the use of knotted cords; rings, "hands" fashioned from lead and special ointments are also used to similar effect (see below, nn. 9 and 10).

with these *egalkura* recipes designed for political situations. In each case social or political inferiors armed with a magically enchanted cord face their “princes” with hopes of being made more welcome or attractive. In similar forms of later Greek “political” magic the anger or potential anger of the ruler is frequently the focus of the spell, as, for example, in this short recipe, which is alleged to be from “a sacred book called unique” or the “Eighth Book of Moses”:<sup>8</sup>

θυμοκάτοχον· πρὸς βασιλέα | ἡ μεγιστᾶνα εἵσαγε, τὰς χεῖρας ἐντὸς ἔχων λέγε | τὸ ὄνομα <τ>ὸ δίσκου, βαλὼν ἄμμα τοῦ παλλίου σου ἢ τοῦ ἐπικαρσίου, καὶ θαυμάσεις. || (PGM<sup>2</sup> XIII.251–253)

*To restrain anger:* Enter the presence of a king or magnate, and while you have your hands inside your garment say the name of the sun disk, while tying a knot in your pallium or shawl. You will marvel at the results. (tr. M. Smith)

Here the procedure, performed quickly and surreptitiously in the presence of the superior, is understandably reduced to a single knot and a simple invocation of a god. Other types of *egalkura* spells (e.g., special rings<sup>9</sup> or facial ointments<sup>10</sup>) can also be paralleled in later Greek magic.

<sup>8</sup>Such hoary eastern antecedents are usually fabricated by later magicians in order to make the spell more mysterious, and therefore more valuable to the customer, see H.-D. Betz and A. A. Barb (below, n. 33). There are, however, indications of real Jewish influence here; see M. Smith, “The Eighth Book of Moses and How it Grew (*P.Leid.* J 395),” in *Atti del XVIII congresso internazionale di papirologia* (Naples 1984) 683–693, and his comments *ad loc.* in Betz, *Translation* 172–188, esp. 179, n. 62, where he suggests that the rare Greek word ἐπικάρσιον (“shawl”) may have been a translation of Hebrew *talith*. Knots and knotted cords were a regular part of the Greco-Roman arsenal of amulets; see P. Wolters, “Faden und Knoten als Amulett,” *ArchRW* 8 (1911) 1–22, who collects many passages from Pliny, Marcellus Empiricus, and other later writers, and convincingly argues that vase paintings from the classical period attest to similar customs in much earlier Greek society.

<sup>9</sup>Prof. Scurlock compares, for instance, KAR 71 rev. 9–11 = Spell C Scurlock (“Over a copper ring repeat the spell three times. You place it on your finger, [and then] you will enter into the presence of the prince and he will welcome you”) with PGM<sup>2</sup> XII.270–273 and 277–280: “A Ring: A little ring for success and for favor and victory. It makes men famous and great and admired and rich as can be, or it makes possible friendships with suchlike men . . . . The world has nothing better than this. For when you have it with you, you will always get whatever you ask from anybody. Besides it calms the angers of masters and kings. Wearing it, whatever you may say to anyone, you will be believed, and you will be pleasing to everybody” (tr. M. Smith). There follows a long incantation which is to be repeated thrice daily. Beliefs about the efficacy of such rings may lie behind the myth of the ring of Gyges (*Plato Resp.* 2.359d–360a), which allows him to get close to and then seduce the queen.

<sup>10</sup>For the use of facial ointments in both traditions, compare KAR 237.13–17 = Spell J.1–5 Scurlock (“You repeat this spell three times over good oil. You smear your eyes and your hands, and then you will enter into the presence of the prince and he will welcome you”) or KAR 237.18–23 = Spell L Scurlock, which is almost identical, except the last line which reads: “. . . and then he who looks upon you will be glad to see you,” with

In a recent study of later Greek aphrodisiacs, John Winkler reveals a fluidity in the later Greek categories of amulet and aphrodisiac that is remarkably similar to that found in the Neo-Assyrian magical recipes discussed above.<sup>11</sup> Although we are accustomed to think of an amulet as self-induced "protective" magic and an aphrodisiac as invasive "black" magic aimed at another, there is a series of recipes for amulets in the Greek magical papyri which are clearly designed to affect the way other people perceive and interact with the wearer. Instead of simply asking that some evil be turned away, the invocations inscribed on these amulets often request that some abstract benefit be granted. Spells called νικητικά, for instance, are designed to help gain victory over a rival. A simple prayer inscribed on the hooves of a racehorse reads: "Give me success, χάρις, reputation, glory in the stadium" (*PGM*<sup>2</sup> VII.390–393). Another charm is written on a gold tablet and then hung on a ship or a horse: "Thoth give victory, strength and influence to the wearer" (*PGM*<sup>2</sup> VIII.923–925). Other spells, sometimes designated as χαριήσια, are designed to help public speakers gain the sympathy of their audience (e.g., *PGM*<sup>2</sup> XXXVI.275), or are blatantly commercial and ask that the profits of a shopowner be increased; in either case they demand benefits such as a beauty, sexiness and χάρις, which here and in all Greek amulet recipes refers to outward attractiveness toward others.<sup>12</sup>

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*PGM*<sup>2</sup> XXXVI.211–230: "Prayer to Helios: A charm to restrain anger and for victory and for securing χάρις (none is greater): Say to the sun (Helios) [the prayer] seven times, and anoint your hand with oil and wipe it on your head and face" (tr. R. F. Hock). The actual prayer (which follows) asks for a variety of abstract benefits, including "χάρις with all men and women" (see below, n. 13 for a full translation and discussion). This recalls the specially consecrated oil which Medea prepared for Jason, to ensure his success and protection in the deadly trials arranged for him by her father (Pindar *Pyth.* 4.221–223).

<sup>11</sup>J. Winkler, "The Constraints of Desire: Erotic Magical Spells," in C. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford 1990) 216–245 = *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender* (New York 1990) 77–79. Much of the following two paragraphs is indebted to this groundbreaking study. Although there are many detailed recipes for such "charm" or "victory" amulets in the magical papyri, it is surprising that there are so few extant examples; for a survey, see D. R. Jordan, "The Inscribed Gold Tablet from the Vigna Codini," *AJA* 89 (1985) 162–166, at 164–165.

<sup>12</sup>There are three prayers connected with talismanic statues (which are amulets of sorts, albeit on a larger scale) to be set up in shops: the first is to be recited over a small wax statue of "the little beggar": "Therefore give me χάρις and work for my business. Bring me silver, gold, clothing, and much wealth for the good of it" (*PGM*<sup>2</sup> IV.2440–2441); the second prayer is inscribed on papyrus and inserted into a homemade statuette of Hermes: "Give income and business to this place" (2365–2366). The request for χάρις, "outward grace, beauty," in the first of the spells quoted above signals the desire for more than the practical acquisition of profits for a business; personal attractiveness was also thought to be necessary for success. This is spelled out quite clearly in a third recipe for a talismanic statue of a seated baboon wearing the winged helmet of Hermes.

For our purposes, it is significant that these two interrelated categories of amulets are often combined and blurred with still another genre, the *θυμοκάτοχον*.<sup>13</sup>

Θυμοκάτοχον καὶ χαριτήσιον καὶ νικητικὸν | δικαστηρίων βέλτιστον, μέχρεις καὶ πρὸς  
|| βασιλέας ποιεῖ, οὐ μῖζον οὐδέν. λαβὼν λάμ|ναν ἀργυρᾶν γράφε χαλκῷ γραφίῃ τὴν  
ὑποκιμέ|νην σφραγίδα τοῦ ζωδίου καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα || καὶ φόρ(ε)ι ἐν τῷ ὑποκαλύμματι  
σου, καὶ νικήσις. | ἔστι δὲ τὰ γραφόμενα ὀνόματα ταῦτα· | 'Ἰαώ, Σαβαώθ, 'Αδ-  
ωναί, 'Ελωαί, 'Αβρασάξ, | 'Αβλαναθαναλβα, 'Ακραμμαχαμαρι, πεφθα|φωζα, φνεβεν-  
νουνι, κύριοι ἄγγελοι, δότε μοι, || τῷ δεῖνα, ᾧ ἔτεκεν ἡ δεῖνα, νίκη, χάριν, δόξαν, |  
ἐπιτυχίαν πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους καὶ πρὸς | πάσας γυνέκας, μάλιστα πρὸς τὸν δεῖνα, ὃν  
ἔτεκεν | ἡ δεῖνα, ἐπὶ τὸν αἰεὶ καὶ ἅπαντα χρόνον. τέλ(ε)ι. (PGM<sup>2</sup> XXXVI.35–68)

Charm to restrain anger and a charm to secure *χάρις* and an excellent charm for gaining victory in the law courts (it works even against kings; no charm is greater!): Take a silver lamella and inscribe with a bronze stylus the following seal of the figure and the names, and wear it under your garment and you will have a victory.

