RELIGIONS IN THE
GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

*

Magical Practice in the Latin West

Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005

*

Edited by
RICHARD L. GORDON
and
FRANCISCO MARCO SIMÓN

BRILL

Magical Practice in the Latin West

Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

Editors

H.S. Versnel
D. Frankfurter
J. Hahn

VOLUME 168

Magical Practice in the Latin West

Papers from the International Conference
held at the University of Zaragoza
30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005

Edited by

Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón

BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2010

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Magical practice in the Latin West : papers from the international conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005 / edited by Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simon.
p. cm. — (Religions in the Graeco-Roman world, ISSN 0927-7633 ; v. 168)
Includes indexes.
ISBN 978-90-04-17904-2 (hardback : alk. paper) 1. Magic—Europe—History—Congresses. I. Gordon, R. L. (Richard Lindsay) II. Marco Simón, Francisco. III. Title. IV. Series.

BF1591.M3444 2010
133.4'3094—dc22

2009041611

ISSN 0927-7633
ISBN 978 90 04 17904 2

Copyright 2010 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Hotei Publishing, IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA.
Fees are subject to change.

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

CONTENTS

Preface ix
Abbreviations xiii
List of Text-Figures, Tables and Illustrations xix
The Contributors xxv

Introduction
Richard Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón 1

PART I

THE DISCOURSE OF MAGIC

Chapter One *Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin 53
James B. Rives

Chapter Two Magic in the Roman Historians 79
Matthew W. Dickie

Chapter Three Heretical Texts and *maleficium* in the *Codex Theodosianus* (*CTh.* 16.5.34) 105
María Victoria Escribano Paño

PART II

REVISING THE CORPUS

Chapter Four The *defixiones* from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz 141
Jürgen Blänsdorf

Chapter Five Religion and Magic at Rome: The Fountain of Anna Perenna 191
Marina Piranomonte

Chapter Six The Texts from the *Fons Annae Perennae* 215
Jürgen Blänsdorf

Chapter Seven Cursing a Thief in Iberia and Britain 245
Roger Tomlin

Chapter Eight Prayers for Justice in East and West: Recent Finds and Publications 275
Henk S. Versnel

PART III

WRITING *DEFIXIONES*: MODELS, LANGUAGE AND AIMS

Chapter Nine How does Magical Language Work? The Spells and *Formulae* of the Latin *defixionum tabellae* 357
Amina Kropp

Chapter Ten Inversion, Adversion and Perversion as Strategies in some Latin Curse Tablets 381
Christopher Faraone and Amina Kropp

Chapter Eleven Execrating the Roman Power: Three *defixiones* from Emporiae (Ampurias) 399
Francisco Marco Simón

PART IV

PROTECTIVE, EUDAEMONIC AND DIVINATORY MAGIC

Chapter Twelve Nails for the Dead: A Polysemic Account of an Ancient Funerary Practice 427
Silvia Alfayé Villa

Chapter Thirteen Magic at Sea: Amulets for Navigation 457
Sabino Perea Yébenes

Chapter Fourteen A Prayer for Blessings on three Ritual Objects at Chartres-*Autricum* (France/Eure-et-Loir) 487
Richard Gordon, Dominique Joly and William van Andringa

Chapter Fifteen Mithraism and Magic 519
Jaime Alvar Ezquerra

Chapter Sixteen A Visigothic Charm from Asturias and the Classical Tradition of Phylacteries Against Hail 551
Francisco Javier Fernández Nieto

Chapter Seventeen Between Orthodox Belief and 'Superstition' in Visigothic Hispania 601
Isabel Velázquez Soriano

Chapter Eighteen Celtic *Loricae* and Ancient Magical Charms 629
Pierre-Yves Lambert

Indices
General Index 649
Select Index of Texts and Documents cited 660
Index of Latin words 669
Select index of Greek words 675

PREFACE

This volume presents most of the papers given at the conference *Magical Practice in the Latin-speaking Empire (Late Republic to Late Antiquity)/Prácticas mágicas en el Imperio romano latinoparlante desde fines de la República a la Antigüedad Tardía* held at the University of Zaragoza (Saragosa) between 30th September and 1st October 2005.

It is familiar that contemporary academic interest in the history of magic and witchcraft is a product of the shifts in historiographic practice that occurred in the 1960s, when many western European historians outside France discovered the history of mentalities and social micro-history, prompted by the example of the *Annales* school, especially Henri Lefebvre and E. LeRoy Ladurie. The European archives were full of scarcely-exploited materials on witchcraft and magic, which have fuelled a now vast bibliography: as Robin Briggs recently put it, "witches have…become big business in modern times".[1] Although it took some two decades for this influence to make itself felt in the field of ancient history, with the important exception of a famous paper by Peter Brown,[2] the topic has become well-established over the past fifteen or twenty years, its commencement conventionally marked by the publication of Hans-Dieter Betz' collective *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (1986[1]), Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink's *Hiera Magika* (1991) and John Gager's *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells* (1992). Since then, a variety of issues and practices that traditionally received relatively little notice because they were held so decidedly to traduce the Hellenic ideal (Wilamowitz notoriously called the study of the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri 'Botokudenphilologie', as it were 'Bongo-Bongo philology') has been explored from a variety of angles.

---

[1] R. Briggs, *The Witches of Lorraine* (Oxford 2007) 1; cf. W. Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts: A Global History* (Cambridge 2004). Some early reprints/synthetic accounts based directly on archival material include C. Ginzburg, *I Benandanti* (Turin 1966); R. Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France aux XVII^e siècle* (Paris 1968); B. Rosen, *Witchcraft* (London 1969).

[2] P. Brown, Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: From Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages, in M. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*. ASA Monographs 9 (London 1970) 17–45, repr. in P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London 1972) 119–46.

The majority of this work has however concerned itself with the rich and varied Greek documentation deriving mainly from the eastern Mediterranean basin. The editors of this volume, who have been engaged in a research project 'Magic, Collective Representations and Power in Rome in the first century CE' financed by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture (BHA 2002–02584), thought it might be useful to organise an international conference whose aim would be to bring together some of the specialists working on the general topic of magical practice, and ask them to focus, where possible, on materials from the western part of the Roman empire, precisely because this area has tended to be perceived as marginal or secondary. The issue had become still more topical thanks to the recent discovery of several important new Latin curses: some thirty-four in the joint sanctuary of Mater Magna and Isis at Mainz, datable to the years 80–120 CE; around twenty late-antique items from the Fountain of Anna Perenna at Piazza Euclide in northern Rome; and a number of other texts, mainly in Germania Superior, to say nothing of the numerous British texts from Bath, Uley and other sites. We also wanted to give Spanish scholars, especially younger ones with a particular interest in this field, an international forum for their work. In effect, we had three general aims: to continue the general critique of the traditional 'grand dichotomy' between Magic and Religion in antiquity, to explore the implications of the new finds, and to suggest and evaluate areas for further research on the theme of the special or distinctive character of magical practice in the western part of the Roman Empire. Given the nature of the subject, and personal predilections and areas of expertise, it was not in the event possible entirely to exclude Greek topics, but we have done our best.

We succeeded in obtaining a special subsidy from the General Head Office for Research of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (HUM2004–20268–E/HIST), which made it possible for us to organise the conference at Zaragoza. The meetings were held in the comfortable lecture-hall of the New Library of Humanities 'María Moliner' of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University. The three main sessions of the conference were: i) 'Magic in the Principate' (M.W. Dickie, J.B. Rives, R.L. Gordon and A. Kropp; ii) 'Magical practitioners and Roman society' (H.S. Versnel, J. Blänsdorf, M. Piranomonte, R.S.O. Tomlin, F. Marco Simón, D.R. Jordan, C.A. Faraone and S. Perea Yébenes; and iii) 'Magic in the Society of the Later Empire in the West' (J. Alvar Ezquerra, M. Victoria Escribano and P.-Y. Lambert).

The published volume varies this scheme considerably. The sections are different; the papers by delivered by Faraone, Gordon and Jordan have been withdrawn; several of those here published were not actually presented in Zaragoza. Two of these are by Spanish colleagues who, though scheduled to read, were in the event unable to attend the conference itself (I. Velázquez and F.J. Fernández Nieto). C.A. Faraone offers a joint paper with A. Kropp on issues arising from the Mainz tablets. The discovery at Chartres of the prayer by C. Verius Sedatus prompted D. Joly, W. Van Andringa and Gordon to write a version of their report especially for this volume (which, apart from being in English, differs considerably from that scheduled to appear in *Gallia*). Finally, in order to strengthen the representation of archaeological but non-epigraphic documentation, S. Alfayé Villa was invited to contribute a piece arising from her research on the use of nails in funerary contexts in the western part of the Roman Empire.

The Editors would like to acknowledge their debt to the people and institutions that enabled the conference to take place and this volume to be published. First, of course, to the authors of the papers, who gamely came to Zaragoza and submitted the final version of their papers in good time (the delay in publication is at least partly due to the decision by the editors and publishers of RGRW that all papers were to be in good academic English). We would also like to thank the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, whose grant covered the main costs of the conference, supplemented by some funds from our own research project. The Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Zaragoza deserves thanks for allowing us to use the lecture-hall of the new Library; also the Dean, Dr. M.A. Ruiz Carnicer, for having kindly accepted our invitation to open the conference. The Service of Culture of Zaragoza City Hall opened the Roman theatre and its museum to the members of the conference under the experienced guidance of Dr. Romana Erice. Dr. Silvia Alfayé Villa, now of the Departamento de Ciencias de la Antigüedad of the University of Zaragoza, took care of the academic organisation with efficiency and good humour. Particular thanks are due to Martin Dough for his translations into English of several papers originally presented in Spanish. Finally, we thank our colleague H.S. Versnel, and the members of the Editorial Committee of Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, for inviting us to publish this volume in their prestigious series.

The Editors

INTRODUCTION

Richard Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón

In their collective volume, planned in the late 1980s, Faraone and Obbink set out to "establish the study of magic as an area to be ignored by students of ancient religion and society only at their peril",[1] by challenging the conventional dichotomy between religion and magic, and highlighting the twin issues of the social meanings and uses of magical practice. Since then, the importance of the topic has been widely accepted. Two fine synthetic books, by F. Graf and M.W. Dickie, laid out the ground for future work on concepts, practitioners and historical shifts.[2] A series of conference-proceedings has refined the debate over conceptualisation, located Greek and Roman magical practice in the context of the high cultures of the Near-East, and greatly extended our understanding of the classical and post-classical discourse(s) of magic.[3] Considerable numbers of new texts, on papyrus, lead and other materials, have accumulated.[4] The publication of doctoral dissertations, bibliographies, translated source-books and a companion, and the foundation of specialist scientific journals, have all helped to institutionalise the field.[5]

---

[1] Faraone and Obbink 1991, vii.

[2] Graf 1996; Dickie 2001. In the late 1980s Graf was commissioned by C.H. Beck to edit a manuscript of 700pp. on divination and magic by the Norwegian scholar Sam Eitrem (who edited *POslo* 1 = *PGrMag* XXXVI, and had otherwise been of considerable help to K. Preisendanz, e.g. in checking the readings of *PGrMag* IV), which had been left uncompleted at his death in 1966 and was intended to appear in the series Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft (F. Graf, Preface to S. Eitrem, Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 175f.). Instructively, however, in the end things proved to have moved on so much that the plan was not pursued.

[3] *AMRP* (1995), *EM* (1997), *WAM* (1999), Moreau-Turpin (2000) esp. vol. 1, *MRAW* (2002); Pérez Jiménez and Cruz Andreotti 2002; cf. also Ankarloo/Clark 1999 and the papers that appeared in the Athenian trimonthly Αρχαιολογία και Τέχνες Dec. 1999–Dec. 2000, now published in English: J.C.B. Petropoulos (ed.), *Greek Magic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (Abingdon and New York 2008).

[4] E.g. *SupplMag*, Kotansky *GMA, SGD* I and II; Tomlin 1988. The recent tendency is to regard *PGrMag* as a regional case whose specific features cannot be generalised.

