

The villagers' of Deir el Medina ability to read and write is unique in the ancient Egyptian world. As a result it is one of the few places in which secular literature and poetry, as opposed to government propaganda and record keeping, is prominent. Their command of language and eloquent symbolism, especially for women, is remarkable. The poetry of the villagers of Deir el Medina uses intense imagery and contemporary metaphors to convey emotion while the references to a dominant mother figure clearly allude to a family dynamic in which women are highly esteemed and influential.

The lovers in the poetry must seek permission from the mother in order to maintain the relationship. For example, a mother may forbid a man from seeing her daughter. In "My Brother Torments My Heart," the female author writes, "And I cannot go to him. \ Mother is right in charging him thus: \ 'Give up seeing her!'" The author is lovesick for the man, however, the mother does not allow them to see one another. Evidently, the mother holds a substantial amount of power in the lives of her children. It is to her, whom the creed of love is declared. In "My Brother Overwhelms My Heart" the female author writes, "He does not realize how I wish to embrace him, \ Or he would write to my mother." When the author asserts that a letter must be written to the mother, she maintains the dominance of women in the society because they are the ones who control marriage. If a man wishes to marry, he must write to the mother for permission. Clearly, women hold a significant amount power in the society of Deir el Medina.

The villagers use concrete, contemporary metaphors to comprehend the abstract nature of love and the world around them. Ancient Egyptian culture highly regarded the heart, rather than the brain, as it was thought to contain the soul, or Ba. As a result, the villagers' constantly referenced the heart as a symbol for the essence of life. While the heart was crucial to the human condition, the Sun was paramount to their religion. In "The Sister Without Peer," the male author writes, "She looks like the rising morning star \ At the start of a happy year." Because the Sun represented Ra, the principle god, it was an immensely important component of religion. When the author compares his love to the Sun, he is literally comparing his love to the salient god. The fact that the Sun rises in the east and sets in the west also holds significance to the ancient Egyptians. In "It Is Her Love that Gives Me Strength," the male author compares his love to the far side of the river Nile. In order to describe the abstract nature of love, the villagers use concrete, contemporary metaphors and symbolization; a remarkable command of language.

The unique abilities of the villagers allow them to craft secular literature while making use of contemporary symbols and metaphors that emphasize their daily struggles with love. Not only do they have an astounding understanding of poetry and secular literature, but also a unique society in which women play an important role, especially in the love lives of their children. The poetry of the village gives us many key insights into the lives of the commoners in the ancient Egyptian village of Deir el Medina.