The names to be written are these: [MAGICAL NAMES], supreme angels, give to me, NN whom NN bore, victory, *χάρις*, reputation, advantage over all men and women, especially NN him whom NN bore, forever and all time. Consecrate it (tr. R. F. Hock).

Here in the Greek magical tradition we find once again the same combination of effects which are expected from the Neo-Assyrian recipes discussed above: a hidden amulet is designed to enhance the attractiveness of the wearer, to restrain the anger of a king or husband, and gain victory and success as well. One might argue that such combinations are random, and merely reflect the tendency in magical handbooks toward the

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The spell begins with a prayer to the god Hermes "Come to me, NN, lord Hermes and give me *χάρις*, sustenance, victory, prosperity, sexiness (*ἐπαφροδισία*), beauty of face (*προσώπου εἶδος*), power over all men and women" (PGM<sup>2</sup> VIII.4–5); a similar prayer is given a few lines later (line 26): "give me *χάρις*, shapeliness (*μορφή*), and physical beauty (*κάλλος*)." The statue has a hollow box on its back which holds a papyrus inscribed as follows: "... give to the workshop business, *χάρις*, prosperity, sexiness (*ἐπαφροδισία*), both to NN himself and to his workshop" (PGM<sup>2</sup> VIII.61–64). Winkler (above, n. 11) stresses that this spell, tellingly labeled a *φιλιτροκατάδεσμος*, "binding love spell," confounds our own preconceived categories of erotic and amuletic magic when it asks for personal beauty, attractiveness, a "pretty face," as well as for monetary success and victory.

<sup>13</sup>We find a similar collection of requests at the end of a rather simple prayer to Helios used with a facial ointment (see above, n. 10 for the *praxis*) in PGM<sup>2</sup> XXXVI.211–230: "I ask to obtain and receive from you life, health, reputation, wealth, influence, strength, success, sexiness, *χάρις* with all men and all women, victory over all men and all women. Yes lord [MAGICAL NAMES], accomplish the matter which I want by means of your power" (tr. R. F. Hock, with minor changes). The rubric of this spell identifies it as "a charm to restrain anger and for victory and for securing *χάρις*." For similar combinations of these three types of spells, see PGM<sup>2</sup> XX.270–273 (all three; above, n. 9); XXXVI 161–177 (*θυμοκάτοχον* and *νικητικόν*) and 211–230 (all three).



development of the "all-purpose" spell. The assimilation of erotic, economic, and political aspirations occurs, however, (as the Near Eastern parallels suggest) in other ancient cultures and is especially convenient in highly competitive societies, such as the ancient Greek, in which politics is the art of maximizing one's own success, limiting that of a rival, and (in heavily bureaucratized imperial systems) controlling the anger of a superior.<sup>14</sup>

I suggest that the actual magical recipes discussed above may reveal how the Homeric poet uses a traditional prayer (often associated with these amulets) to structure the narrative of Hera's encounter with Aphrodite. The Greek invocations quoted above from the magical papyri all include requests for a variety of abstract benefits, such as favor, reputation, sexiness, a beautiful face, χάρις ("outward attractiveness"), advantage in the presence of a superior, and victory over a rival. In their directness and simplicity, these prayers are reminiscent of Hera's request to Aphrodite discussed above (II. 14.198–199): "Give me φιλότης and ἕμερος, with which you overwhelm mortal men and all the immortals . . . ." Indeed, the dramatic structure of Hera's approach to Aphrodite, and the vocabulary and arrangement of her request clearly reflect the strategy of a standard Greek prayer.<sup>15</sup> She begins by "calling" Aphrodite away from the other gods—a commonplace beginning to prayers which is frequently formalized in a special type of hymn described as kletic.<sup>16</sup> Aphrodite's movement away from her divine

<sup>14</sup>See Winkler (above, n. 11) for a penetrating discussion of the use of these aphrodisiac amulets in the context of interpersonal rivalries. He does not, however, address in any detail the question of restraining the anger of a superior, a facet of "political magic" that only develops later on with the advent of the imperial political bureaucracy of the later periods of Greek history. For the more complicated pattern of competition which results in such a socially stratified context, see P. Brown, "Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity," in M. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London 1970) 25–27, and R. Kaster, "The Grammarian Palladas and the Friend of God: Magic and Patronage in Late Roman Alexandria," *ANRW* 3 (forthcoming). Compare the use of binding magic in the democratic law courts of classical Athens, where all attention is focussed on the legal opponent and there is no mention whatsoever of any effect on the jury hearing the case; see C. A. Faraone, "An Accusation of Magic in Classical Athens (Ar. Wasps 946–48)," *TAPA* 119 (1989) 149–161.

<sup>15</sup>K. Ausfeld, "De Graecorum precatationibus quaestiones," *Jahrb. f. cl. Phil.* 28 (1903) 502–547, originally divided the Greek prayer into three parts: *invocatio*, *pars epica*, and *precatio*. More recent studies have downplayed the narrative aspect of the middle section, stressing instead its rhetorical aim. See J. M. Bremer, "Greek Hymns," in H. S. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (Leiden 1981) 196, and F. Graf, "Prayer in Magic and Religious Ritual," in *Magika Hiera* (above, n. 11) 188–215, for the analysis used here: invocation, argument, and request. For prayer formulas in Homer, see L. C. Muellner, *The Meaning of Homeric EYXOMAI Through Its Formulas* (Innsbruck 1976, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft 13) 27–28.

<sup>16</sup>The epithets and powers of the deity are usually mentioned in the invocation, often placed (as here) in a relative clause. See, e.g., the prose prayer to Hermes (PGM<sup>2</sup>

companions may, in fact, be a traditional prerequisite to a proper hearing of a prayer.<sup>17</sup> Hera's invocation is followed by a simple request (δός νῦν μοι) regularly used in the language of prayer in the *Iliad*,<sup>18</sup> and a good argument follows explaining why Aphrodite should grant such a favor.<sup>19</sup> As the use of recognizable forms of prayer by gods and goddesses is very rare in Greek epic poetry,<sup>20</sup> it is certainly significant that some twenty lines later in this very same episode Hera's request for additional aid from the god Sleep begins with yet another traditional form of argument found in Greek prayer:<sup>21</sup>

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VIII.1-63; discussed by Graf, see preceding note), which begins: "Come to me Lord Hermes, who collects the sustenance of gods and men; [come] to me, NN, lord Hermes and give me favor, sustenance, victory, prosperity, sexiness (ἐπαφροδισία) and facial beauty (προσώπου εἶδος)" (tr. E. N. O'Neil, with minor changes). Cf. Hera's mention of the universality of Aphrodite's powers, "with which you subdue all the gods and mortal men" and her invocation of Sleep a few lines later as "Lord of all gods and men" (14.233).

<sup>17</sup>τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάνευθε θεῶν (*Il.* 14.188-119). Compare Demeter sitting in her newly constructed Eleusinian temple (μακάρων ἀπὸ νόσφιν ἀπάντων, *Hym. Hom. Dem.* 303, also 355). Zeus listens to Thetis' request apart from the gods (*Il.* 1.497) and then in his argument with Hera, he makes an oblique reference to her visit which uses the same phrase (*Il.* 1.549). When Zeus forbids the gods to get involved in human affairs at Troy (*Il.* 8.10), his command is couched in similar language: "And whomever I see apart from the gods attempting to go among the Trojans and help them or among the Greeks." The poet of the *Hymn to Demeter* seems to be playing with the convention, when he tells us that Zeus did not hear his divine daughter Persephone calling him, precisely because he was sitting in his temple "apart from the gods" receiving offerings from mortals (25-27).