[5] Recently-published dissertations: Clerc 1995; Tremel 2004; Martin 2005; Carastro 2006; Eidinow 2007; Stratton 2007; Trzcionka 2007; Kropp 2008a and b. Bibliographies: P. Brillet and A. Moreau, Bibliographie générale, in Moreau-Turpin 4, 7–159, containing some 2,800 references; J.L. Calvo Martínez, Cien años de investigación

It now seems appropriate to focus on more specific tasks.[6] One of these is the question of the specificity of magical practice in the Latin-speaking West. As regards Italy of the early and mid-Republican periods, granted that little is known, such specificity seems assured; there is for example no known Greek parallel for the clause of the XII Tables condemning the spiriting away of crop-harvests by magical means (*veneficiis*).[7] Things are less clear for the later period. Even if the modes of dissemination to Italy and Spain are a matter of speculation, the earliest *defixiones* in Latin assimilate Greek practice, just like the Oscan and perhaps even the Gaulish examples.[8] In the late Republic, individuals such as the Pythagorean Nigidius Figulus (pr. 58 BCE),

---

sobre la magia antigua, *MHNH* 1 (2001) 7–60, which is in some ways more helpful in being organised systematically rather than alphabetically. Source-books in translation: G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore 1985[1], 2006[2]); J.L. Calvo Martínez and M.D. Sánchez Romero, *Textos de magia en papiros griegos* (Madrid 1987); Gager *CT* (1992); *AChrMag* (1994); A. López Jimeno, *Textos griegos de maleficio* (Madrid 2001); L. Muñoz Delgado, *Léxico de magia y religión en los papiros mágicos griegos* (Madrid 2001); D. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford 2002). Companion: D. Frankfurter and H.S. Versnel (eds.), *The Brill Guide to the Study of Magic* (Leyden 2010). Journals: *MHNH*, founded 2001 and edited from Málaga by Aurelio Pérez Jiménez; the director of the section on magic is J.L. Calvo Martínez (Granada); the freely-accessible on-line journal *Ephesia Grammata*, edited by M. Martin, was founded in 2007 and has published a number of serious studies on magic in the Gallo-Roman context, Hekate, iatromedicine etc. See www.etudesmagique.info; also <magika2000@hotmail.com>.

[6] For example, the topic of the first Figura meeting in Paris, 27–28 June 2008 was: *Représentation du divin dans les pratiques "magiques"* (Belayche 2009).

[7] Servius ad Verg. *Ecl.* 8.99 = *XII Tab.* VIII.8 (*FIRA*[2]) = VIII.4 Crawford; cf. J.B. Rives, Magic in the XII Tables Revisited; *CQ* n.s.52 (2002) 270–90.

[8] The earliest Oscan defixiones are the fragmentary IV[a] examples from Complex A at Roccagloriosa in the Gulf of Policastro, Lucania, written in the Greek alphabet, which may be indirectly influenced by those from the shrine of Demeter Malophoros at Selinus in Sicily: M. Gualtieri and P. Poccetti in M. Gualtieri and H. Fracchia (eds.), *Roccagloriosa, 1: L'abitato: scavo e ricognizione topografica (1976–1980).* Bibl. Inst. fr. de Naples, sér. 2.8 (Naples 1990) 137–50. Two others, probably from Laos, now at Naples, are IV–III[a]: P. Poccetti, Due tabellae defixionis osco-greche dalla Calabria nel Museo Archaeologico di Napoli, in G. Paci (ed.), *Epigraphai: Miscellanea epigrafica in onore di L. Gasperini.* Ichnia 5 (Tivoli 2000) 2: 745–71. Of the two well-known Oscan *defixiones* from S. Maria Capua Vetere of II[a], both in the Oscan alphabet, one, the 'Curse of Vibia', is a modified prayer for justice: R.G. Kent, The Oscan Curse of Vibia, *CPh* 20 (1925) 243–68 = *DTAud* 193; the other is a judicial *defixio*: Morandi 1982, 117f. no.23 = *DTAud* 192. The names on the lead disk from Cumae (*ILLRP* 1146 = *CIL* I[2] 1614 = *CIL* I[2] 4, p.1011) are all Latin, though the curse itself is in Oscan. So far as we know, the significance of *DTAud* 209 (from Cumae, not Puteoli) has not been clarified. For the Gaulish texts from L'Hospitalet-du-Larzac and Chamalières, both of which are hard to date but written in ORC, see P.-Y. Lambert, *RIG* 2.2 (2003) nos. L99, 100. They are however more likely to derive from indigenous traditions, cf.

who almost certainly studied abroad, had access to a range of Greek occultic sources, themselves mediating material from Babylonia and Egypt.[9] The magical stereotypes of Augustan and later poetry represent a complex amalgam of Greek and Italic themes.[10] In the rhizotomic, iatromagical and lithic traditions cited by Pliny the Elder the process of translation and amalgamation seems to be complete.[11] From the Antonine period, Graeco-Egyptian magical practice, a regional subtype, acquired special prestige all over the Empire, without ever displacing existing forms.[12] Quite apart from these facts, the sheer bulk, originality and interest of the Greek materials threatens to overshadow those in Latin. Nevertheless legitimate questions about cultural differences remain, raised in particular by the cultural role and significance of magic in Augustan and Julio-Claudian Italy,[13] which seems markedly different from anything known either in Classical Athens or the Hellenistic Greek world, but also from the implications of newly-discovered documents.

A colloquium held in December 2003 at the University of Münster was devoted to the issue of malign magic, mainly *defixiones*; the resulting volume contained the first reports of the finds in the *temenos* of the joint temple of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz as well as *editiones priores* of other new finds and general reflections on the genre.[14]

Marco Simón 2002. The purpose of the II^{p} text on the tile from Châteaubleau (Seine-et-Marne) is unclear: *RIG* 2.2. no. L93.

[9] A. Della Casa, *Nigidio Figulo* (Rome 1962); D. Luzzi, *Nigidio Figulo, astrologo e mago. Testimonianze* e *frammenti* (Lecce 1983); E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (London 1985) 90; 310–12. On the reception of Babylonian priestly lore, see M.-L. Thomsen, The Wisdom of the Chaldaeans: Mesopotamian Magic as conceived by the Classical Authors, in T. Fischer-Hansen (ed.), *East and West. Cultural Relations in the Ancient World. Acta Hyperborea: Danish Studies in Classical Archaeology 1* (Copenhagen 1998) 93–101.

[10] A.-M. Tupet, *La magie dans la poésie latine, 1: des origines à la fin du règne d'Auguste* (Paris 1976).

[11] V. Naas, Réflexions sur la méthode de travail de Pline l'Ancien, *RPh* 70 (1996) 305–32.

[12] M. Smith, On the Lack of a History of Greco-Roman Magic, in H. Heine et al. (eds.) *Althistorische Studien: Festschrift H. Bengtson*. Historia Einzelschriften 40 (Wiesbaden 1983) 251–7; F. De Salvia, La figura del mago egizio nella tradizione letteraria greco-romana, in A. Roccati and A. Siliotti (eds.), *La Magia in Egitto ai tempi dei faraoni. Atti del convengo internazionale di studi, Milano 29–31 ottobre 1985* (Milan 1987) 343–365; D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton 1998) 198–237; E.M. Ciampini, Tradizioni faraoniche e iconografie magiche, in Mastrocinque 2002, 27–40; Dieleman 2005, 185–284.

[13] Marco Simón 2001.

[14] Brodersen and Kropp 2004.

In November 2004, C. Faraone organised a meeting in the American School at Rome on the archaeology of professional magical practice in the Imperial period, inviting presentations not only on Mainz but also on the finds from the *Fons Annae Perennae* in Rome made in the same year.[15] Our conference in Zaragoza[16] was designed to capitalise on these results by pursuing four main issues: the representation and instrumentalisation of magic as a politico-cultural theme in the Empire, here called the discourse; the implications of new and revised documents relevant to the issue of the specificity of Latin practice, especially prayers for justice; the study of the pragmatics of Latin *defixiones*; and the presentation of neglected or apparently marginal materials in Latin, up to, and even beyond, the Visigothic period. In the course of this Introduction, we try to weave together general observations on the wider problems as we see them with summaries, discussions and sometimes criticism of the individual contributions.[17] It will be apparent that we have had to compromise in our selection of papers, since some contributors were less ready or able than others to adapt their expertise to our concerns. There are also significant and natural disagreements over the category of magic. Inevitably too, quite apart from the presentational problems involved in transferring certain academic styles into readable English, some contributions have required a good deal of editorial intervention.[18]

---

[15] The proceedings were published in *MHNH* 5 (2005) 7–124. Note esp. Witteyer 2005; J. Blänsdorf, The Curse-tablets from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz, *MHNH* 5 (2005) 11–26; M. Piranomonte, La fontana sacra di Anna Perenna a Piazza Euclide tra religione e magia, *MHNH* 5 (2005) 87–104.

[16] We have decided to maintain the Spanish form of the name rather than the English Saragosa. Otherwise, however, place-names (such as Leiden, München, Roma, Coruña) have been anglicised according to the Oxford rules.

[17] We try not to be too crude about the nature of the possible contrasts between 'Greek' and 'Roman'.

[18] One or two remarks on conventions are in order. Generally speaking, in keeping with the house rules of RGRW, except in those cases where the author provided a full bibliographic list according to the name-date system, the bibliography to each article contains only items cited more than once. Details of works referred to once only by any given author will be found in the footnotes. Where possible, to aid in preparing the indices, references to *AE*, *SEG* and other standard collections have been supplied even where omitted by the author. We have generally used the standard epigraphic sigla for dates expressed in terms of centuries, namely Roman numeral + ^{a} for BCE (e.g. IV^{a}) and Roman numeral + ^{p} for CE (e.g. IV^{p}). To mark the domestication of the term 'prayers for justice' we have usually dropped the inverted commas. The traditional English dialect word 'poppet' has been used throughout in order to avoid the inappropriate American pop-term 'voodoo-doll' and to avoid confusion with the word 'puppet', even though it too is often found in Early-Modern English black-letter

The Discourse of Magic

One of the basic heuristic distinctions to be made in this field is between magical practice, which is in principle contextual, local, and goal-oriented, and the cultural discourse about magic, which, at any rate in a complex society covering hundreds, if not thousands, of local traditions, like that of the Empire, is general and protean, constraining and suggestive.[19] The major value of such a distinction is to caution against the naïve use of literary accounts of magic and magicians, witchcraft and witches, as though they were straightforward evidence for historical practice, quasi-ethnographic documents, rather than heavily-mediated representations whose real historical value lies in what they can tell us about the nature of the discourse about magic and the complex socio-political functions it fulfilled. At the same time, it is obvious that there was a dialectical relationship between practical action and the social discourse, albeit of a limited kind, inasmuch as features or aspects of the discourse provided hints and suggestions to those who felt impelled to invoke magical help in a given situation, and practice, notably in the context of iatro- and apotropaic magic, fed into the discourse. The distinction, though necessary, is thus not complete.

The discourse as a whole was relatively differentiated and capable of supporting several different agenda. But from the Hellenistic period the major one, and certainly the one we hear most about, represented magic primarily in terms of its subversive power and illegitimate authority, claims sustained by graphic stereotypes of its supposed agents, naked women collecting poisonous herbs on mountain-tops, raising storms, or grubbing for human remains in cemeteries, and magicians capable of opening locks without keys or commanding spirits to do their bidding.[20] Such stereotypes, which included dozens of circumstantial details (circumstantiality, however, underwrites

---

pamphlets to mean 'figurine moulded for magical purposes'. Commendably avoiding 'voodoo-doll', Collins 2008, 92–97 uses the term 'figurines' for the Greek case, which is perfectly acceptable.

[19] Stratton 2007, 15–18. We may compare the historical role of 'superstition' as an ideological instrument, cf. Smith and Knight 2008. On the use of the polythetic term magic, we incline to the position of C.A. Hoffman, Fiat Magia, in *MRAW* 179–94, without accepting all his arguments. As historians, we eschew here any reference to the emic/etic 'problem' and adopt the rough and ready operational definition of C.R. Phillips (1991, 262) "unsanctioned religious activity" (Marco Simón 2002, 189f.).

[20] Graf 1996, 61–82, 158–83; Dickie 2001, 96–201.

only the semblance of authenticity), might themselves be exploited to obtain complex responses from sophisticated readers, by, for example, turning the practitioner into a sympathetic abandoned lover, as in Theocritus' *Pharmakeutria*, or stocking a magical ceremony with every imaginable horrid item in order to produce—three inflated goatskin bags.[21] But mainly the discourse and its subtended stereotypes were used, in the manner that dominant discourses usually are used, to limit and control subordinate or marginal practices, by passing them through a grid of persuasive binary oppositions (e.g. legitimate-illegitimate, marvel-magic, good-harm),[22] through inflation of the theme of necromancy,[23] by outright repression (interdiction of 'magical' divination; trials, lynchings),[24] rejecting the others' right to speak (e.g. Pliny's 'Magi'), by belittlement (untrue, ineffective, silly), by commentary (Democritus on the evil eye; 'pulling down the Moon' as forecasting eclipses; Pliny's History of Magic),[25] by social appropriation (pseudepigrapha).[26] On the other hand, because of the centrality of the marvellous to religious discourse as a whole, care was generally taken to allow

---

[21] Apuleius, *Met.* 3.18 with Stratton 2007, 92f.; cf. C. Segal, *Tantum medicamina possunt*: La magie dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide, in Moreau-Turpin 3, 45–70. A somewhat similar, but more amusing, story about a fake Indian *sadhu* and failed erotic magic in Gluckman 1997, 234.

[22] Cf. L. Baldini Moscadi, La magia nell'epica latina: Funzionalità e transgressione (a proposito di Virgilio e Silio Italico, Lucano e Stazio), *MHNH* 4 (2004) 33–50.

[23] D. Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (Princeton 2001).

