2. Using ancient texts as examples and inspiration, compose a Greek or Roman spell or erotic charm and then provide a detailed commentary on the features of the spell.

*Guidelines*: The curse or charm should be set in an ancient context and modelled on ancient examples. In your commentary, you are expected to explain the ancient context of the magic, and comment on the person who casts the spell, the victim (or target), the means by which the magic operates and the divinities or superhuman powers involved. You should cite other spells that have the same feature or use an element in a similar way, for example similes, magical words, deity names, or ritual actions that are part of the procedure. You should also explain why you selected those particular elements and how they work in the spell you have composed, based on how they fit into the spells from which you took them. Since ancient magicians adapted the traditional formulas to the specific context of the spell, the client, the situation or the target, you can also innovate. Make sure to include any oral components or ritual actions that are part of the spell, as well as the inscribed or written component. For this topic, you do not need to follow the strict essay format (eg. you can omit the introduction; simply start with your spell and continue with the commentary).

I, [male], bind [victim], born of [mother], to me, to come to me inflamed with desire. I adjure to Aphrodite Pandemos and Hekate of the Three Faces, ASKION KATASKION LIX TETRA DAMNAMENEUS AISION, to bring [victim] to me, [male], with a burning passion. I bind her heart, her mind, her soul, her body, and her vulva so she desires [male], son of [father]. If she eats, may she not eat; if she drinks, may she not drink; if she speaks, may her tongue be tied and her words confused, as the words of this tablet are confused. As I bind [victim] to me, may she be filled with a burning fever until she comes to me, [male]. Burn her limbs, her woman’s body, her breasts, her mouth, until she comes to me. May she not eat, nor drink, nor find any rest until she comes to me [male], crazed with desire and a burning lust. May [victim] lie sleepless at night with her mind empty except for her desire for me [male]. May she not love another man, or have sex with another man, unless that man is [male], I alone am that man. May she find no pleasure or rest until she comes to me and loves me, [male], eternally.

The spell-caster wishes the victim to fall in love with him. The victim doesn’t reciprocate his feelings and hence he has turned to a spell, which seeks to drive the victim insane with lust and desire for the caster, and afflict her with illness that will only stop when she obeys the caster’s wishes. The spell is partly a transference of the unrequited love the caster feels, so that the victim may “suffer the torments of unreciprocated love for the curser,” but overall is an attraction spell, so that his love can be fulfilled.[[1]](#footnote-1) The spell is written on a lead tablet, in the “boustrophedon” style, with the writing alternating from left-to-right to right-to-left, to “[restrain] through confusion and ‘hobbling’.” [[2]](#footnote-2) Hekate and Aphrodite Pandemos are invoked: Hekate due to her magical abilities, as she is invoked in erotic and non-erotic curses, and Aphrodite Pandemos due to her association with sexual desire. This tablet is buried under the victim’s house, as tablets could be buried at sites specific to the victim, or at sites considered most effective for the spell.[[3]](#footnote-3) The tablet is rolled and pierced with a nail, as is customary. Buried with the tablet is a wax figure of a woman with the victim’s hair wrapped around it as a piece of *oustia*. The figure has its hands bound behind its back and its head turned backwards, to restrain and confuse the victim as is stated in the tablet.[[4]](#footnote-4) It was written in Greece around the fourth century AD. The tablet uses the *ephesia grammata* as they were featured in many of the tablets from the imperial period – all discussed tablets use the *voces mysticae*.[[5]](#footnote-5) Since erotic attraction spells only became major in the fourth century AD, the *ephesia grammata* would have become part of the “formula” for curse tablets.[[6]](#footnote-6) No drawings or *charaktēres* are included as they are not common to erotic attraction spells nor are they required, unless the spell needed to be particularly powerful. No oral incantations are used either as the tablet is long enough and complex enough to negate needing an oral accompaniment.

A voodoo doll is used in two attraction spell recipes (Ogden, 208 & 209, p. 233). It is included to make the spell more powerful, since *oustia* is used and thus acts as a direct link to the victim. It is possible that dolls may have accompanied the other examples discussed, but have not been mentioned, or have decayed over time.

A feature common to erotic attraction spells is the specific binding of body parts, as is present in a fifth century AD Egyptian curse (Ogden, 207, p. 232) and a second century AD Egyptian curse (Ogden, 210, p.234). The four tablets discussed by Bravo also all feature the specific binding of genitals, as well as the body, the soul, and other body parts.[[7]](#footnote-7) The spell above binds the woman’s body, as well as her heart and soul, to win her over to the spell-caster. Tablet 207 repeatedly mentions different parts of the victim’s body, binding her brain and heart as well as her vulva; and tablet 210 binds the victim’s soul and heart. These body parts have been bound as they are essential for love; the sexual organs have also been bound to give the lust desired. As such, the tablet above binds the victim’s mind and soul, so that she will love the spell-caster, and her body and vulva, so she desires the spell-caster.

The tablet also “[utilizes] ideas of general or specific harm to the object” by using illness to inflame and burn the victim and prevent them from eating, drinking, and sleeping, “[assaulting] the victim with pain that, seemingly, will remit only in the presence of the spell-caster,” a feature very common to erotic attraction spells.[[8]](#footnote-8) This could be considered an attempt to weaken the victim until they gave in to the caster’s efforts. Pachoumi also notes that “Greek and Roman physicians treat erotic passion as a disease,” and as such illness is used in erotic curse tablets to inflame desire.[[9]](#footnote-9) This feature is found most explicitly in examples of a fifth century AD Egyptian curse (Ogden, 207, p. 232) which calls for the deities to “burn her limbs, her liver, her woman’s body, until she comes to me, loving me,” and a second century AD Egyptian curse (Ogden, 206, p. 231) which asks that Theodotis (the victim) be “dragged in slavery, driven crazy, taking to the air in search.”[[10]](#footnote-10) This feature is included in the tablet as it seeks to make the victim feel the pain of the spell-caster’s love for the victim, as well as simultaneously working towards bending them to the spell-caster’s will, weakening them until they have no choice but to give in.

Word Count= 1173

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   Ibid, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, 24.

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4. Ankarloo, B., & Clark, S. *Witchcraft and Magic In Europe. Ancient Greece and Rome.* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ogden, D. *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds.* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc, 2002), 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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10. Ogden, D. *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds.* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc, 2002), 232.

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