<sup>18</sup>Of the thirteen other occasions where the imperative δός appears in the *Iliad*, nine are employed in prayers. The most frequent usage is δός + accusative + infinitive (3.322; 3.351; 5.118; 6.307; 10.281; 17.646; and 24.309; cf. the same construction with δότε + accusative + infinitive at 6.476, its only appearance in the poem), but we do find it two other times (as here) with a dative and an abstract noun: one prayer to Zeus (7.202-205) asks for victory, power (βία) and honor (κῦδος), while in another passage (16.514-526) the wounded Glaukos calls Apollo and asks for strength or power (κράτος). Althaea's similarly constructed prayer to Hades and Persephone is reported in indirect speech (*Il.* 9.571): παιδί δόμεν θάνατον.

<sup>19</sup>In the prayer of Glaukos mentioned in the preceding note, the argument portion of the prayer is also introduced with a narrative beginning with γάρ, which explains the reason for the prayer: Ἐλκος μὲν γὰρ ἔχω τόδε καρτερόν.

<sup>20</sup>Hera pounds the earth with her hand and prays to Ouranos, Ge and the Titans to give her a child more powerful than Zeus (*Hymn to Apollo* 334-339); the hand-pounding may be a special way of attracting the attention of chthonic deities, cf. Althaea's prayer to Hades and Persephone for Meleager's destruction (above, n. 18). Thetis' supplication of Zeus contains several of the traditional elements of prayer (*Il.* 1.500-516; see G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary 1: Books 1-4* [Cambridge 1985] *ad loc.*)

<sup>21</sup>Such an argument is, of course, familiar to the readers of Sappho (fr. 1.5-8): αἶ ποτα κἀτέρωτα / τὰς ἔμας αἰδοῦς αἰόισα πῆλοι / ἔκλυες, πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα / χρύσιον ἦλθες. See Graf (above, n. 15) for discussion. Muellner, (above, n. 15) 19-20, suggests that a standard formula (cf. *Il.* 1.453) has been altered at the end of *Il.* 14.234 in order to avoid using a participle of the verb εὔχομαι in describing Hera's petition to Sleep. He argues that this was done, because it is inappropriate for a goddess to pray to another deity.

Ὕπνε, ἄναξ πάντων τε θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων,  
 ἡμὲν δὴ ποτ' ἐμὸν ἔπος ἔκλυες, ἡδ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν  
 πείθει· ἐγὼ δέ κέ τοι εἰδέω χάριν ἡματα πάντα.  
 κοίμησόν μοι Ζηνὸς ὕπ' ὀφρύσιν ὅσσε φαινώ,  
 αὐτίκ' ἐπεὶ κεν ἐγὼ παραλέξομαι ἐν φιλότῃ. II. 14.233–237

Here, too, the power of Sleep over all mortals and immortals is emphasized, and Hera once again appears as a somewhat powerless individual (nearly as helpless as a mortal) who must appeal to (other) gods for help in her seduction and manipulation of Zeus.

Her prayers to Aphrodite and Sleep are perhaps connected with the other religious overtones of the scene on Mt. Ida, which seem to reflect aspects of the *ιερός γάμος* of Zeus and Hera. Perhaps a prayer similar to Hera's prayer to Aphrodite, used in conjunction with a *κεστός*, comprised a traditional ritual performed by newly-wed brides to ward off any future discord in their marriage. Such a ritual may itself have been borrowed from the east, for scholars have long suspected Near Eastern influence in Greek celebrations of this sacred wedding.<sup>22</sup> It has also been argued that Hera's tale about the anger of Tethys and Oceanus is itself modelled on the Near Eastern myth of Tiamat and Apsu preserved in the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish*, where they appear as the parents of the gods; although originally united in love, they were separated at the very beginning of time. The suggestion of influence is grounded in the important fact that it is uniquely here (in all of early Greek literature) that Oceanus and Tethys appear as the progenitors of the gods.<sup>23</sup> In any event, it need not surprise us to find a Near Eastern form of erotic magic in a section of the poem which betrays other important hallmarks of such influence.

<sup>22</sup>See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Eng. tr. J. Raffan (Harvard 1985) 108 and 132, for discussion and pertinent bibliography. It is generally agreed that the whole portrait of the gods in the *Iliad* has far more in common with the picture presented in Near Eastern poetry of the second millennium than with that of archaic or classical Greece. See M. L. West, "The Rise of the Greek Epic," *JHS* 108 (1988) 151–172, at 169, for the most up to date bibliography. The parallels between Hera's preparations in *Iliad* 14 and Pandora's adornment in Hesiod (above, n. 5) are perhaps more understandable if viewed as typical "bridal preparations," in which the donning of an amulet like the *κεστός* or a necklace (in either case infused with *χάρης* and other powerful abstractions) plays an important role.

<sup>23</sup>In early Greek literature this idea is only found in the Διὸς ἀπάτη episode (II. 14.201, 246, and 302). Plato (*Theaetetus* 152e and *Cratylus* 402b) and Aristotle (*Met.* 1.3.983b27) corroborate its uniqueness and Plato assimilates it to an early Orphic doctrine, according to which Oceanus and Tethys were the first married couple. See G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge 1983) 10–17, who argue that the concept is either Egyptian or Babylonian. M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 201, and *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford 1971) 207–208, discusses the Near Eastern parallels for the separation of the originally married Tethys and Oceanus.

## APPLES FOR ATALANTA AND POMEGRANATES FOR PERSEPHONE

A fragmentary papyrus of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* preserves part of the story of Atalanta, who vowed that she would only marry the man who could defeat her in a footrace. Hippomenes, on the advice of Aphrodite, carried three apples onto the racetrack, and threw them at various intervals during the contest. Only one small fragment actually mentions the apples:

ἀντάρ ὃ [. . . . .] πόδεσσι μ[  
 ἦ δ' αἶψ' ὥσθ' Ἄρπυια μετ[αχρονίοισι πόδεσσιν  
 ἔμμαρψ'· αὐτὰρ ὃ] χειρὶ τὸ δεύτερον ἦ[κε χαμάζε·

καὶ δὴ ἔχεν δύο μῆλα ποδώκης δῖ' Ἀτ[αλάντη·  
 ἔγγυς δ' ἦν τέλεος· ὃ δὲ τὸ τρίτον ἦκε χ[αμάζε·  
 σὺν τῷ δ' ἐξέφυγεν θάνατον καὶ κῆ[ρα μέλαιναν,  
 ἔσθη δ' ἀμυνέων καὶ [. . .] [. . .] .σομ[ fr. 76.17–23 MW

In their interpretation of this strange scene, scholars rightly point out the frequent appearance of μῆλα as love tokens in elegy, amatory epigrams and romances, and suggest that apples and other fruits designated by that term originally played a role as engagement or wedding gifts.<sup>24</sup> This practice is, in turn, usually compared with ancient fertility rites such as the throwing of nuts or the dedication of πανσπερμία at agrarian festivals; it is argued that since apples, quinces, pomegranates and other fruits designated by the term μῆλον contain many small pips, they, too, are suitable many-seeded “symbols” for fecundity.<sup>25</sup> In fact a closer look at the use of apples in marriage rites and seduction scenes reveals repeatedly that they were designed to produce sexual desire in the female, not fertility.

I shall begin with the earliest evidence for their use in Greek wedding rituals. According to Pherecydes, Ge caused apple trees to spring up at the wedding of Zeus and Hera as her gift to the new couple (*FGrHist* 3 F17). Stesichorus describes the quinces and flowers thrown at the wedding

<sup>24</sup>This is a much discussed topic: B. O. Foster, “Notes on the Symbolism of the Apple in Classical Antiquity,” *HSCP* 10 (1899) 39–55; J. Trumpf, “Kydonische Äpfel,” *Hermes* 88 (1960) 14–22; A. R. Littlewood, “The Symbolism of the Apple in Greek and Roman Literature,” *HSCP* 72 (1967) 48–81; M. Lugauer, *Untersuchungen zur Symbolik des Apfels in der Antike* (diss., Erlangen 1967); and M. K. Brazda, *Zur Bedeutung des Apfels in der antiken Kultur* (diss., Bonn 1977). Trumpf gives a particularly good discussion of apples, pomegranates and quinces in early Greek love poetry. An anonymous referee points out that the discussion of apples and pomegranates by M. Detienne, *Dionysos Slain*, tr. M. Muellner and L. Muellner (Baltimore 1979) 41–44, anticipates some of my arguments here about the predominately erotic nature of the apple in Atalanta's story and the pomegranate in Persephone's.