[24] Phillips 1991; Graf 1996, 54–56; D. Liebs, Strafprozesse wegen Zauberei. Magie und politisches Kalkül in der römischen Geschichte, in A. Manthe and J. von Ungern-Sternberg (eds.), *Grosse Prozesse der römischen Antike* (Munich 1997) 146–58; Gordon 1999, 253–66; Dickie 2001, 142–61; Cogitore 2002, 116–22; J.B. Rives, Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime, *Classical Antiquity* 22 (2003) 313–39, and idem, Magic, Religion, and Law: The Case of the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis*, in C. Ando and J. Rüpke (eds.), *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome.* PAwB 15 (Stuttgart 2006) 47–67; Collins 2008, 132–65.

[25] Democritus: M.W. Dickie, Heliodorus and Plutarch on the Evil Eye, *CPh* 86 (1991) 17–29; Moon: S. Lunais, *Recherches sur la lune, 1: les auteurs latins de la fin des Guerres Puniques à la fin du règne d'Auguste*. EPROER 72 (Leyden 1979) 225–32; Pliny: Graf 1996, 48–54; Marco Simón 2001, 125–28; S. Ribichini, 'Fascino' dall' Oriente e prima lezioni di magia, in S. Ribichine, M. Rocchi and P. Xella (eds.), *La questione delle influenze vicino-orientali sulla religione greca: Stato degli studi e prospettive della ricerca. Atti del Colloquio internazionale, Roma 20–22 maggio 1999*. Istituto per la civiltà fenicia e punica "Sabatino Moscati"/Istituto per gli studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici. Monografie scientifiche, serie Scienze umane e soziale (Rome 2001) 103–15.

[26] Garosi 1976; Marco Simón 2001; Cf. A. Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (London and New York 1980) 124–27; U.J. Schneider, *Michel Foucault* (Darmstadt 2004) 103f.

that magic might enjoy access to strange powers and hidden truths, an ambivalence the word μάγος/*magus* neatly captures.[27]

The electronic resources made available by TLG (E), Perseus, the CD-Rom of the published volumes of *TLL* (K.G. Saur, 2004) and The Latin Library have not so far had much impact on our field. This no doubt has much to do with the conviction that, to be effective, *Begriffsgeschichte* must be based on more than word-counting.[28] Nevertheless, Rives' examination of one group of Latin words, based on the Greek exotic agentive μάγος, up to and including Apuleius, *De magia*, produces some interesting results. In surviving prose authors of the late Republic and early Principate to the Flavian period, *magus* almost exclusively refers to the religious specialists of Persia (a sense heavily stressed of course by Apuleius). The most striking exception here is Pliny the Elder, who uses the term 'the Magi' to denote the pseudepigraphic authors of *Physika*, in whom he found quantities of recipes for *materia medica* and *materia magica*, using animal parts, exotic plants and stones, materials based, as Max Wellmann argued in several fundamental contributions early in the last century,[29] at least in part on Babylonian materials but also on collected (and endlessly recycled) rhizotomic lore, and implying a theory of natural magic associated with Bolos of Mende in the Nile Delta in the late second century BCE, and Anaxilaos of Larissa and Nigidius Figulus in the late

[27] Cf. N. Méthy, Magie, religion et philosophie au II^e siècle d.n.è.: À propos du dieu-roi d'Apulée, in Moreau-Turpin 3, 85–107. On Pliny's use of the wondrous or marvellous, esp. in Bk 36 (on stones), see V. Naas, *Le projet encyclopédique de Pline l'Ancien*. CEFR 303 (Rome and Paris 2002); on the paradoxographic tradition, G. Schepens and K. Delcroix, Ancient Paradoxography. Origins, Evolution, Production and Reception, in Pecere and Stramaglia 1996, 375–409. Note also the important article on Origen by G. Sfameni Gasparro, Origene e la magia: Teoria e prassi, in L. Perrone (ed.), *Origeniana Octava: Origene e la tradizione Alessandrina: Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa 27–31 August 2001*. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovanensium 164 (Leuven 2003) 1: 733–56.

[28] E.g. the comment of J.Z. Smith: "Giving primacy to native terminology yields, at best, lexical definitions which, historically and statistically, tell how a word is used. But lexical definitions are almost always useless for scholarly work" (2004, 134). Against that, both Graf 1996, 24–48 and Stratton 2007, 2 employ, implicitly or explicitly, the idea of a semantic constellation.

[29] M. Wellmann, Die *Georgika* des Demokritos. *APAW* 1921.4 (Berlin 1921); idem, Die φυσικά des Bolos-Demokritos und der Magier Anaxilaos aus Larissa. *APAW* 1928.7 (Berlin 1928); Marcellus von Side als Arzt und die *Koiraniden* des Hermes Trismegistos. *Philologus Supplementband* 27.2 (Leipzig 1934).

first.[30] Although he mainly avoids using the related abstract noun for this lore, preferring *ars* to connote the combination of learning and written tradition attested by his sources, Pliny's transliteration of the Hellenistic adjectival-noun μαγική in his sketch of the history of magic in Bk. 30.1–18 suggests how discursive needs produce new coinages in this area, which then acquire a life of their own, while his insistence on the rationalising idea that it was Zoroaster and then Ostanes who invented the art is a clear nod to, indeed an historicising reinforcement of, the dominant lexical usage of the word *magus* in his own day.[31] Yet his 'history', the first section of which must be based on Hellenistic predecessors, evidently had a significant impact: it seems plausible to think, for example, that the dominant early-II^{p} meaning of *magus,* 'diviner', goes back to his insistence on astrology as one of the three main legs of the magical art.

Perhaps the most intriguing of Rives' findings however is that in Augustan and later poetry the agentive noun is uncommon, whereas the adjective *magicus* is used in very much the same 'advanced' sense as Greek μαγική, to mean 'connected with the activities of rhizotomists, φαρμακεῖς, *sagae* etc.' without reference to Persia. We cannot tell whether Catullus used the word prior to Vergil in *Eclogue* 8, since his imitation of Theocritus' *Phamakeutria* is lost (Theocritus himself does not use it); Rives himself thinks the background to Vergil's usage might be familiarity with the 'Magian' pseudepigrapha; but we might also think of the translations and adaptations of Greek plays presented on the Roman stage in the late Republic, themselves influenced by the Hellenistic extension of the sense of the adjective μαγικός.[32] At latest by the time of Apuleius' *De magia*, which is closely datable to winter 158/spring 159 CE, this wide sense of the adjectival form had evidently extended to the agentive noun *magus*, so that Apuleius has to make a special point of its 'real' meaning, while constantly betraying his

---

[30] R. Laurenti, La questione Bolo-Democrito, in *L'atomo fra scienza e letteratura.* Pubbl. dell'Ist. di Filol. class. e med. dell'Univ. di Genova 91 (Genua 1985) 75–106; R.L. Gordon, *Quaedam veritatis umbrae*: Hellenistic Magic and Astrology, in P. Bilde et al. (eds.), *Conventional Values of the Hellenistic Greeks.* Studies in Hellenistic Civilization 8 (Aarhus 1997) 128–58 at 134–39; M.W. Dickie, The Learned Magician and the Collection and Transmission of Magical Lore, in *WAM* 163–93.

[31] Graf 1996, 48–51; on the high status of the Magi in a certain tradition of Greek thought from Eudoxus of Cnidus and Theopompus in IV^{a} to Hermippus' bulky Περὶ Μάγων in III^{a}, briefly summarised in Diog. Laert., *Vit. phil.* Proem. 6–9, see A. de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi.* RGRW 133 (Leyden 1997) 205–12.

[32] Gordon 1999, 165.

familiarity with the dominant sense of the word, as used for example by his accusers.[33]

Rives' paper reminds us of the range of references in Latin literature (in the wide sense) to practitioners of magic and the ambiguities both of their status and the language used of them. Dickie's paper focuses instead on the public discourse of magic, as transmitted to us by two Roman historians, Tacitus and Dio Cassius. Both were members of the Senate, both knew the workings of court life and court intrigue at first hand, and what they have to tell us about educated, but of course not philosophers', views of the related themes of divination and magic nicely complements Rives' account.[34] Dickie argues first that both historians, in a perfectly conventional and predictable manner, disapproved of recourse to magic and private divination. Tacitus seems to have some understanding of the fascination the sheer availability of occult power might exercise, especially over the young; both however see the danger it posed primarily in terms of public order, of the threats to the state that might grow out the fears and superstitions aroused by alarmist prophecy. One gets a sense of the volatility of urban populations, of the vulnerability of the dominant order.[35] This is, as it were, their grave and responsible public face. Dickie also shows, on the other hand, how ambiguous they both are about the possibility of magic itself. Both reflect the fissures and debates of the world around them: the fear of being 'caught' by a curse, the mockery of the vain pretensions of magicians, the interest in cases where it may have worked (as in love-magic) and where it certainly seemed to have failed (Hadrian's fatal dropsy), the fascination with the death of Germanicus,[36] the stress on divination(-magic) rather than other categories, the oscillation between official actionism and indifference. Both also reveal the role of rumour and gossip, itself central to court

[33] Cf. N. Fick, Magie et religion dans l'Apologie d'Apulée, *Vita Latina* 124 (1991) 14–31.

[34] See also the texts assembled by M.-L. Freyburger-Galland, La magie chez Dion Cassius, in Moreau-Turpin 2, 95–113 at 108–13.

[35] R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Cambridge MA 1966).

[36] We should however note that the *SC de Gn. Pisone patre* (*CIL* II² 5, 900 = *AE* 1996: 885) makes no mention whatever of this charge, which suggests that Tacitus has instrumentalised mere rumours for his own purposes, cf. A.-M. Tupet, Les pratiques magiques à la mort de Germanicus, *Mélanges de littérature et d'épigraphie latines, d'histoire ancienne, et d'archéologie: Hommages à la mémoire de P. Wuilleumier*. Coll. d'études latines, sér. scient. 35 (Paris 1980) 345–52; cf. W. Eck, A. Caballos and F. Fernández, *Das SC de Cn. Pisone patre.* Vestigia 48 (Munich 1996) 145f.

life, in mediating and refracting the polyvalence of the theme of magic in this restricted world of the élite.[37] But perhaps the main value of magic to both historians is the insight it provides them into the central figure in these men's lives, the autocrat himself. For Tacitus, the trial of Libo Drusus, pathetic as he was, and the subsequent denunciation, execution and exile of diviners and magicians, marked what he chooses to claim was the first occasion when the combination of delation, greed, suspicion, sycophancy and fear made its appearance in the context of a trial for *maiestas*, where the sheer opacity of the notion of *magica sacra* played straight into the hands of those skilled in the art of innuendo.[38] Since rumour and stereotype were all there was to go on, and no one knew what might count as evidence, accusations of magic were the perfect instrument of tyranny. At the same time, he uses astrology to convey Tiberius' duplicity, thereby anticipating Dio Cassius' use of the theme of magic as a metaphor for the state of the Empire: by the time of the 'second paganism' it was by no means unthinkable that emperors themselves might use magic and admire magicians just as they certainly made use of astrology and admired its skilled practitioners. The report that Alamannic wizards claimed to have sent Caracalla nightmare visions of Severus and Geta injects a sudden sense of the doubt that in the long run the Empire could maintain its northern frontier, a fear that proved all too well-founded a mere twenty years later.[39]

It is now reasonably well-established that there was no law specifically forbidding the practice of magic during the Principate, as Mommsen surmised, but that the Republican *lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* provided a basis for accusations, punctuated by Senatus consulta relating to specific incidents, which duly influenced their formulation. At

---

[37] On the roles of gossip, rumour and allegation in magical contexts among the Gonja of Ghana, cf. Goody 1970, 229–36, 241f. On the role of the 'irrational' in the Empire, see K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge 1978) 231–40; more recently, M. Requena, *El emperador prestinado: Los presagios de poder en época imperial romana* (Madrid 2001), usefully revalues reports once dismissed as 'supersititious rumour'.

[38] Marco Simón 2001, 114–17; Cogitore 2002, 181–91; cf. Y. Rivière, *Les délateurs sous l'Empire romain* (Rome and Paris 2002). The revisionist thesis by S.H. Rutledge, *Imperial Inquisitions: Prosecutors and Informants from Tiberius to Domitian* (London and New York 2001) rather plays down the delatores' ability to exploit imperial fears.

