

The Opposite of Charity

little versed in the Latin tongue
- Eginhard

The opposite of charity,
historically a possessive
demonic passion (*Libido* in German)
thought to stem mostly from women

conceived as properties of the cosmos
which is to say properties of
infernal and nocturnal powers
and thus privy to charms and potions

and so tied up in the popular mind
with magic and spells and weirdness
the Church had trouble convincing people
that women were human not cosmic beings —

Amor a four-letter word
used of parents and children and lovers
but never in a positive sense
in reference to married bliss.

Charitas conjugalis
(as Innocent the First called
what others called *dilectio*
implying preference and respect):

a love that embraces conjugal grace
and a mixture of tenderness and friendship
honorable and delightful sex
coupled with fidelity as well as

disinterested sensible devotion
a man and woman in love together
experience, connection both
physical and spiritual.