<sup>25</sup>E. S. McCartney, “How the Apple Became a Token of Love,” *TAPA* 56 (1925) 70–81, and Brazda (above, n. 24) 42–45. Littlewood (above, n. 24) 179 n. 76, attributes the idea originally to H. F. Tozer, who is quoted by R. Ellis, *Catullus: Text and Commentary* (Oxford 1867–1889), in his comments on Catullus 65.19.

chariot of Menelaos and Helen (187 *PMG*). Neither of these early fragments provides an explanation for the custom, and vase paintings which depict mythical brides holding apples are similarly mute.<sup>26</sup> Later accounts of actual wedding ceremonies suggest that the appearance of such fruit in myth reflects its use in actual ritual. Strabo, a native of Pontus, tells us that among the Persians a girl on her wedding day was allowed to eat only apples and camel marrow (15.3.17). We might hasten to dismiss his testimony on this point, were it not for evidence of a similar custom among the Athenians. Plutarch describes a special set of Athenian laws allegedly handed down by Solon, which concerned the marriage of ἐπίκληροι, "heiresses":<sup>27</sup>

It is a wise provision, too, that the heiress may not choose her consort at large, but only from the kinsmen of her husband, that the children may be of his family and lineage. Conformable to this, also, is the requirement that the bride eat a "Kydonian μήλον" [i.e., a quince] and then be shut up in the bridal chamber with the bridegroom; and that the husband of an heiress shall approach her thrice a month without fail. For even if they have no children, still, this is a mark of esteem and affection which a man should pay to a chaste wife; it removes many of the annoyances which develop in all such cases, and prevents their being altogether estranged by their differences. (Plut. *Solon* 20.3, tr. F. C. Babbitt)

Although this law is ultimately concerned with the production of legitimate heirs, Plutarch clearly saw another benefit; combined with the thrice-monthly visit, the eating of the apple was somehow supposed to encourage sexual intimacy between the couple.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Brazda, (above, n. 24), mentions a depiction of Theseus offering an apple to Ariadne (36, n. 1) and describes a vase-painting of the wedding of Jason and Creusa, who holds an apple (43, n. 1).

<sup>27</sup>Cf. *Mor.* 138d and 279f, where Plutarch cites the law (in both texts saying simply "bride" and not restricting the provision to the marriage of ἐπίκληροι) in two completely different contexts. In the first citation, he gives the quince a rather fatuous, symbolic meaning, implying that the bride is required to eat it "in order that her speech (i.e., to her husband) might be harmonious and sweet from the very start." In the same passage he mentions a Boeotian custom of placing a garland of asparagus on the head of the bride after she is veiled, to which he gives a similarly symbolic interpretation; Pliny (*HN* 20.42) informs us, however, that asparagus was also commonly used as an aphrodisiac. At *Mor.* 279f Plutarch says the reason for the law was to ensure that the couple's first meeting not be disagreeable. Most scholars have accepted Plutarch's repeated assertion that this law was attributed to Solon; cf. W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca 1968) 89–90. For a recent negative view, see E. Ruschenbusch, ΣΟΛΩΝΟΣ ΝΟΜΟΙ: *Die Fragmente des Solonischen Gesetzwerkes* (Wiesbaden 1966, *Historia Einzelschriften* 9) 56, who believes that most of the traditional Athenian laws and customs about marriage were humorously and falsely attributed to Solon by the writers of Attic comedy, and that these references were later wrongly taken at face value by the Hellenistic biographers upon whom Plutarch depends.

<sup>28</sup>Some may question the use of this testimony as support for the erotic intent of the law, as Plutarch is generally thought to reflect a new epoch of Greek sexuality, in

The presentation or consumption of μήλα, then, seems (in certain parts of Greece at least) to have been a customary prerequisite for the wedding night. There is further evidence that the fruit was often "delivered" by throwing it at the bride, as we find both in the myth of Atalanta and in Stesichorus' description of the wedding procession of Helen, mentioned above. Noteworthy is the Athenian custom of throwing μήλα for explicitly erotic purposes, as attested by the peculiar expression "to be hit with an apple," first mentioned by the comic writer Aristophanes. The scholiast on the passage and all the lexicographers agree that it means "to become sexually excited" (we might compare our own outworn expression: "to be hit by Cupid's arrow").<sup>29</sup>

I suggest that the ballistic use of apples as aphrodisiacs lies behind the scene discussed above from the Atalanta myth: in a myth concerned with the tensions that pervade courtship and marriage, the apples are thrown as part of a ritual which specifically aims at filling her with sexual desire for Hippomenes. The papyrus fragment of the Hesiodic catalogue (quoted above) does not describe the effect of the apples on the maiden, and although much later versions of the story suggest that the apples distracted her by their beauty or monetary worth (e.g., Ovid *Met.* 10.666 *nitidique cupidine pomi declinat*), Hellenistic writers (the earliest testimony after Hesiod) leave no doubt that the apples, recommended by Aphrodite, stimulated

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which heterosexual erotics within matrimony are fully recognized and given precedence over the traditionally privileged male homosexual relationship. See most recently e.g., M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 3: *The Care of Self*, tr. R. Hurley (New York 1986) 176–192, or P. Veyne, *History of Private Life* 1: *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, tr. A. Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass. 1987) 33–49. Although it is true that sex in marriage is clearly more emphasized in Plutarch and other writers of his time, it is certainly an exaggeration to suggest that it did not exist, or was unimportant in the earlier periods—it was simply not expressed publicly in the texts which have survived. For a more balanced view, see J. Redfield, "Homo Domesticus," in J.-P. Vernant (ed.), *Visaggi dell'uomo greco* (Bari forthcoming), who reminds us of Achilles' plaintive question at lines 340–341 of the ninth book of the *Iliad* ("Are the sons of Atreus the only ones who love their wives?") and points to the great number of early Greek myths which focus on elopement and marriage with a strong emphasis on the erotic elements.

<sup>29</sup>Ar. *Nubes* 997 with scholia. For the various lexicographers, see Littlewood (above, n. 24) 154–155. The context in the Aristophanes passage is a speech by Dikaïos Logos urging Pheidippides to avoid the "womanish" behavior of the current crop of youths at Athens and to stay away from dancing girls and prostitutes, lest one of them hit him with an apple. The passage is curious because aside from two passages in Theocritus (5.88 and 6.7) this is the only early Greek example of a reversal in the normal sex roles in this type of ritual. The passage, however, need not be taken literally to mean that prostitutes regularly pelted their clients with apples. As the scholiast suggests, here the phrase simply means "to excite sexually." That this excitement is expressed in an image drawn from an erotic ritual normally aimed at women may, however, be a subtle device used by Dikaïos Logos to bolster his argument that behavior of the younger Athenian generation is "effeminate."