[39] J.-M. Carrié and A. Rousselle, *L'Empire romain en mutation: des Sévères à Constantin* (Paris 1999) 94–101.

trials—when it came to trials—what was at stake was the defendant's social credit: the prosecution would draw upon popular beliefs about magic and magicians, rumour, anything strange or untoward about the defendant's alleged behaviour, in order to undermine his or her credit. The more closely the defendant fitted into the appropriate stereotypes, the worse for him or her. At the same time skills in charming and herb-lore, expertise in folk-methods of divination, charismatic healing, i.e. marginal religious expertise of all kinds, were widespread in the population, the instrumental under-belly of civic religion; these practices were familiar, at least in general outline, and provided the experiential basis for stories, rumours and social stereotypes, which in turn formed the humus in which accusations flourished, as well as many of the supposed details of the actions involved.[40]

At all social levels, there was an ever-present temptation to use such material to gain advantage in cases of conflicts and quarrels between families, villagers, the inhabitants of *vici* in towns. Such instrumentalisation of fears for personal advantage and private revenge was particularly easy during the incidence of widespread infectious disease ('plague'), social unrest, military disaster.[41] The opportunity for social actors to present themselves as innocent victims of others' wickedness has always proved a highly effective psychological mechanism for repressing consciousness of one's own wrong-doing. As Theres Fögen argued in 1995 (Fögen 1995), however, none of this low-level 'trouble' much interested the authorities; the main driving force behind considered repression of magic in the Principate, from the time of Tiberius, if not earlier under Augustus, was illicit divination and the fear that this might involve a direct attack upon the person of the emperor. The sheer vagueness of the notion of magic in this connection, horrifying but wholly impalpable, made it a useful plank in the construction of an ideological counter-order as the inherent problems of maintaining

[40] It is however in our view doubtful that the educated public at Rome, poets included, enjoyed "[eine] große Vertrautheit mit der Aufführung von Zauberritualen", as Kropp 2008b, 66 claims. Ethnographic enquiry shows that all that is required here are stories, rumours and stereotypes, which are anyway the sources from which individual actors drew their inspiration; cf. R.L. Gordon, Lucan's Erictho, in M. and M. Whitby, and P. Hardie (eds.), *Homo Viator (Studies for J. Bramble)* (Bristol 1987) 231–41 at 235f.

[41] Note for example the popular horror at the discovery of some poppets in a city, probably Sardis, during the mid-II^{p} plague (*SEG* 41: 981): F. Graf, An Oracle against Pestilence from a Western Anatolian Town, *ZPE* 92 (1992) 267–79; idem 1996, 150f.; Gordon 1999, 209f.

political and military control over a land-mass as large and diverse as the Empire threatened from the 230s to become insoluble. Traianus Decius' sacrificial edict of late 249 marks a decisive point in the process of representing the unity of the Empire explicitly in symbolic, i.e. religious terms.[42]

It is in this context, for example, that we first find the expression *Romana religio* meaning 'Roman religious practice', i.e. 'Roman religion', which would have been unthinkable two hundred years earlier.[43] The Tetrarchic persecution of Christians (303–12) was likewise prompted by the desire to impose religious unity upon the Empire as a symbol of its political coherence—a last gesture too towards the ancient understanding of a sacrificing polity duly rewarded by divine beneficence.[44] The centrality of warfare throughout the first century of the Late Roman Empire from 284, to say nothing of the Christian claim that all pagan worship was inherently wicked because Devil-inspired, meant that *maleficium* came to play a central role both in constructing the religious component of the politico-social Other (especially for those emperors concerned to keep the Church doctrinally united) and in symbolising the individual ruler's vulnerability to secret machinations.[45] The contribution of M. Victoria Escribano summarises these developments in the political instrumentalisation of *maleficium* as a background to her detailed account of moves in 398, early in the reign

---

[42] G. Alföldy, Die Krise des Imperium Roman und die Religion Roms, in idem (ed.), *Religion und Gesellschaft in der römischen Kaiserzeit. Kolloquium zu Ehren von F. Vittinghoff.* Kölner Historische Abhandlungen 35 (Cologne and Vienna 1989) 53–102; P. Barcelò, Zur Begegnung und Konfrontation von religio Romana und Christentum, in H. Gottlieb and P. Barcelò (eds.), *Christen und Heiden in Staat und Gesellschaft des zweiten bis vierten Jhdts.* (Munich 1992) 151–89; J.R. Rives, The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire, *JRS* 89 (1999) 135–54; H. Leppin, Old Religions Transformed: Religions and Religious Policy from Decius to Constantine, in Rüpke 2007, 96–108.

[43] *Eos, qui Romanam religionem non colunt, debere Romanas caerimonias recognoscere*: *Acta procons. Cypriani* 1.1, p.168 Musurillo (referring to 30 Aug. 257 CE). The phrase is ascribed to Aspanius Paternus, *procos. Africae.*

[44] Cf. E. DePalma Digeser, Religion, Law and the Roman Polity, in C. Ando and J. Rüpke (eds.), *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome*. PAwB 15 (Stuttgart 2006) 68–84 at 72f.

[45] Cf. the excellent accounts by H. Funke, Majestäts- und Magieprozesse bei Ammianus Marcellinus, *JbAC* 10 (1967) 145–75; L. Desanti, Sileat omnibus perpetuo divinandi curiositas: *indovini e sanzioni nel diritto romano*. Pubbl. Fac. giurid. univ. Ferrara² 26 (Milan 1990). An interesting, and limited, exception in fifth-century Alexandria and Berytus is discussed by G. Sfameni Gasparro, Magia e demonologia nella polemica tra cristiani e pagani (V–VI sec.): la *Vita di Severo* di Zaccario Scolastico, *MHNH* 6 (2006) 33–92.

of Arcadius, by the eunuch Eutropius in his campaign against the most extreme of the Anomoean groups, the Eunomians.[46]

Thanks to Theodosius' firm commitment to the Nicene position, supported by the western Church and the Cappadocian fathers, the major internal Arian disputes had been resolved by the Council of Constantinople of 381. Nevertheless, Arianism remained on the political agenda. One of the major inducements to declare the Catholic Church both Nicene and the official Roman state religion was the Arianism of the omnipresent Germanic peoples, by means of which they defined themselves and affirmed their distinctive ethnic identity. It was thus that John Chrysostom, as bishop of Constantinople, forbade the Gothic community to worship in the city, but assigned them the church of St Paul outside the walls, and made repeated efforts to convert them to Nicenism (Theodoret, *HE* 5.30). Escribano shows how Eunomianism threatened first to disrupt the settlement of 381 and then to infiltrate the administration and the imperial guard, causing Theodosius to react in a series of repressive measures, all of which apparently failed to make much impression. Finally, after the fall of Rufinus, the eunuch Eutropius resolved to treat, or threaten to treat, the Eunomians (Eunomius himself had died in 396/7) as sorcerers, perhaps basing himself on the relevant passages of the Pauline *Sententiae* that forbade the mere possession of books of magic. So to fuse the categories of heretic and sorcerer was unprecedented, and evidently unsuccessful: we never hear of anyone being put to death under this legislation, and the Eunomians seem to have continued successfully to infiltrate the central bureaucracy.[47] The paper provides an example of the temptation of using the heaviest hammer available in a context

[46] The paper forms part of a more extensive series on the constellation imperial power and the politics of heresy by the same author: Graciano, Teodosio y el Ilírico: la *constitutio Nullus (locus) haereticis* (*CTh*. 16.5.6. 381), *RIDA* 51 (2004) 133–66; eadem, *De his qui super religione contendunt:* la *constitutio* 16.4.2 (388) del *Codex Theodosianus*, *Antiquité Tardive* 13 (20059 265–79, Disidencia doctrinal y marginación geográfica en el s. IV d.C.: los Exilios de Eunomio de Cízico, *Athenaeum* 94 (2006) 197–227; eadem, Intolerancia y exilio. Las leyes teodosianas contra los eunomianos, *Klio* 89 (2006) 184–208; eadem, La construction de l'image de l'héretique dans le Code Théodosien XVI, in J.N. Guinot and F. Richard (eds.), *Empire chrétien et Église aux IV^e^ et V^e^ siècles: Intégration ou concordat? Le témoignage du Code Théodosien*. Colloque international de Lyon, 6–8 octobre 2005 (Lyon 2008) 389–412.

[47] On Peter Brown's model of late-antique sorcery (Brown 1970), people were able to see that the vested power of the emperor was not in fact threatened by demonic forces, and so had no reason to fear for him.

where criminal legislation was minimally enforceable, thus directly inviting delators to instrumentalise legal dispositions for private ends. It also shows the ease with which one repressive discourse could slide into another.

Revising the Corpus

After the death of Auguste Audollent (1864–1943), no prominent Latin epigrapher followed up his interest in *defixiones*, though M. Besnier completed an additional dossier of 61 texts published between 1899 and the outbreak of the Great War.[48] Indeed, Audollent himself made no effort to continue his corpus, with the exception of the relevant North African texts.[49] Until the late 1960s the major name in the Latin field was probably Rudolf Egger, who deciphered—a trifle optimistically—and commented on several difficult texts.[50] The number of new texts published grew constantly over this period of six decades: whereas in 1904 Audollent could include just over 100 acceptable Latin texts,[51] Emilio García Ruiz (who incorporated *in grandinem* texts) assembled a similar number that had accrued in the period 1904–1966.[52]

---

[48] Besnier 1920. This work was mainly intended as a guide and supplement to Jeanneret's philological study (Jeanneret 1916/17–18).

[49] So far as we know, Audollent's last publications on magical texts were: Tablette magique de Carthage, *CRAI* 1930, 303–9 (= *AE* 1931: 55 = *SEG* 9: 842); *Tabella defixionis*, in *Recueil de mémoires concernant la philologie classique dedié à Paul Thomas* (Bruges 1930) 16–28 (= *AE* 1931: 132); Les inscriptions de la fontaine 'Aux milles lampes' à Carthage, *V^e Congrès intern. d'Archéologie, Alger 1930* (Algiers 1933) 119–38 (= *AE* 1933: 234f.; *SEG* 9: 835, 837 = *SGD* I nos. 138–41); and Double inscription prophylactique contre la grêle, sur une croix de plomb trouvée en Tunisie, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 43. 2 (1939) 45–75 (= *AE* 1939: 136).

[50] E.g. Egger 1926 (= AE 1929: 228), Carnuntum = Egger 1962–63, 1: 81–109; Aus der Unterwelt der Festlandkelten, *Wien.Jahresh.* 35 (1943) 99–132 = Egger 1962–63, 1: 272–312 (Bregenz); Liebeszauber, *JÖAI* 37 (1948) 112–20 (= *AE* 1950: 112, Mautern an der Donau = Egger 1962–63, 2: 24–33); Zu einem Fluchtäfelchen aus Blei, in *Cambodunum Forschungen* 1 (1953) 72–5 (= *AE* 1958: 150 = Egger 1962–63, 2: 247–53, Kempten); Die Fluchtafel von Rom (Deux-Sèvres): ihre Entzifferung und ihre Sprache, *SAWW* 240, 4 (1962) 3–25 (= Egger, 1962–63: 2, 348–69; a version in French in *Ogam* 14 [1962] 431–57). His text of this last, which is in Gaulish, was described by P.-Y. Lambert as "un texte imaginaire": *RIG* 2.2. 294 on his L103.

[51] Audollent actually prints 113 texts in Latin (Kropp 2008b, 30). Jeanneret 1916/17, 225 and Besnier 1920, 5 excluded 10 of these; Kropp excludes *DTAud* nos. 136, 114–20 (2008b, 247).

[52] E. García Ruiz, Estudio lingüistico de las defixiones latinas no incluidas en el Corpus de Audollent, *Emerita* 35 (1967) 55–89 and 219–48 at 56–100 (listing 100 texts of all types since 1904—actually 1899). Note also Solin, *Ostia* 23–31 (listing 48 texts

The 1980s saw a massive increase in the numbers of Latin 'theft texts', now called prayers for justice, the great majority from SW Britain: the excavation of the shrines of Mercury on West Hill above Uley in Gloucestershire by Ann Ellison between 1977 and 1979 produced 168 tablets in varying stages of decay and corrosion,[53] that of the Sacred Spring beneath the King's Bath at Bath in Avon by Barry Cunliffe in 1979–80 around 130, many of them fragmentary, and some apparently uninscribed.[54] The spread of metal-detectors among amateur archaeologists and treasure-hunters (and the provision in some countries of effective heritage-laws that provide an inducement to alert the authorities to new small finds) has led to an increasing rate of reporting and publication of scattered items. As a consequence, the most recent tally of Latin *defixiones*, the data-bank very competently assembled by Amina Kropp and available on CD-Rom in her book on the pragma-linguistics of these texts, has reached 537.[55] Latin *defixiones* thus represent some 33% of the total of published texts of this

since 1914). R. Marichal (with M. Lejeune), Une tablette d'exécration de l'oppidum de Montfo (Hérault), *CRAI* 1981, 41–52 at 46 n. 2 provides a somewhat updated list to 1977.

[53] Woodward and Leach 1993. Uley was among the first British projects to analyse the full range of evidence from a shrine, an enormous task that made possible a relatively dense account of ritual and other activity at a single site over half a millennium. Its historical importance thus extends far beyond our restricted interest in the tablets (cf. the review by A. King, *Britannia* 25 [1994] 347–49). The very first (and very fragmentary) tablet from the site was in fact turned up by ploughing already in 1972 (*AE* 1975: 538). Mark Hassall and Roger Tomlin have published fifteen texts in their annual epigraphic reports from *Britannia* 10 (1979) 341–45 nos. 2–4 onwards (and elsewhere), some 80-odd are mentioned, and some published in full, in Woodward and Leach 1993, esp. 118–26. The earliest datable text seems to be ibid. no. 58: *Mercurio // res id est lanam*, which Tomlin assigns to I^{P}. The final report on the texts is due to appear fairly soon.

[54] B.W. Cunliffe and P. Davenport, *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, 1*: *The Site*. OUCA Monograph 7 (Oxford 1985) 37–45; Tomlin 1988, 59. The site of the temple of Mercury at Pagan's Hill, Chew Stoke, just S. of Bristol, excavated in 1949–52, has now produced three prayers for justice (*Britannia* 15 [1984] 336 nos.7–9, cf. *AE* 1984: 623). At least one other shrine in the area was evidently used for the same purpose (Gloucester/Avon, exact provenance unknown): *AE* 1991: 1167.

[55] Kropp 2008a; cf. 2008b, 30–33; 37. The crude total was 578, of which 41 could be excluded for various reasons (2008b, 247). By excluding 106 recently- or unpublished texts (mainly Mainz, Anna Perenna and Uley), she constructed an effective corpus (C2) of 391 *defixiones*, which formed the basis of her linguistic research. It should however be said that references to the *AE* entry, esp. recent ones, are often missing. A member of our research group in Zaragoza, C. Sánchez Natalías, is currently working on a dissertation likewise focused on the Latin *defixiones*.

type (c. 1600). There are a handful of Republican texts (21);[56] the great majority however can be dated from mid-II^{p} to late III^{p}, thus roughly following the overall epigraphic frequency-graph (despite being only tangentially related to public epigraphic culture).[57] It is this distribution-pattern that lends such significance to the large deposit of lead tablets (many of them just lumps of molten metal) found in 1999/2000 by Gerd Rupprecht, Marion Witteyer and their team in the temenos of the joint temple of Isis and Mater Magna in the centre of Mogontiacum/Lotharpassage, Mainz, since they can be firmly dated to the Flavian-Trajanic period.[58] Seventeen of the more or less legible texts are presented here by Jürgen Blänsdorf with a more extensive commentary than has hitherto been readily available in English.[59]

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of these texts for the themes of the conference. In the first place they constitute by far the

---

[56] In view of its provenance, perhaps the most telling Republican text in Latin is *CIL* I^{2} 3439 = *ILLRP* 1150, a copper plaque from the necropolis of Rheneia (opposite Mykonos), II^{a} (second half). The earliest datable Latin text from Italy itself is *CIL* I^{2} 2541 = *ILLRP* 1147 ('diptych' from Tomb 10 of the Porta Stabiana necropolis at Pompeii, late II^{a}). *CIL* I^{2} 1614 = I^{4} p.1011 = *ILLRP* 1146 (perhaps from Cumae) cannot be much later (traces of Oscan). Seven of the Republican *defixiones* come from Spain (Corduba, Carmona, Emporiae): B. Díaz Ariño, *Epigrafía Latina republicana de Hispania* (Barcelona 2008) 72f. with references.

[57] S. Mrozek, À propos de la répartition chronologique des inscriptions latines dans le haut-Empire, *Epigraphica* 35 (1973) 113–18; more or less the same article with the same title in *Epigraphica* 50 (1988) 61–64. It is by now familiar, however, that epigraphic culture developed, and receded, according to different timetables in different provinces—it is only one index of Romanisation: J. Bodel, The Roman Epigraphic Habit, in idem (ed.), *Epigraphic Evidence: Ancient History from Inscriptions* (London and New York 2001) 1–56 at 6–10; F. Beltrán Lloris, The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman World, in Ch. Bruun and J. Edmonson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy* (Oxford and New York, forthcoming).

[58] M. Witteyer (ed.), *Das Heiligtum für Isis und für Mater Magna* (Mainz 2004); eadem, 2004; 2005. The enclosure lay just off the main thoroughfare leading from the legionary fortress to the bridge over the Main.

[59] Twenty-four (71%) of the thirty-four more or less well-preserved tablets were found in a special shaft behind the shrine of Mater Magna, which, after its original function had been discontinued, was filled with layers of burned ash that also contained charred vegetable offerings, sacrificial remains, turibula and oil-lamps. Texts of ten of them have already appeared in *AE* 2004: 1024–26 and 2005: 1122–28 (from Blänsdorf 2005a, b, c); a further selection, with good colour photos, which we cannot afford, appeared in Blänsdorf 2008. A similar but shorter English account appeared as Blänsdorf 2005b. This contribution appears without the editors' suggested improvements; we have done our best with the English. The final report on the tablets is due to appear in German shortly before the present volume is published: J. Blänsdorf (ed.), *Forschungen zum Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtum, 1: Die Defixionum tabellae des Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna- Heiligtums* (*DTM*). Mainzer Archäologische Schriften 1 (Mainz 2009).

earliest large group of curse-texts known from the Latin-speaking part of the Empire. The complete absence of traces of Graeco-Egyptian magic helps confirm the consensus that the latter tradition was more or less completely unknown (outside Egypt) until, say, late II^{p}. Second, their range and variety indicates that, just as at Bath and Uley, there was no set of pre-existing templates or formulae at the joint shrine of Isis and the Mater Magna, even if certain topoi recur in the longer texts.[60] Eight or nine consist simply of one or more names, or brief injunctions directed to unstated addressees, and are thus to be classed as conventional *defixiones*; yet others explore the metaphoric possibilities offered by the melting-ritual, of reversal, negation, sterility and misfortune; others again deploy a considerable range of themes explicitly linked with the rites of the temple and demonstrating familiarity with specifically Roman votive practice;[61] still others display a convincing grasp of rhetorical, and quasi-legal, expertise.[62] This variety implies not merely that cursing was an acknowledged and widely-understood

[60] Witteyer however emphasises the rule-bound nature of the rituals followed in depositing the tablets (2004, 49; 2005, 118). Two of the three surviving clay poppets had been thrown into a well; the third had been buried with a lead tablet (Blänsdorf 2008, 54 no. 3 = Blänsdorf's no. 10, p. 177 below), a lamp, some fruit and a small pot in a ditch filled with rubbish. They seem to be a little later than the ensemble in the shaft behind the temple; see Witteyer 2004, 43f. with fig. 15; 2005, 109–14 with fig. 3 (p. 110). There is reason to believe that originally many more such poppets were deposited in the temple area, but they have disintegrated.

[61] In some areas, for example the importance of Attis in the cult (who in one text is called the *benedictus*, the 'dear deceased', of Mater Magna), and the imaginative impact of blood-letting, the Mainz texts, and other recently-published *defixiones* from Alcácer do Sal and Groß-Gerau that invoke Attis, are of considerable interest for the history of the provincial cult of the Mater Magna in the late I^{p}/early II^{p}, cf. Alvar 2008, 67f., 70 n. 139, 172 n. 82 etc.; Blänsdorf 2008, 49f. Another text proves that the *archigalli* existed well before the official institution of the Archigallate (Blänsdorf 2008, 60 no. 10).

[62] Take for example the phrase *ut tu me vindices de* in *AE* 2005: 1122 (= Blänsdorf no.7 here): although the dominant meaning of *vindicare* in curse-contexts is certainly 'exact reparation for, avenge' (*OLD* s.v. senses 5, 6) here it inevitably recalls the issue of *vindicatio* in the Roman law of possession and rights to property or goods. The main problem in any dispute over property or goods was to prove that one was the (true) owner (the legal process was called *vindicatio*). With regard to goods and things, if one had neither made them oneself nor captured them in war, but acquired them e.g. by trade, this might be very difficult and involve a virtually endless regress. It would be even more difficult in cases of deposit (i.e. goods voluntarily left with a second party), since the praetor or judge would normally grant possession to the person who had held the goods for the longer period in the past twelve-months (*usucapio*), in this case presumably Ulattius. Here *vindices* surely alludes to the principal's belief that *she* was the rightful owner even though a court might well see the situation differently.

form of religious action (including an appreciation of the conditions under which it might appropriately be resorted to) but that concrete or specific models of how to go about such an enterprise were widespread even within a provincial Roman population (the bulk of the population of Mainz seems to have come from Cisalpina, Lugdunensis and Belgica).[63] Even if, as Versnel and Tomlin argue, they rely upon a belief common to the Mediterranean world—the idea that we can ask the gods for justice—these texts show that even at a single site in Germania Superior there was a wide spectrum of opinion about how best to realise that goal. Although Attis and the Mater Magna do figure in some texts, it seems very unlikely that the institution of cursing was brought to Mainz either by the priests or by the *(archi)galli* and *bellonarii* mentioned in four of them.[64]

The sole Latin texts that can be compared with the most accomplished of the Mainz texts are the five well-known Johns Hopkins texts from Rome (Porta Salaria) or nearby, addressed to Proserpine; and they acquire their rhetorical impetus from the model of the body, whose parts they list.[65] They date from rather less than a century earlier, and, although they are aggressive texts, not prayers for justice, are modelled, at any rate indirectly, on Hellenistic Greek curse-patterns. Those of the Mainz texts concerned with redressing wrongs, such as theft and fraud, also seem to be loosely based on the prayer for justice, but Blänsdorf is at pains to show that the debt is mainly a typological one, and that very few specific themes or details can successfully be explained with reference to models from the eastern Mediterranean. It is rather as if the prayer for justice had already become assimilated into Roman provincial culture, and given way to a vaguer, disseminated, model of how to instrumentalise the gods' general sense of justice for one's own purposes. This is consistent with Tomlin's inference

---

[63] On the composition of the population of Mainz, see K.V. Decker and W. Selzer, Moguntiacum/Mainz von der Zeit des Augustus bis zum Ende der römischen Herrschaft, *ANRW* II.5 (1976) 404–56.

[64] The fact that some of the most important Gaulish texts (e.g. Chamalières, L'Hospitalet-du-Larzac, both datable to I^{p}) are magical documents points to the traditional importance of cursing rituals in this cultural area: C.J. Guyonvarc'h, *Magie, medicine et divination chez les Celtes* (Paris 1997) 179f.; F. Marco Simón, Magia literaria y prácticas mágicas en el mundo romano-céltico, in A. Pérez Jiménez and G. Cruz Andreotti (eds.), *Daímon Páredros. Magos y prácticas mágicas en el mundo grecorromano* (Madrid and Malaga 2002) 189–219.

[65] *CIL* I^{2} 2520 = *AE* 1912: 40, with the commentary by W. Sherwood Fox, The Johns Hopkins University *defixionum tabellae*, *AJPh* 1912 (Suppl.).

that the conditional curse to recover stolen property was introduced into Britain in the (later) I^{p} and had established itself by the time of the *tabula ansata* from Caerleon in South Wales, which is probably to be dated c. 100 CE.[66] Rhetorically, the art lay in representing oneself as the victim of fraud or malice, and in accumulating sufficient imagistic force, normally in the elaboration of the hoped-for punishment, to compel a hearing. In such a context, of course, the other side never has anything to contribute, and is left mute and worsted, whatever the actual complexities of the case. Such curses are thus in a sense similar to the world of real litigation they skirt or duck, with rhetorical skill far outweighing the establishment of facts in deciding the outcome or judgement.

The second group of new texts reported here for the first time in English by Marina Piranomonte is that from the fountain of Anna Perenna and her Nymphs in the extreme north of the Campus Martius (the modern district of Parioli).[67] The discovery of a handful of early objects suggests that the fountain itself was designated as a shrine already in IV–III^{a}. A votive altar and two bases found in the revetment of the trough of the fountain have provided the first evidence of *ludi publici* connected with the shrine, perhaps held on the Ides of March, perhaps at some other point in the year.[68] Though these texts belong to the public religion of Rome in II^{p}, the great majority of the finds in the cistern of the fountain, the votive coins and lamps, perhaps the small wooden plaques too (which were presumably inscribed with messages), relate to another, private, side of Roman religion that presumably continued all through the year, quite independent of the public festival(s). In addition to these offerings, the twenty-one *defixiones* and the twelve containers from the cistern contribute yet another aspect of instrumental religion, the use of divine power to harm one's enemies (though it seems probable that one or two of the eight commented on here by J. Blänsdorf are not curses, but appeals for aid.)[69] One of the texts, in markedly Vulgar Latin, seems to date from II–III^{p}; all

[66] *RIB* 323, cf. Tomlin 1988, 61 no. 29; 99; and p. 253 n. 14 in this volume.

[67] The final report is due to be published at about the same time as the present volume appears.

[68] The revised paper reached the executive editor after the editorial process had finished and is printed here with only the most necessary editorial amelioration.