Atalanta's erotic desire for Hippomenes (Lugauer ([above, note 24]) 93–96). Theocritus mentions the myth once in passing:

Ἴππομένης, ὅκα δὴ τὰν παρθένον ἤθελε γάμαι,  
μᾶλ' ἐν χερσὶν ἔλων δρόμον ἄνυσεν· ἃ δ' Ἀταλάντα  
ὥς ἶδεν, ὥς ἑμάνη, ὥς ἐς βαθὺν ἔλατ' ἔρωτα. Theoc. 3.40–42

A scholiast to Theocritus (2.120) reports that Philetas (fr. 18 Powell) treated the story in a similar fashion: "according to Philetas, the apples moved Atalanta to physical love (εἰς ἔρωτα ἐκίνησαν)." The myth of Acontius and Kydippe similarly turns on a tossed apple.<sup>30</sup> Acontius inscribes an apple with an oath ("I swear by Artemis I shall get married to Acontius") and tosses it to Kydippe over the τέμενος wall, as she stands within the sanctuary of the goddess. The unsuspecting girl takes the fruit and reading aloud (as was customary in the ancient world) she utters the oath, which the goddess hears and demands be fulfilled.<sup>31</sup>

A recently-edited Berlin magical papyrus provides fresh insight into all of these myths and the use of apples as aphrodisiacs:<sup>32</sup>

ἐξαγωγή ἐπωδῶν ἐκ τῆς εὐρεθείσης  
ἐν Ἡλίου{ς} πόλει ἐν τῇ ἱερᾷ βύβλωι τῇ καλου-  
μένη Ἑρμοῦ ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ Αἰγυπτίοις  
4 γράμμασιν καὶ διερμηνευθέντων Ἑλληνι-  
κοῖς ἐπὶ μήλο[ις] ἐπωδῇ· τρίς·  
~ βα[λ]ῶ μή[λ]οις [± 4] δῶσω τόδε φάρμα-  
κ[ον] καίριον αἰ εἰ βρωτὸν θνητὸν ἀν-  
8 θρώποις καὶ ἀθανάτοις θεοῖσιν ἦ ἄν

<sup>30</sup> Callim. fr. 67–75 Pfeiffer; Ovid *Her.* 20–21 and *Aristainetos* 1.10. The similar tale of Hermochares and Ktesylla, told by Nicander (fr. 50; cf. *Ant. Lib.* 1.1–2) seems to have been derived directly from the Acontius myth, see Littlewood (above, n. 24) 153.

<sup>31</sup> W. Deonna, "Quelques croyances superstitieuses de la Grèce ancienne," *REG* 42 (1929) 169–180, at 176–178 ("La pomme d'Akontios et de Kydippé"), and Lugauer (above, n. 24) 100, argue that the role of the goddess is a late addition to the story, which originally turned solely on the magical effect of the apple and the girl's speech. I suggest that the inscribed apple is merely a more concrete version of the spells discussed below, where an incantation is spoken over an apple, instead of being inscribed into it. See R. Kotansky, "Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets," in *Magika Hiera* (above, n. 11) 107–137, for a similar evolution of inscribed amulets from enchanted ones.

<sup>32</sup> *PBerol.* 21243, col. 1.1–14 = *PGM*<sup>2</sup> CXXII.1–15. For detailed discussion of the text, see W. Brashear, "Ein Berliner Zauberpapyrus," *ZPE* 33 (1979) 261–269; Betz, *Translation* 316; and F. Maltomini, "P. Berol. 21243 (formulario magico): due nuove letture," *ZPE* 74 (1988) 247–248. The text presented here is Brashear's, with Maltomini's new reading of lines 8 and 9. The translation is that of Betz, with two alterations: 1) using a Near Eastern erotic spell as a model, I shall argue (below, n. 36) that τρίς in line 5 is better construed with ἐπωδῇ as part of the rubric of the spell with some verb of speaking understood (i.e., "Enchantment [sc. spoken] three times over apples"); and 2) I follow Maltomini's interpretation of lines 8–9 (unavailable to Betz in 1986).

12 δῶ μῆλφ τε βάλω μῆλφ τε πατάξω  
 πάντα ὑπερθεμένη μαίνοιτο ἐπ' ἐμῇ  
 φιλότῃ ἦτε ἐν χειρὶ λάβο[ι]. . . φαγοί  
 ..... ἦ ἐν κόλπῳ κáθηται μῆ  
 παύσαιτο φιλεῖν με· Κυπρoγένεια τέλει  
 ~ τελέαν ἐπαιοδῆν· *PBerol.* 21243, col. 1.1–14

An excerpt of enchantments from the holy book of Hermes, found in Heliopolis in the innermost shrine of the temple, written in Egyptian letters and translated into Greek.

Incantation over apples three times: I shall smite with apples, . . . and thereby I shall provide this timely love spell for both mortal people and immortal gods. To whomsoever I give the apple, or at whomsoever I throw the apple, or hit with it, / setting everything aside, may she fall madly in love with me; whether she takes it in her hand and eats . . . or holds it in her bosom, may she not stop loving me. O goddess born on Cyprus, / carry out this perfect charm.

The papyrus, dating to the Augustan period, is considerably earlier than most extant magical papyri. The claim in the preface for a specific Egyptian hieratic source is probably tendentious, and part of a long tradition of assigning mysterious eastern origins for magical spells in order to increase their value.<sup>33</sup> The incantation, although now somewhat garbled, appears to have been originally hexametrical, and may have come from a lost Greek poem, perhaps even a lost section of the Hesiodic *Catalogue* itself.<sup>34</sup> Regardless of its original date and purpose, the incantation provides evidence for the traditional variations discussed above in the use of apples in Greek wedding ceremonies and in myths concerned with courtship; here the fruit

<sup>33</sup>H.-D. Betz, "The Formation of Authoritative Tradition in the Greek Magical Papyri," in B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders (eds.), *Self-Definition in the Greco-Roman World* (Philadelphia 1982) 61–70, discusses the repeated attribution of spells collected in the Greek magical handbooks to Egyptian and Jewish sages. We should not, however, broadly reject the idea that Egyptian and Near Eastern magic greatly and continually influenced Greek magic from the earliest epochs. See A. A. Barb, "Birds and Medical Magic," *JWarb* 13 (1950) 316–332, at 316–318, who points out that although the specific reports in late antiquity of direct Greek translations of Near Eastern inscriptions are usually false fabrications, often genuine Near Eastern magical lore can be found scattered in these works. He reveals that the ἀετρίς, lit. "eagle-stone," (a hollow stone containing loose pebbles or sand) recommended by the author of *Kyranides*, Pliny, and other ancient writers for the treatment of women with difficult pregnancies, can be traced back to a similar Assyrian amulet called *aban eru*, "pregnant stone," which seems to have entered the Greek magical tradition as the "eagle-stone" by the mistranslation of *eru* as its homophone which means "eagle."

<sup>34</sup>For possible reconstructions of the hexameters, see Brashear, Merkelbach (both *apud* Brashear, above n. 32) and R. Janko, "Berlin Magical Papyrus 21243: A Conjecture," *ZPE* 72 (1988) 293. D. Obbink, "Poetic Quotation in the Greek Magical Papyri," *ZPE* (forthcoming), argues that the verses are a hitherto lost fragment of the *Atalanta* story as it was told in the Hesiodic *Catalogue*.



can be either presented to the woman or thrown at her. A similar variation is permitted in the girl's reaction; she can either take and eat it or merely hold it in her bosom.

The Berlin papyrus is one of the earliest extant fragments of a Greek magical handbook, and the individual spells contained within it (e.g., the apple-aphrodisiac spell) are undoubtedly of earlier, probably Hellenistic, date. Nevertheless, it is still somewhat late to be used in any conclusive way as independent evidence for the type of ritual reflected in the Greek myths discussed above. The fact that the incantation itself may be a literary fragment deepens our suspicion that (like the many quotations of Homer and other poets used in later Greek magical recipes) the use of the apple here may have simply been adapted from a non-magical, literary source. There is, however, more direct and conclusive evidence that this type of magic spell existed at a much earlier period, albeit beyond the borders of the Greek world. As in the case of Aphrodite's *κεστός*, a cuneiform collection of Near Eastern ritual texts dating to the ninth century B.C. provides an interesting parallel:<sup>35</sup>

7 Incantation. If a woman looks upon the penis of a man.

8 Its ritual: either <to> an apple or to a pomegranate

9 you recite the incantation three times. You give (the fruit) to the woman (and) have her suck the juices.

10 That woman will come to you; you can make love to her. (tr. R. Biggs)

This recipe is part of a collection of magical rituals used by men to attract and seduce women. The parallels to the Greek customs discussed above are interesting; an incantation is spoken over the fruit,<sup>36</sup> which is then given to the victim to eat. In the incantation which precedes this apple spell, Inanna (Sumerian for Ishtar, often equated with Aphrodite) is invoked as

<sup>35</sup>KAR 61.1–10; for translation and commentary, see R. D. Biggs, *ŠÁ.ZI.GA: Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations* (Locust Valley, New York 1967) 70–74, who also reports the existence of another fragmentary spell (KAR 69.4–5: "Its ritual: over either a pomegranate or an apple you recite the incantation seven times, then give it to the woman . . .") Cf. *idem*, *Reallexikon für Assyriologie* s.v. "Liebeszauber." E. Ebeling, *Liebeszauber im Alten Orient* (Leipzig 1925, Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft 1.1) 9 n. 3, long ago pointed to the parallels between this incantation and the tossed apples in Theocritus 5.88 and 3.40–42. An anonymous referee cites a rather similar recipe for a love potion from an Egyptian demotic papyrus, in which an apple, wine, and blood are pounded together and given to the desired woman to drink, after an incantation is recited seven times over the cup (*P. Griffith-Thompson* col. 15.21–23; for the most recent translation, see J. Johnson in Betz, *Translation* 221).

<sup>36</sup>In fact, these Assyrian apple-incantations provide evidence for my slightly altered interpretation of the Berlin spell given above (above, n. 32); the rubric of the spell (5) with a slight change in punctuation could read: "Enchantment [sc. spoken] three times over apples." This interpretation was, in fact, first proposed by Brashear, (above, n. 32) *ad loc.*, simply because the layout of the spell on the papyrus suggested it.

the goddess "who loves apples and pomegranates." In Greek myth it is always Aphrodite who suggests that Hippomenes and others use apples to obtain their brides-to-be; the Berlin papyrus likewise ends with an appeal to Kyprogeneia (= Aphrodite).

The mention of pomegranates as an alternative fruit in the Assyrian spell may also help elucidate a heretofore obscure detail of the Persephone myth: in the oldest version, the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, Hades gives her a pomegranate seed to eat and thereafter she must remain with him as his wife. The event is described twice in the hymn. In the omniscient narrative of the action, the poet reports the following after Hades consents to Persephone's return to her mother:<sup>37</sup>

Ὡς φάτο· γήθησεν δὲ περίφρων Περσεφόνηα,  
καρπαλίμως δ' ἀνόρουσ' ὑπὸ χάρματος· αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' αὐτὸς  
ῥοίῃς κόκκον ἔδωκε φαγεῖν μελιηδέα λάθρῃ  
ἄμφι ἔνωμήσας, ἵνα μὴ μένοι ἥματα πάντα  
αὖθι παρ' αἰδοίῃ Δημήτερι κυανοπέπλω.

*Hym. Hom. Dem. 371-374*

Thus he spoke, and wise Persephone rejoiced and quickly leaped up in happiness. But he (sc. Hades) on his part gave her a honey-sweet pomegranate seed to eat, having secretly consecrated it in order that she might not remain continually at the side of grave Demeter of the dark peplos.

Later in the same poem, when Persephone is closely questioned by her mother, she gives a somewhat different version of the incident:

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἀνόρουσ' ὑπὸ χάρματος, αὐτὰρ ὃ λάθρῃ  
ἔμβαλέ μοι ῥοίῃς κόκκον, μελιηδέ' ἔδωδ' ἔν,  
ἄκουσαν δὲ βίῃ με προσηνάγκασσε πάσασθαι.

*Hym. Hom. Dem. 411-413*

Immediately I leaped up with joy, but he secretly gave me<sup>38</sup> a pomegranate seed, sweet food, and forced me to taste it against my will.

<sup>37</sup>The translation follows that of Evelyn-White with one important exception, the rendition of the verb νωμάω, which he, LSJ (s.v. ἀμφινωμάω), and N. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford 1974) *ad loc.*, all translate as "peer about." I follow the suggestion of J. L. Myres, "Persephone and the Pomegranate (*H. Dem.* 372-374)," *CR* 52 (1938) 51-52, and C. Bonner, "Hades and the Pomegranate Seed (*Hymn to Demeter* 372-374)," *CR* 53 (1939) 3-4, who both argue that Hades performs some kind of circular motion or similar consecration ritual connected with "binding magic" that binds Persephone to Hades. The Myres-Bonner approach makes much better sense of the placement of the purpose clause which follows ἄμφι ἔνωμήσας and certainly ought to be connected with it (i.e., the seed) in order that she not remain continually at the side of grave Demeter of the dark peplos."

<sup>38</sup>Evelyn-White's translation ("he secretly put in my mouth . . . a pomegranate seed") follows the traditional interpretation, which Richardson, (above, n. 37) *ad loc.*, adopts with discomfort, admitting that "the use of ἔμβαλέ μοι without further specification (e.g., στόματι) is unusual for early epic." S. Eitrem, "Eleusinia—Les Mystères et l'agriculture,"

This incident is usually interpreted as an example of a widespread folk belief that if one eats the food of the dead, one must remain with them; Demeter herself is thought to express this very concern in 393–400, but this is far from certain, as the unique manuscript of the poem is torn away at precisely this point.<sup>39</sup> The resulting relationship between Hades and Persephone is, moreover, much closer than simply that of a host and his guest, and most commentators agree that there is some special erotic character of the pomegranate which leads to its appearance here.<sup>40</sup> It is interesting how easily the scene recalls the quince eaten by the Athenian *ἐπίκληρος* and the apples given to Persian brides.

The question arises whether the pomegranate seed can operate *pars pro toto* for the whole fruit. A plaintive speech addressed by one of Lucian's courtesans to her faithless boyfriend provides a nice parallel, and gives us some further insight into the symbolic nature of such aphrodisiacs when they are presented and accepted in a public setting:

τέλος δὲ τοῦ μήλου ἀποδοκᾶν, ὅποτε τὸν Δίφιλον εἶδες ἀσχολούμενον—ἐλάλει γὰρ Θράσωνι—προκύψας πῶς εὐστόχως προσηκόντως ἐς τὸν κόλπον αὐτῆς, οὐδὲ λαθεῖν γε πειρώμενος ἐμέ· ἡ δὲ φιλήσασα μεταξὺ τῶν μαστῶν ὑπὸ τῷ ἀποδέσμῳ παρεβύσατο. (*Dial. Meret.* 12.1)

As in the story of Persephone, or the magical spell preserved in the Berlin papyrus, the etiquette of the activity is indeed strange; it is perhaps somewhat difficult to imagine an amorous young man pitching a bite of apple into the blouse of his beloved. But we see here that, as in the case of the pomegranate seed, the entire fruit need not be used. This anecdote also supplies us with some clues as to how the presentation of a traditional aphrodisiac could easily evolve into a symbolic or ceremonial act. By hitting the girl with a piece of fruit, a man indicates his intent to seduce her;

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*Symbolae Osloenses* 20 (1940) 133–151, at 146, calls the action “le jet rituel” without further argument.

<sup>39</sup>Only the beginnings of the lines remain. The standard interpretation tenuously depends on the word βρώμης, which could easily refer (as does *ἐδωδή* in 412) specifically to the pomegranate and not to food in general. Allen's supplements in his very influential Oxford text were apparently the work of Goodwin, and were included in Allen's text *cum magna diffidentia*. Richardson (above, n. 39) wisely ventures no restorations and obelizes line 398.