[69] Blänsdorf's nos. 4 and 5. A few of the lamps have a direct relation to the *defixiones*, as at Mainz, but such objects are a very common form of 'general votive' and the majority, like the coins, should be considered as such.

the others so far deciphered, though written in different registers of Latin, can be dated to the Late-Roman period, IV^{p} (second half). Just as at Mainz, the finds show that, even within the category 'inscribed texts', there was no single, widespread model of how to invoke divine power to harm one's enemies. At the level of technique, one might simply choose to prepare one's own lead-tablet by hammering it out cold, inscribing it and throwing it into the cistern accompanied by the appropriate ritual, as at Bath (cf. Tomlin 1988, 81–84); one could make tiny lead plaques, inscribe them, and fit them into the nozzle of a lamp, as a metonym of the transfer of the message into the hands of the Nymphs; one could 'presentify' (rather than conjure) the daemon envisaged by drawing an image of him or it ferrying the victim's name away (as in the *PGrMag*); or one could commission an elaborate set of containers from a specialist practitioner, who in this case would prepare a poppet enclosed around a sliver of bone; one could go even further and enclose the poppet in a lead carapace, subject it to a dumb-show of being devoured by a snake, and drive nails through it, all as deictic acts to convey to the other world the principal's wishes. At the linguistic level, one could confine oneself simply to naming a name (and perhaps distorting, or disturbing, it as a deictic model or pre-scription); proceed to deploy certain declaratives, words of dedication, devotion, consignment; add key religious terms, *rogo, petere, divinum*; and finally compose a regular malign prayer that includes all these more elementary ideas. These variations, like those of the Latinity, suggest that most of the texts, except the possible requests for help and at least some of the containers, represent, like those at Mainz, attempts by individuals to get even with enemies, those who have wronged or cheated them.

The great interest of the find, though, is its late date. Although a considerable number of late-Roman pagan *defixiones* are now known, they tend to be focused on public spectacles, charioteering and *venationes*.[70] The Porta S. Sebastiano group, which was found in a tomb, and is exclusively the work of one or more Greek-speaking specialist practitioners drawing on Graeco-Egyptian models, provides in fact the closest parallel to some at least of the late-IV^{p} *defixiones* from the Fountain, not merely in the possible invocation of Seth but also in

[70] See Table 3 in Tremel 2004, 39.

the role of images in the production of curses.[71] Without following Fernández Nieto in his thesis of semantic vacancy, we may note that the canisters imply a shift of assumed efficacy from written text to indicative or deictic performance, ranging from the extreme, almost obsessive, care with which the poppets are sequestered (i.e. indicatively removed from normal social bonds) to the preference for 'imperative illustration' and 'vertical writing', the written text shrivelling to the status of a mere identifier of the victim. Given the logorrhoea of the Porta S. Sebastiano group, we should not make too much of this shift; the differences between the individual *PGrMag* formularies clearly show that images might play quite different roles in the praxis of different Graeco-Egyptian practitioners (and in the preferences of collectors of recipes). Nevertheless the shift at the nymphaeum away from inscribed text as *the* effective cursing mode in favour of alternatives seems suggestive in the wider context of the long retreat both from public epigraphic culture (except at the level of the administration) and from personal literacy.

There is a further similarity between Porta Sebastiano and the *defixiones* from the Fountain, namely the complete absence of appeal to Christian formulae. One might be tempted to argue that the material from the Anna Perenna site, both coin-offerings and *defixiones*, provides fresh evidence for the 'basic' paganism of the mass of the population, not subjected to the patronage pressures effective on great estates, long after much of the élite had declared itself Christian.[72] However, in

[71] Wünsch 1898 = *DTAud* 140–87; cf. A. Mastrocinque, Le *defixiones* di Porta S. Sebastiano, *MHNH* 5 (2005) 45–60; G. Bevilacqua, Le *Ninfe Ephydriades* nelle Sethianorum Tabellae di Roma, in *L'Italia centro e meridionale tra Repubblica e Primo Impero. Alcuni aspetti culturali e istitutuzionali. Giornata di studio, Roma 13 dic. 2002* = *Opuscula Epigraphica* 11 (2003) 65–74. Wünsch estimated that there had originally been about 60 defixiones in this group, of which he was able to publish thirty-four (1898, 5). Sporadic finds of Egyptian-made wine-amphorae at Rome, the latest from a VII^{p} context in the Crypta Balbi site (also at Ostia, Naples and several other places) attest to commercial links with Italy continuing into the late-Roman period: P. Arthur, Eastern Mediterranean Amphorae between 500–700: A View from Italy, in L. Saguì (ed.), *Ceramica in Italia: VI–VII secolo. Atti del Convegno in onore di John W. Haynes, Roma 11–13 maggio 1995* (Florence 1998) 157–84 at 163.

[72] The extent of Christianisation even of the Roman senatorial élite in the later IV^{p} is admittedly highly contentious; compare G. Clemente, Christianesimo e classi dirigenti prima e dopo Costantino, *Mondo classico e cristianesimo: Atti del convegno Roma 1980* (Rome 1982) 51–64 (Christian majority by 384) with A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike* (Munich 1989) 287 (pagan majority still in 394–5). Kahlos 2007, 36 has recently suggested that it is the undecided, her *incerti*, who were in the majority in 384.

view of Augustine's remarks on 'double-hearted' Christians, who fall back on pagan remedies when they or their relatives fall sick (*In Epist. Joh.* 7.7), and the late fifth-century dispute of Gelasius, bishop of Rome (492–96), with the *patroni*, the members of the Christian Roman elite who, allegedly under pressure from the rabble, wished to continue the celebration of the annual Lupercalia,[73] it may be preferable to reckon in terms of *ad hoc* roles and crisis situations, for which pagan models were available but as yet no Christian ones. The fact that extremely few Christian *defixiones* of this period are known from Rome may only mean that the type of text familiar from the Coptic evidence was simply not being written there.

His regular surveys in *Britannia* of new British epigraphical finds, together with his exemplary publication of the tablets from the shrine of Sulis Minerva at Bath, and his continuing work on the Uley texts, have given Roger Tomlin an unrivalled knowledge of the range of British curse-texts, above all the prayers for justice (thefts). Here he takes the opportunity of exploring the parallels between the latter and a small group of Iberian texts, through the genre of which he is master, the pithy epigraphic commentary. Apart from improving the readings, his contribution raises two important issues: are the similarities between these texts so marked as to imply specific, even identifiable, colporteurs, or have we merely to do with a wide-spread belief in the possibility of de-randomising divine justice and exploiting the gods' sense of moral indignation here and now, in this specific case?[74] If the latter, how are we to explain the very variable survival of prayers for justice, which (to speak only of the western Empire) are uncommon in Italy and the Danube area, barely exist in the Gauls or North Africa, or, until the find at Mainz, in the Germanies, but are relatively widespread—are indeed far more common than straight *defixiones* (of which there are only six)—in Britain south of Watling Street? As Versnel also

[73] Gelasius, *Adversum Andromachum* with G. Pomarès, *Gélase 1^er^, Lettre contre les Lupercales et dix-huit messes du Sacramentaire leonine* (Paris 1965) 20–51; N. McLynn, Crying Wolf: The Pope and the Lupercalia, *JRS* 98 (2008) 165–75.

[74] In Tomlin 1988, 73, he suggests that the persistence of some formulas, such as *si servus si liber, si vir si femina* etc., from the second century to the fourth, indicates that they arrived in the first century CE together with the idea of inscribed curse tablets, and survived as an oral tradition—there are simply too many variants of formulae to support the idea of hand-books. From that perspective, such texts are clearly also an aspect of Romanisation, cf. M. Feugère et al., Signes de la Romanisation, *RAN* 31 (1998) 299–353.

points out, occasional references to the model of the petition may offer an important clue here: perhaps recourse to the prayer for justice implies the transfer to the divine world of the model of administration that underlies the institution of the petition, namely that of a rational, legal-bureaucratic administrative power which nevertheless requires to be influenced and (re-)directed.[75] Plausible though the suggestion is, it does not take us very far, since the petition was an Empire-wide institution, the prayer for justice not. Are we then to look for specific local conditions? What might they look like? Mattingly for example sees in the British prayers for justice (virtually all of which, insofar as they are prior to the *constitutio Antoniniana*, seem to be by non-citizens) as evidence for a sharp divergence between military and civilian religious cultures (granted that our impression of the latter is heavily slewed in favour of Hadrian's Wall).[76] Were there equivalents of Bath and Uley all over the western Empire, which have simply never been found? It seems possible, but perhaps now unlikely.[77]

The last paper in this section is devoted to a survey of recently published (and still unpublished) prayers for justice, some Greek, others in Latin, by H.S. Versnel, again reminding us that the work of revising the Corpus is never-ending. One of his main objectives here is to test whether some at least of the recent finds of curse-texts fit his category, which of course they do. Some of his texts overlap with Tomlin's, which is a reasonable indication that the analysis works. At the same time more than half of the selected new texts fall into his 'mixed' category, texts that occupy the 'border-area' between *defixiones* and prayers for justice. This has prompted Versnel to tackle his second objective, which is to clarify his understanding both of the relation between straight *defixiones* and prayers for justice, and to develop a story about the historical emergence of the latter. Instead of imagining

---

[75] Miss Reynolds has criticised Tomlin's thesis that many of the words in the Bath texts have a legal flavour (1990, 381). However, various parallels in their language to the Germanic law-codes of a century later, e.g. *Pactus Legis Salicae*, have been noted by J.N. Adams, British Latin: The Text, Interpretation and Language of the Bath Curse Tablets, *Britannia* 23 (1992) 1–26 at 26. Since there can be no question of a direct relationship, it seems likely that "both sets of documents were… drawing on the sort of phraseology used in late antiquity in quasi-legalistic discussions of theft and its consequences".

[76] D. Mattingly, Being Roman: Expressing Identity in a Provincial Setting, *JRA* 17 (2004) 5–25 at 20f.

[77] "It is at present tempting to regard Britain as a little 'special' in its preoccupations": Reynolds 1990, 381.

two different forms of curse-tablets with an intermediate 'muddled' group between, he now thinks in terms of a continuum whose poles are formed by two ideal-types of text, the one represented by a synthesis of the litigation- and spectacle-*defixiones*, the other by a synthesis of the texts from Cnidus and Bath. Moreover, his own later work, and suggestions by others, have contributed to refining the ideal-typical features of the prayer for justice, for example in stressing the role of legal or quasi-legal language, the model of the ἔντευξις, the petition as a key institution in communicating with bureaucracy and contingent political authorities, the role of calculated or rhetorically-convincing emotion in the expression of these texts.

The idea of a continuum allows Versnel to move beyond his discussion of intermediate types in his main earlier discussion of these texts,[78] to the point where he can offer a story about development: the initial prayers for justice in the mid-Hellenistic period developed out of the regular *defixio* but feature a strongly-marked inclination to self-justification and revenge for social embarrassment. The prayer proper however emerged somewhat later, from the context of temple-religion: its model was probably not the *defixio* but the conditional self-curse, or perhaps grave-curses, which are likewise attempts to use religious means of preventing wickedness directed against ego. The appearance of 'in-between' texts during the Imperial period, such as many of the Mainz texts, is the result of attempting to lend the prayer additional rhetorical—or shall we say illocutionary—force by employing features that belong to the ideal-type *defixio*. It is however not appropriate to offer a set of purely linguistic or textual differentia: the same, or very similar, language conceals quite different socio-religious aims, which ought to be the real object of our analyses. There is finally a third objective, which is to argue against the idea, which has been defended again recently, that objects and persons 'handed over' to the addressee(s) are being vowed rather than ceded.[79] They are in fact being rendered—albeit informally—*sacer*, the property of the god, whose responsibility they are now to be. But, as Tomlin noted in the

[78] H.S. Versnel, Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 60–106.

[79] Criticism of P. Kiernan, Britische Fluchtafeln und „Gebete um Gerechtigkeit" als öffentliche Magie und Votivrituale, in K. Brodersen and A. Kropp (eds.), *Fluchtafeln: Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt a.M. 2004) 99–114.

case of the Bath texts, there is a good deal of uncertainty about quite what 'ceding' might amount to in practice (1988, 70).

The Pragmatics of Execration

Of the numerous types of magical action in the Roman world, we can define malign and aggressive magic as the attempt, within culturally-specific contexts, to channel divine power, in its morally-ambivalent mode, in the pursuit of ego's immediate situational interests; the prayer for justice is basically the same effort, but addressed to a divinity overtly conceived or rather represented as a moral instance. If the basis of social order is the successful integration of individual situational interests into collective consensus, malign and aggressive magic can conveniently stand for its inverse (as we have already noted), while prayers for justice, irrespective of their *de facto* aims, make an effort to slip under the wire of integration. Although the individual who has recourse to malign or aggressive magic always has a personal justification or rationalisation of his or her choice (the opponent's judicial trickery, faithless husband or lover, 'love', fear of losing wagered money…), the more or less negative socio-moral location of such acts requires special linguistic and ritual strategies, which, in broad outline, are available as culturally-specific stereotypes that can be locally adapted and embroidered as seems good. The formulas used in Greek *defixiones* already attracted the attention of the Polish scholar E.G. Kagarow shortly after the Great War, and individual editors, notably Tomlin in relation to the Bath and Uley texts, have perforce occupied themselves with particular patterns.[80] Their characteristic features have however not yet been studied by a professional linguist. Stimulated by Tambiah's stress on the combination of language and practical action in magical contexts, and eager to avoid a purely symbolic approach to magical utterance,[81] Amina Kropp suggests the application of Searle's

[80] E.G. Kagarow, *Griechische Fluchtafeln*. Eos Supplementa 4 (Lwow and Paris 1929) 29–44; Tomlin 1988, 63–73.