<sup>40</sup>Richardson (above, n. 37) *ad loc.* T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday, and E. E. Sikes (eds.), *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford 1936) *ad loc.*, suggest the pomegranate either served as a fertility charm or as an aphrodisiac. For the latter view (and the one argued here) they cite the evidence that the pomegranate and the apple were the only fruits banned (along with domestic fowl, certain types of seafood, and beans) from the Eleusinian mysteries and the Haloo festival, i.e., places where one might expect restraint of sexual activity, but not of fertility. Detienne (above, n. 24) discusses the evidence for pomegranates used as gifts for newlyweds, and rightly suggests that they and other forms of *μήλα* “act directly, like a drug or an incantation” (42), although he is completely unaware of the evidence compiled above for their actual use in magical rituals.

by willingly putting the apple to her lips or hiding it away in her bosom, the woman knowingly subjects herself to the aphrodisiac, and by doing so returns a message of her willingness to be seduced. A similar set of messages is understood in an epigram attributed to Plato:

Τῷ μήλω βάλλω σε· σὺ δ' εἰ μὲν ἐκοῦσα φιλεῖς με,  
δεξαμένη, τῆς σῆς παρθενίης μετάδος· *Anth. Pal.* 5.79.1–2

This two-step process—presentation and acceptance—is, in fact, a shared characteristic of several of the texts under discussion, which can be conveniently summarized as follows:

	Male Action	Female Reaction
Berlin papyrus	recite charm throw apple	take it in hand and eat it or place it in bosom
KAR 61	recite charm give apple	suck its juices
<i>Hym. Hom. Dem.</i>	1) give seed 2) give seed	1) eat it 2) unwillingly taste it
Lucian	throw piece of apple	kiss it and place in bosom
<i>Anth. Pal.</i> 5.79	throw apple	accept it willingly

The second step, the willing acceptance of the aphrodisiac by the female, may help explain the use of the μήλον-aphrodisiac in wedding ceremonies. The quince legislated for the Athenian ἐπίκληρος provided the bride with a public forum to accept it willingly and thus, like the courtesan described by Lucian, display her consent to the seduction which is always implicit in marriage. Atalanta, too, publicly accepts the apples, and in so doing signals her consent to seduction and marriage; in this way the plot of the story is wonderfully streamlined, for by the very same act she loses the race and publicly agrees to become the wife of Hippomenes. Finally, it is interesting to note that the two versions of the pomegranate seed in the *Hymn to Demeter* diverge on this very question, i.e., to what degree did Persephone offer her consent? The first report of the poet suggests that Hades simply gave the fruit to Persephone and she ate it; the girl, however, when she is interrogated by her mother, reports that she was forced against her will to taste it. Persephone's version is understandably designed to save face; as a victim of an abduction marriage of sorts, it is expected that she resist her kidnapper, and only acquiesce against her will in the face of violence or irresistible magic.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup>A wide variety of evidence suggests that in the Greek world for all periods of antiquity abduction marriage (also known as "bride theft") was an alternative to the

## EARLY GREEK MYTH AND NEO-ASSYRIAN RITUAL

In using much later Greco-Roman magical rituals to help interpret earlier Greek myth, I implicitly suggest the survival of these rituals in the Greek world for more than a millennium. As the survival of many other forms of ritual is well documented in Greek society for even longer periods of time, and is frequently invoked by historians of Greek religion, I shall make no defense of this presupposition here.<sup>42</sup> By using Neo-Assyrian incantation texts from the tenth and ninth century B.C. to help elucidate roughly contemporaneous Greek myth, I am treading on more controversial ground, an area of study recently surveyed by Burkert<sup>43</sup> and Bernal.<sup>44</sup> Burkert in particular has argued that the eighth century was a period of extraordinary

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more formal betrothal marriage. J. Evans Grubbs, "Abduction Marriage in Antiquity: A Law of Constantine (CTh IX.24.1) and Its Social Context," *JRS* 79 (1989) 59–83, discusses late Roman laws which were previously and wrongly thought to be legislation against rape. Marshalling evidence from early Greek art and mythology, Roman declamations (which frequently turn on points of Greek law or custom), Roman secular and early Christian ecclesiastical law, and modern Balkan and Aegean ethnography, she shows that only a very old Greek tradition of bride theft (especially in the rural areas of the eastern empire) can explain the evidence as it has come down to us. For abduction marriage in modern-day rural societies, she cites (among others): W. C. Lockwood, "Bride-Theft and Social Maneuverability in Western Bosnia," *Anthropological Quarterly* 47 (1974) 253–269; D. G. Bates, "Normative and Alternate Systems of Marriage among the Yoruk of South-Eastern Turkey," *ibid.* 270–287; and M. Herzfeld, "Gender Pragmatics: Agency, Speech and Bride-Theft in a Cretan Mountain Village," *Anthropology* 9 (1985) 25–44. In the modern anthropological accounts, the stolen bride is expected to preserve family honor by asserting afterward that she was unwilling and forcibly abducted, although in many cases this is manifestly untrue.

<sup>42</sup>For general discussions of this phenomenon from the earliest to the latest periods of Greek religion, see, for example, M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and Its Survival in Greek Religion* (Lund 1950), J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion: A Study in Survivals* (Cambridge 1910), and E. R. Dodds, "The Religion of the Ordinary Man in Classical Greece," in *The Ancient Concept of Progress* (Oxford 1973) 140–155, at 140–144.

<sup>43</sup>W. Burkert, *Die orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literatur, SBHeid* 1984.1, provides an eye-opening account of the debt owed by the early Greeks to their eastern neighbors in the field of religious ritual and myth. Especially helpful is his concept of a "religious technology" which, like the expertise of other wandering craftsmen from the Near East, was disseminated throughout the Mediterranean. West (above, n. 22) suggests that Euboea, a rich and powerful trading center, especially attracted these Near Eastern specialists in the eighth century B.C.

<sup>44</sup>M. Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* 1: *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785–1985* (Rutgers 1987), is a provocative study of the foundation in the nineteenth century of the modern study of history, and the negative impact on that study of racist theories and (more particularly) antisemitism. He argues that the repeated denial of Near Eastern influence by scholars intent (consciously or subconsciously) on maintaining the Aryan purity of ancient Greek culture, led to marginalization of other scholars who argued to the contrary. The book is not without

cultural borrowing from the Near East, particularly in the area of religious and magical ritual. His argument is most persuasive when he can show clearly that Greek practices do in fact change at or about this time. For example, he reminds us that some rituals, such as divination by the liver of sacrificial animals or the burning of certain incenses, are first attested in Ionia and Crete in this period and were undoubtedly borrowed from the Near East. Such direct influence is, however, more difficult to document when we shift from the rich archaeological record to the paltry remains of early Greek literature and myth. A recurring pattern suggests that the *praxis* of Assyrian or Babylonian rituals reappears as part of the plot of Greek myths and legends. Apollo purifies the insane Orestes by pouring the blood of a pig over his head (mentioned at *Eum.* 283 and depicted on vase paintings, which show the god stabbing a small pig over the youth's head); a similar procedure is prescribed in an Assyrian cuneiform tablet, which instructs that a piglet be dissected over the head of a physically or mentally ill patient in such a way that the blood is spread everywhere.<sup>45</sup> The legend of the Seven against Thebes is remarkably close to the scenario imagined in another Assyrian purification ritual, in which seven protective demons are conjured up to protect the patient from seven attacking demons.<sup>46</sup> Legends about theriomorphic statues fashioned by Hephaestus and used to protect Greek buildings, cities, and islands similarly correspond to actual tenth-century B.C. Assyrian rituals, which are attested by both

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difficulties. Bernal repeatedly turns a blind eye to the mounting archaeological evidence which supports his view of pervasive and continuous contacts between the Near East and Greece from the very earliest periods of Greek history. Instead, he is inordinately fond (in the tradition of C. Gordon and M. Astour) of Egyptian and Near Eastern etymologies for pre-Greek words in the Greek language, a difficult enterprise whose results are even more difficult (and in some cases impossible) to prove. The book is, however, indispensable to classicists and historians alike as it attempts to explain why (despite so much evidence to the contrary) the question of eastern influence has been repeatedly and roundly denied for nearly a century. See S. Morris, "Daidalos and Cadmos: Classicism and Orientalism," in *The Challenge of "Black Athena"* (1989, *Arethusa* Special Issue) 39–45.

<sup>45</sup>For the vase paintings see A. Kossatz-Deissmann, *Dramen des Aischylos auf west-griechischen Vasen* (Mainz 1978, *Schriften zur antiken Mythologie* 4) 102–117. R. R. Dyer, "The Evidence for Apolline Purification Rituals at Delphi and Athens," *JHS* 89 (1969) 38–56, provides a careful discussion of the use of these paintings as evidence for actual rituals. For a full discussion of Near Eastern influence, see W. Burkert, "Itinerant Diviners and Magicians: A Neglected Area of Cultural Contact," in *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.: Tradition and Innovation*, *SkrAthen* 30 (1983) 111–119, at 115, and *idem*, *Die Epoche* (above, n. 43) 58–61.