[81] Tambiah 1968; idem 1973; idem 1979. Tambiah's main explicanda however were Malinowskian 'coral garden' magic and medical magic: "the rite consists in persuasively transferring the properties of the desired and desirable… to the other… or in attempting to convert a potential, not-yet-achieved state into an actualized one" (1985, 72). Execration was not part of his agenda.

modified Austinian approach specifically to the Latin curse-tablets.[82] As is well-known, linguistic pragmatics conceives various types of utterance as performative acts, as properly intelligible only in (a specific) social context. Her starting-point therefore is that instead of concentrating on what appears on the tablet—the utterance—we should regard it as simply an aspect of a wider communicative event, the ritual, to which overt allusion may or may not be made. This allows her to make further distinctions that have not hitherto been generally made, for example between the act of binding or piercing and that of committing or transferring the target to the implicit or explicit addressee(s).

Kropp argues that the 'manipulation formula' functions *ex opere operato*, whereas the committal is normally to an addressee, who is then responsible for fulfilling the curse. In either case, the tablet is to be understood as a metaphor for the target; the psychological advantage of committal is that responsibility for the event is devolved onto the divine sphere. Her main interest however is in the manipulation formula, which she treats as a declarative (which in pragma-linguistic terms effect changes in status). Searle himself has always left religious declaratives carefully alone; Kropp suggests that we need a new subclass of declaratives to cover curses of this kind, which she proposes to call transformatives, utterances that lose their message character and themselves cause changes (i.e. *ex opere operato*). Her model here is the acknowledged autonomy of the evil eye, which is the ideal-type of unmediated magical communication.[83] Though she does not allude to it, this approach recalls Marco Simón's invocation of the African social anthropologists' distinction between witchcraft and sorcery, and likewise one of Versnel's criteria for distinguishing between prayers for justice and 'straight' *defixiones*. Kropp apparently sees her transformatives as covering the entire class of curses, and sees no fundamental difference here between prayers for justice and *defixiones*. The prayer or 'complaint' form is merely a different legitimation-strategy.

It is implicit in Tambiah's performative account that magical utterance is simply one form of religious utterance, which is in turn simply

[82] Her paper is in effect an English summary of her thesis, Kropp 2008b.

[83] Cf. V. Chryssanthropolou, The Evil Eye among the Greeks of Australia: Identity, Continuity and Modernization, in J.C.B. Petropoulos (ed.), *Greek Magic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (London and New York 2008) 106–18.

an aspect of the much larger class of performatives.[84] Kropp's strategy seems to be to try and preserve the specificity of the category magic by identifying a core or 'real' form that effects real-world changes *ex opere operato*.[85] Whether the notion of 'transformatives' is robust enough to support a substantive definition of this type remains to be seen; but we can certainly welcome the detailed scrutiny of Latin execration-language that she has undertaken.[86]

A further example of the potential gain here is the discussion by Faraone and Kropp of one of the idiosyncrasies of the Mainz texts, the use of compounds of the verb *vertere*, in particular the past participle passive of *avertere*, in a figurative or metaphoric sense. In Attic curses of the fourth century BCE one of the models for effective cursing was to simulate, virtually enact, through the manipulation of script, the reversal of the fortunes—or even death—of the *defictus* or suspect. A similar device is found occasionally in *defixiones* and 'prayers for justice' in the Roman world, a cluster of them in Germania, including Mainz. Here however we find more than a symmetrical relation between text and malign wish. What seems to interest the authors of these texts about the idea of reversal is its possibilities as a figure of speech, hinting at, but not stating, the desire that the victim shall be injured or die. Picking up an idea put forward by Rudolf Egger in the 1940s, they suggest that it was the range of meanings offered by words such as *averse* that facilitated this shift towards the idea of the destruction or even death of the target. The clear implication is that effective curse-models were widely spread in the population, and that they were subject to imaginative variation given the needs of the case. There is no slavish adherence to a model, written or other. This conclusion is

[84] Tambiah 1973, 218–27 = 1985, 77–84. In idem 1979, Tambiah lists three senses in which he considers ritual performative: as conventional acts, as intensified communication, and as configurational patterning; cf. Smith 1995, 15 = 2004, 217, also A. Deremetz, La prière en représentation à Rome. De Mauss à la pragmatique contemporaine, *RHR* 211.1 (1994) 141–65.

[85] Tambiah himself strongly rejected this common actors' view of the matter: 1968: 184f. = 1985, 28f.

[86] A non-linguistic, rhetorico-moral approach by an anthropologist in A.B. Weiner, From Words to Objects to Magic: Hard Words and the Boundaries of Social Interaction, *Man* 18 (1983) 690–709. Note also K.B. Stratton, Curse Rhetoric and the Violence of Identity in Early Judaism and Christianity, in Z.A. Crook and P.A. Harland (eds.), *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others. Essays in Honour of S.G. Wilson*. New Testament Monographs 18 (Sheffield 2007) 18–30.

reinforced by the fact that the shifts occur over a very wide area, from central Italy, to the extreme west of Gaul (where we find a further imaginative variation, the use of a dead or tortured puppy to show the divinities what punishment to inflict), as well as on the Rhine. In some ways, this rhetorical approach seems to us perhaps a more promising way forward than the idea of performativity, picking up as it does Tambiah's suggestion that magic typically exploits the expressive properties of language, notably metaphor and metonymy (1985, 37).

As historians, we are naturally rather more interested in another sense of pragmatics, namely the social locations and uses of execration not sanctioned by a recognized social instance. There are several different types of questions here. Is there any particular rationale to be found in the genres of *defixiones*, apparently beginning with the judicial type, much later extending to competitive sports? Given the existence of a wide-ranging discourse of magical power in antiquity, why is the range so limited? Why did aggressive (i.e. non-execrative) magic, particularly amatory and relationship magic, and later the prayer for justice, adopt the convention of the lead-tablet? How far did the democratic structure and ideology of classical Athenian society favour resort to judicial execration? Why is resort to judicial execration comparatively rare in the Roman Empire? Are *defixiones* typically employed by the comparatively powerless in a given social situation? To what extent is recourse to magical action in this area a means of accommodation to socio-political change? The reticence of our texts is of course a massive hindrance to answering such questions; but that should stimulate the search for new strategies rather than cause us to abandon the attempt to historicise. The most promising method is no doubt to focus on the place of magical action in a specific periods, places or discourses, such as classical Athens, the early Principate, early Christian debates and views, or fourth-century Syria.[87] The monograph focused on a single place and/or period stands the best chance of making interesting connections.

The essential preliminary to such enquiries, however, remains the traditional broadly-based epigraphic commentary of the type offered

[87] Athens, e.g. C.A. Faraone, Aeschylus' ὕμνος δέσμιος (*Eum*. 306) and Attic judicial curse-tablets, *JHS* 105 (1985) 150–4; R.C.T. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford 2005) 116–35; Eidinow 2007; Stratton 2007, 39–69; early Principate: Garosi 1976, 13–93; Marco Simón 2001; Dickie 2001, 124–201; Christians: Stratton 2007, 107–41; Clerc 1995, 239–321; Syria: Trzcionka 2007.

by F. Marco Simón.[88] Perhaps the most famous *defixiones* from Spain are the three opisthographic tablets found by Martín Almagro in a necropolis outside Ampurias. On their publication in 1952, it was immediately recognised that they mention members of the Flavian senatorial aristocracy. Their interest however is not matched by their clarity; many different scenarios have been proposed for them. Marco Simón, who has looked once again at the originals and here publishes fresh photographs of them, not only offers a detailed new commentary (where he supports the suggestions made by the editors of *IRC* 3 about the interests of the principal) but provides a range of contexts, proximate and more distant in time and space, for this attempt to resist constituted authority—concretely, to halt Roman interference, in the aftermath of the Vespasianic grant of the *ius Latii*, in what we may take to be traditional, or at any rate, extant, property régimes around Emporiae.

The reported use of malign magic against members of the élite of course slips straight into a trope (the vulnerability of the eminent to envy), and as such may be exploited in a variety of ways: in relation to the deaths of monarchs, for example, it mainly aids in resolving the enduring tension between the frailty of the person and the political necessity of the institution; but it may also confirm the desirability of institutionalised privilege by insinuating that only the Great suffer Tragedy; or underscore the malignity of Fate, thus uncoupling God from the responsibility; and many other ends. The death of Germanicus is a case in point: reports of human bones and tablets provide far more than a mere explanation of a death. But other uses of malign magic against constituted authority invite us to reflect, as Marco Simón does, on the evidence they provide of conflicting perceptions of the rights and wrongs of the same events: both acts of malign magic and accusations emerge not from "malignity"—though the targets vigorously claim as much—as from conflicts over interests.

A failure to recognise the inherently conflictual background of the mainly wretched evidence we dispose of (what after all does a *defixio* tell us that is of any great importance?—the context, the details of the conflict, the affair, the situation: all that is almost always "off-screen")

[88] Note also his joint paper with I. Rodà de Llanza, Sobre un *defixio* de Sisak (Croacia) al dios fluvial *Savus* con mención del hispano L. Licinius Sura, *MHNH* 8 (2008) 99–126.

is the main weakness of Faraone's conception of *defixiones* (which was actually devised for fourth-century Athens) as "pre-emptive strikes" against the background of a generally eristic public culture.[89] Pre-emptive to what?, one asks. That litigation-*defixiones* were intended to shut opponents' mouths in court is obvious; such an aim cannot be fulfilled retrospectively. Emphasising "pre-emptive" simply ignores the realities of (in this case) Athenian legal institutions, the absence of qualified presiding judges, the central roles of fabrication of 'evidence' and misrepresentation by σύνδικοι and μαρτύρες, favour and influence, but also the entire narrative of preceding events, the complex of actions, arguments and justifications that preceded the deposition of any particular *defixio* that we happen to be looking at, which may well have continued over years, and that we know all too well from the legal speeches of Lysias, Demosthenes, Isaeus and the others.[90] That is, as well as having a pragmatic intention within the tacit usages of local religion (and no one uses an appeal to such powers, whether we call them chthonic or demonic, to avenge an insult, even one that a Martial would be proud of: resort to malign magic has its own calibrations of measure, which need close attention), malign magic in the context of litigation is a communicative form which implicitly tells us just as much a story about 'justice' as prayers for justice do in relation to theft and other forms of suffered wrong. We can only guess what that might have been at Emporiae, but these three small tablets imply a long struggle between a complex of different interests which Roman authority is on the point of resolving—or has already resolved—where 'justice', at any rate in the eyes of one person, or one group-interest, has not been done, and indeed never could be, either because the issues were too intractable to be resolved by a merely human decision or because it was suspected that the 'others' had used (more, or higher) 'gifts' and bribery of witnesses to obtain a favourable judgement. The rationality of judicial magic is invariably a function of the quality of the justice available within the judicial system and the degree of con-

[89] C.A. Faraone, The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 3–32. On the limitations of the evidence provided by *defixiones*, cf. Eidinow 2007, 146–225.

[90] On the realities of the Athenian judicial system, see R.G. Osborne, Law in Action in Classical Athens, *JHS* 105 (1985) 40–58; S.C. Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law* (Oxford 1993).

ceptual unclarity, arbitrariness, social leverage and corruption prevalent in it.

Protective, eudaemonic and apotropaic

Although in the modern literature on (Graeco-)Roman magical practice it is malign and aggressive magic and prayers for justice, for which there is relatively interesting epigraphic evidence, that have attracted most attention, by far the commonest types of magical practice in antiquity were in a broad sense protective: medical, apotropaic or eudaemonic. Evidence for such practice is widely scattered over a variety of genres, but has suffered from the excessive interest of an older generation of writers on folklore and 'superstition', for whom such material served a variety of largely discredited ideological interests. Nevertheless there has been considerable advance in two areas, the study of amuletic gems, for which a fair number of well-prepared museum catalogues are now available,[91] and the collection of phylacteries inscribed on precious metal and bronze.[92] The final section of the volume is devoted to an effort to encourage discussion of this type of praxis. The variety of the genres considered, nails in funerary contexts, amulets against disaster at sea, personal eudaemonic entreaty, and a sequence devoted to late-antique/early medieval Christian magic, is matched by the diversity of approaches.[93] It is here too that as editors

---

[91] *SMA*; A. Delatte & P. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes. Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles et Antiques* (Paris 1964); F.M. Schwartz & J.H. Schwartz, Engraved Gems in the Collection of the American Numismatic Society,1: Ancient Magical Amulets, *Museum Notes. The American Numismatic Society* 24 (1979) 149–97; H. Philipp, *Mira et Magica: Gemmen im Ägyptischen Museum der Staatlichen Museen · Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Charlottenburg* (Mainz 1986); E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette u.a. Gemmen des Instituts für Altertumskunde der Universität zu Köln*. Papyrologica Coloniensia 20 (Opladen 1992); S. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum* (eds. P. and H. Zazoff) (London 2001); eadem, *Bunte Steine—Dunkle Bilder: Magische Gemmen (Ausstellungskatalog)* (Munich 2001); eadem, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bilder und Zauberformeln auf geschnittenen Steinen der Antike und Neuzeit*. Studien aus dem Warburg-Haus 7 (Berlin 2004); Mastrocinque 2002.