<sup>46</sup>W. Burkert, "Seven Against Thebes: An Oral Tradition between Babylonian Magic and Greek Literature," in C. Brillante, M. Cantilena, et al. (eds.), *Poemi epici rapsodici non omerici e la tradizione orale* (Padua 1981) 38–46, and *idem*, *Die Epoche* (above, n. 43) 99–106.

magical recipes and material remains.<sup>47</sup> In each case, however, although we can see clear parallels between the activities narrated in Greek myth and those prescribed by Neo-Assyrian incantation texts, we have no way of proving *conclusively* that the Near Eastern material was borrowed by the Greeks during the eighth century, or for that matter at any particular point in time.<sup>48</sup> A similar problem presents itself with regard to the aphrodisiacs discussed above, as both the κερτός and the tossing of apples are found in the earliest strata of Greek myth. Although my guess would be that these rituals were in fact borrowed at some point from the older and more sophisticated societies of the Near East, there is simply no way to prove it or to disprove a competing claim that such magical rituals evolved independently in many traditional societies in the circum-Mediterranean basin.

In a more recent essay on the apparent use of a Near Eastern succession myth in Hesiod, Burkert takes a somewhat subtler approach to the problem of Greek cultural borrowing from the east.<sup>49</sup> He points out the great paradox in Hesiodic studies in recent decades. As we have collected more and more evidence for the widespread existence of succession myths in the Near East, two contrary effects exert themselves: we are more and more certain that the succession myth in the *Theogony* was borrowed at some time and some place from the Near East; but ironically, it has become less and less clear where and when such borrowing occurred. I suggest that if in the next decade we were to discover even more Near Eastern evidence for the erotic spells discussed above, it would only complicate the picture—we would perhaps be even more convinced that the Greek and Near Eastern rituals were related, but we would also be more confused about how exactly these close relations came to be.

Such a process can, in fact, be illustrated by comparing the two traditional aphrodisiacs discussed above. The custom of throwing or eating μήλα

<sup>47</sup>E.g., *Od.* 7.91–94; *POxy* 3711 col. 1.14–32. See C. A. Faraone, "Hephaestus the Magician and Near Eastern Parallels for Alcinous' Watchdogs," *GRBS* 28 (1987) 257–280, for full discussion.

<sup>48</sup>Burkert (above, n. 45) bolsters his argument for dating the arrival of the Assyrian purificatory rituals to the eighth century by appealing to the traditional argument that the concepts of pollution and purification do not appear in Homer, but are major concerns in the *Cypria* (the purification of Achilles for Thersites' murder) and thereafter in early Attic tragedy. See, however, R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford 1983) 66–70 and 130–143, who (in a book published the same year as Burkert's) argues that both concepts were in fact known to Homer but due to the generic differences between epic and tragedy were expressed in a different and more subtle manner. This insight does not, however, in any way invalidate Burkert's undoubtedly correct claim for Assyrian influence, but it calls into question the precise dating of this influence to the eighth century.

<sup>49</sup>W. Burkert, "Oriental and Greek Mythology: The Meeting of Parallels," in J. Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London 1986) 10–40.

at mythical and actual weddings or in love play can be documented in all periods of Greek history, and allows us to assume its continuous existence in Greek society from its earliest epochs. That these practices aimed at stimulating desire in females is explicitly attested in many sources, including Neo-Assyrian and late Greek magical recipes. Such an abundance of evidence, however, ironically prevents us from making any specific arguments about the origin or diffusion of the practice; all that can be said with confidence is that it appears in Greek, Persian, and Assyrian cultures from quite early on. The Homeric *κεστός*, on the other hand, is embedded in an episode of the *Iliad* which betrays several hallmarks of direct Near Eastern influence. Given the paucity of evidence it is tempting simply to call the *κεστός* a purely literary borrowing, which does not in itself provide evidence for the actual use of such a device in early Greek society. Indeed, unlike the numerous references to the native Greek use of *μηλα*, the *κεστός* does not seem to appear outside of literary texts, and they invariably depend from Homer's treatment. There is, however, no extant Assyrian *literary* antecedent for the Homeric *κεστός*, only the ritual text ("When a husband is angry . . .") and the related *egalkura* incantations quoted above. The fact that similar spells used in political situations appear in the Greek magical handbooks of a much later date suggests that this larger category of magical activity was not unknown to the Greeks of the earlier periods, but this cannot be demonstrated. Here the problem lies not in the overabundance, but in the discontinuities of the evidence: Neo-Assyrian ritual is to be compared directly with early Greek myth, with only slight corroboration from much later Greek ritual.

My purpose here is not, however, to trace the origins of Greek myth and ritual or the diffusion of Near Eastern magical practices to the west; as I suggest above, any attempt at reconstructing a specific historical epoch of diffusion or a definite geographical route is probably doomed to failure. The problem lies in the fragmentary evidence for very early Greek myth, which prevents us from saying that at one point the Greeks did not know of a certain ritual and then suddenly a generation or two later they did. We can, however, acknowledge the striking similarities in Near Eastern rituals and in later Greek magical spells, assume some shared Mediterranean tradition, and use these rituals cautiously to gain a better understanding of the early Greek poetic texts discussed above. Thus in the light of Near Eastern parallels I have tentatively suggested above that the *κεστός* episode may have been designed around a traditional prayer to Aphrodite (Ishtar) used in conjunction with a specially made amulet. Such a prayer may have been embedded in a *ἱερὸς λόγος* describing the nuptials of Zeus and Hera from which it was adapted by Homer in the *Διὸς ἀπάτη* episode. In a similar way, the apples thrown by Hippomenes and the pomegranate seed used by Hades can be further elucidated by parallels in erotic magical recipes. The



differing reports of Hades' action in the *Hymn to Demeter* highlight the familial tensions which come into play during the transfer of the bride to her new home. Persephone implies that only violence and magic prevented her from resisting her abduction and marriage to Hades; otherwise she would have preferred to remain in the family of her birth. This is corroborated by the poet's statement (373-374) that Hades employed the enchanted seed "in order that she (*sc.* Persephone) might not remain continually at the side of grave Demeter of the dark peplos" (see above, note 37). According to Pindar, Aphrodite instructs Jason in the use of the ἵνυξ to similar effect:

λίτας τ' ἐπαοιδᾶς ἐκδιδάσκεισεν σοφὸν Αἰσονίδαν·  
ὄφρα Μηδείας τοκέων ἀφέλοιτ' αἰδῶ, ποθεινὰ δ' Ἑλλάς αὐτάν  
ἐν φρασὶ καιομένην δονέοι μᾶστιγι Πειθοῦς. Pyth. 4.217-219

The use of erotic magic in myths about courtship is, in fact, well suited to a common pattern found in Greek myths about marriage (e.g., the Proetides) and in actual prenuptial rituals performed at the temples of Artemis at Brauron and at Lousoi. In each case the women move from: 1) a secure childlike happiness in their parents' home; to 2) a transitory state of madness and unbridled independence; to 3) a new state of security under the dominion of her husband.<sup>50</sup> In Greek myth the liminal stage of madness is often induced by an outsider, usually a deity, such as Hera in the story of the Proetides, or (as the myths discussed in this essay suggest) by a mortal armed with magic from the goddess Aphrodite.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>See S. G. Cole, "The Social Function of Rituals of Maturation: The Koureion and the Arkteia," *ZPE* 55 (1984) 233-244, at 239-244, for the ceremonies at Brauron; J. N. Bremmer, "Greek Maenadism Reconsidered," *ibid.* 267-286, at 282-286, for the Proetides, the Minyads and other maddened groups of young women whose stories end in marriage; and R. Seaford, "The Eleventh Ode of Bacchylides: Hera, Artemis and the Absence of Dionysus," *JHS* 108 (1988) 118-124, for the connection between the Proetides and the cult of Artemis at Lousoi.

<sup>51</sup>Seaford (above, n. 50) 120-122. For the temporary madness induced in women by aphrodisiacs, see Theocritus 3.42 (Atalanta is "maddened" by the apples) and Pindar *Pyth.* 4.216 (the ἵνυξ to which Medea is assimilated by sympathetic magic is called a "mad bird").