[92] Kotansky *GMA*; cf. idem, 1991. Kotansky's commentaries are invariably illuminating; it is very much to be regretted that the second part, phylacteries on lead, stone and papyrus, has never appeared.

[93] Regrettably, no contributor discusses a medical-magical theme, despite the central importance in antiquity of this type of praxis; cf. recently N. Palmieri (ed.), *Rationnel et irrationel dans la médécine ancienne et médiévale: Aspects historiques, scientifiques et culturels* (St. Étienne 2003); F. Gaide, Usages de la parole dans les

we have experienced the greatest problems in persuading contributors to comment explicitly on the specific issue of the distinctiveness of western practice.

Most of the contributions to the volume concentrate on literary or epigraphic evidence; we therefore welcomed the offer by Silvia Alfayé to contribute a piece on the practice, relatively widespread in the western Empire from I[a]–II[p], of depositing (iron) nails in tombs, often, though not predominantly, children's or infants' tombs. This phenomenon attracted attention already in the 1820s, and has long since evoked two competing explanations: that the nails are apotropaic, intended to safeguard the dead from harm in the Afterlife; or that they are defensive/protective, intended to protect the living from visitation by the dead in the form of spirits, δαίμονες, φάσματα, *lemures*, *larvae* etc. Most scholars, then and now, prefer the first explanation, since the 1960s the second has become fairly fashionable. Alfayé's point however is that in most cases, apart from the extreme of violence against the corpse, driving nails through parts of the skeleton, there is no satisfactory means of deciding between them, so that it is preferable to see them as complementary, the one not excluding the other; and allowing that there may well have been several other (local) funerary practices involving nails that, for lack of evidence and satisfactory interpretative hypotheses, have been quietly forgotten. The model we use ought to start from the assumption that such rituals were grounded in a variety of ideas, fears and hopes relating to the deceased. It must however be said that there is little Graeco-Roman evidence in favour of the idea that the dead might be in need of protection in the tomb; it seems to be one of those assumptions brought into the discussion by armchair anthropologists; the overwhelmingly dominant tone of Greek and Latin epitaphs is that nothing can affect the dead. The most important implications of Alfayé's paper however are, first, that our appreciation of such practices is extremely selective, conditioned by apriorisms, with numerous tricky cases simply bracketed out or elided; second, that in the absence of explicit and clearly relevant textual evidence, even consciously symbolic archaeology rapidly comes up against its interpretative limits; and third, that local practice and rationalisation

---

precationes, *carmina* et *incantamenta* des textes thérapeutiques latins, in J.-F. Cottier (ed.), *La prière en Latin, de l'antiquité au XV[e] siècle: Formes, évolutions, significations* (Turnhout 2006) 107–18.

are decisive factors, thus inevitably setting limits to the validity of simple general explanations.

Another form of protective magic widespread in the archaeological record is the amulet. Generally speaking, classical archaeologists have been inclined to treat engraved gems (intaglios), especially those set in finger-rings, primarily in utilitarian terms, as seals.[94] However, the evidence of the Graeco-Roman Lapidaries, the 'Books of Stones', suggests that this may be only part of the truth. These are the survivors of a large ancient literature, mainly in Greek, but also in Latin, most familiar to us through Pliny's *HN* Bk 37, that described the marvellous properties, medicinal and magical, of precious and semi-precious stones.[95] Taking as his example a brief Greek text, of Byzantine date but based on earlier materials, which lists seven semi-precious stones that protect the wearer against dangers at sea, Sabino Perea argues that the instructions, which include engraving a given gem with images of Poseidon or Amphitrite, support the idea that finger-rings with mythological images may have been intended (also) to act as amulets, on the principle of the implicit *historiola*, the mythic narrative applied as a statement of a norm to a specific moment of adversity or calamity.[96]

These texts, which include *Cyranides* Bk 1, also provide insights into the implicit logic governing the choice and empowerment of amuletic gems. Stones, we might say, can be seen as a contested frontier between

---

[94] Gems and finger rings: cf. e.g. F.H. Marshall, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings, Greek Etruscan and Roman, in the British Museum* (London 1907); H.B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems and Cameos, Greek, Etruscan and Roman, in the British Museum* (London 1924); G.M.A. Richter, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems, Greek, Etruscan, Roman: Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Rome 1956); J. Boardman and M.-L. Vollenweider, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems and Finger-rings in the Ashmolean Museum, 1* (Oxford 1978); the four vols. of *AGDS*; P. Zazoff, *Die antiken Gemmen* (Munich 1983); J. Spier, *Ancient Gems and Finger-Rings: Catalogue of the J. Paul Getty Collection* ('Malibu' CA 1992); M. Henig and A. MacGregor, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems and Finger-rings in the Ashmolean Museum, 2: Roman* (Oxford 2004); also: Á.M. Nagy, *Daktylios pharmakites.* Magical Healing Gems and Rings in the Graeco-Roman world, in C. Burnett & I. Csepregi-Vardabasso (eds.), *Ritual Healing in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages* (London 2009).

[95] M. Wellmann, Die Stein- und Gemmenbücher der Antike, in *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Medizin* 4. 4 (1935) 86–110. The surviving texts of the Greek lithic writers are collected by R. Halleux and J. Schamp, *Les lapidaires grecques* (Coll. Budé) (Paris 1985, repr. 2003); Cyranides Bk. 1: M. Waegeman, *Amulet and Alphabet: Magical Amulets in the first Book of Cyranides* (Amsterdam 1987).

[96] J. Podemann Sørensen, The Argument in Ancient Egyptian Magical Formulae, *Acta Orientalia* 45 (1984) 5–19; D. Frankfurter, Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells, in *AMRP* 457–76.

the 'interesting' and the 'uninteresting' natural worlds, between the world that can successfully be invested with a divine dimension and that which is simply given, between the world that can be positively instrumentalised and that which cannot. It is of course the colours, markings and light-textures of precious and semi-precious stones that grant them this frontier-role; working from the marvellous powers of the magnet and the coral, acknowledged by all, the authors of the Lapidary tradition sought to integrate stones into the more familiar world of plant and animal remedies. In this effort, some writers drew heavily upon the *abnu šikinšu* tradition, the Babylonian lapidaries, which became available in Greek with the opening up of Mesopotamia to Greek culture in the Seleucid period. It was along this fault-line, between 'traditional' Graeco-Roman ideas of useful stones, and the 'Magian' tradition, that Pliny, and no doubt many others, marked the difference between sound (medical) lore and magic. The argument was thus not about 'superstition', but about admissible or entertainable degrees of the marvellous: are there limits to the transformations that Nature can achieve?

Beyond that, the lithic tradition is an excellent example of the type of Hellenistic-Roman didactic erudition to which Mario Vegetti has drawn attention, intended primarily for the instruction and entertainment of a class of leisured readers rather than to provide practical, usable information.[97] It is of the essence of this literature that its ideological aims dominate the diverse materials collected and of course their selection and treatment of sources: each genre developed an appropriate discourse that governed the range of what must and what might be claimed, and governed the occlusions and silences that sustained its credibility as a discourse.[98] These features of didactic literature imply that it is no easy or straightforward matter to move back from a literary claim to practical or real-world belief. Not only do the

[97] M. Vegetti, La scienza ellenistica: problemi di epistemologia storica, in G. Giannantoni and M. Vegetti, *La scienza ellenistica*. Collana Elenchos 9 (Pavia 1984) 427–70; cf. Pecere and Stramaglia 1996. On occultism, A.J. Festugière. *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, 1: l'astrologie et les sciences occultes*[2] (Paris 1944, repr. 1950.; again 1986, 2006) remains fundamental; note also K. Alpers, Untersuchungen zum griechischen Physiologus und den Kyraniden, *Vestigia Bibliae* 6 (1984) 13–87.

[98] Cf. the essays in J. König and T. Whitmarsh (eds.), *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge 2007), none of which however deals specifically, or even tangentially, with occultist discourse.

internal dynamics of the discourse insulate claims from all 'empirical' interrogation but contextualised or context-specific, locally-limited claims or beliefs acquire general or universal validity. Such considerations also apply to apparently or overtly practical collections of occultic material such as the magical papyri.

Amulets are theoretically interesting because they seem to offer not merely a means of escaping calamities but also a long-term promise of well-being, what we might call eudaemonic magic. Investment in an expensive gem attracts divine benevolence in special measure. The key move surely lay in the claim that ritual praxis could confer a special status on the amulet. The chance discovery in 2005 by a team under Dominique Joly of a set, or a series, of small *turibula*, stands for burning incense or possibly small offerings of other kinds, in a domestic cellar in Autricum/ Chartres, all inscribed with a prayer for blessings addressed to the *omnipotentia numina*, raises a similar point. The author, C. Verius Sedatus, clearly was a man of some pretension: not only was he at the very least a Junian Latin, and probably a full Roman citizen, as early as ca. 100 CE, which must have been quite unusual in the *ager Carnutum* at that date, but the knowledge his text implies is different from the usual run of prayer language. His repetition of the prayer in each cardinal direction (if there were indeed four such objects, four times in each cardinal direction, sixteen times in all), his use of exotic *nomina magica*, and his appeal to the authority bestowed upon him by the fact that he is their *custos*, their rightful keeper, introduces a hint of the exotic into what, had it appeared in a literary text, would have been considered a standard, indeed classic, religious context, the petition-prayer.

Given that we lack a broader basis for interpretation, two quite different contexts suggest themselves, between which it is not easy to choose. One line of argument stresses the likelihood that Sedatus was a local man of Gallic descent, as well as the vaguely Gaulish phonetics of his 'names', and looks to the Gallo-Roman background for an interpretative context. The interest of this possibility is that, like the category of judicial prayers, it stresses the existence of many intermediate positions on the continuum between what everyone in Graeco-Roman society (in the widest sense) recognised as religious behaviour, and what everyone recognised as magic; and also insists on the imaginative possibilities within acceptable religious behaviour opened up by the availability in the cultural context of a variety of means of power

associated with magic, including writing.[99] However, one of the co-authors of this piece, William Van Andringa, an expert on Gallo-Roman religion, is sceptical of a Gallo-Roman context, and prefers the obvious alternative explanation, that Sedatus knew some early form of Graeco-Egyptian praxis that included prayer directed 'cosmically' to all four quarters. Between these options it is admittedly difficult to decide. However, if the date assigned by the French team to the script is correct, it would be extremely surprising if the requisite elements of the Graeco-Egyptian tradition had already reached Gallia Lugdunensis.[100] On the other hand, we know nothing about Sedatus, either his reading or his possible travels; and the Erictho episode of Lucan, *BC* Bk 6 suggests that debates concerning magical effects were current at Rome already in mid-I^{p}, debates that may even have left their trace on the recipes of the *PGrMag*.[101] Sedatus' *turibula* can thus serve as an emblem of the wider problem of disentangling the magical practice of the Latin-speaking West from that of the Greek, the Graeco-Egyptian, and for that matter the Graeco-Babylonian, world.

The functioning of amuletic gems is one of the issues raised by Jaime Alvar. He argues that we might re-contextualise the rather small number of surviving Mithraic gems in terms of competition between professional magical practitioners and mystery-cults over the offer of what Weber calls 'salvation-goods'. Whereas the mysteries offered intra- and extra-mundane salvation in return for longer-term commitment based on ethical virtue,[102] dealers in amulets offered their clients

---

[99] Cf. F. Charlier, La pratique de l'écriture dans les tuileries gallo-romaines, in M. Feugère and P.-Y. Lambert (eds.), *L'écriture dans la société gallo-romaine*, fascicule of *Gallia* 61 (2004) 1–192 at 67–102; cf. Marco Simón 2002 on Gallic magical traditions mediated in Graeco-Roman sources.

[100] Jacco Dieleman argues that the London-Leiden papyrus, one of the longest and most important items in the Anastasi collection, probably dates from first half of III^{p}, though a date in second half of II^{p} cannot be excluded (2005, 41–44). Its contexts would have been assembled "not earlier than the late first or early second century CE". It may be that much the same holds good for the contents of *PGrMag* IV, the source of the 'four-quarters' texts that offer the best parallel to Sedatus' *turibulum*, although the version we have is dated palaeographically to IV^{p}. This makes any direct, or even indirect, Egyptian influence rather implausible; moreover, the earliest surviving independent texts in the Graeco-Egyptian tradition, dating from I^{a}–I^{p}, are far less sophisticated than the great majority of the recipes in the Anastasi collection (see also Brashear 1995, 3413f. and n. 112 below, particularly the refs. to Kotansky *GMA*).

[101] See Gordon 1999, 242; on secrets such as the name of the Supreme God revealed to practitioners in the learned magical tradition, see F. Graf, The Magician's Initiation, *Helios* 21 (1994) 161–78 at 164.

[102] Cf. Alvar 2008, 143–203.

a short-cut by usurping iconographic tokens, for example the Mithraic tauroctony-scene, for inclusion on eudaemonic amulets claimed to ensure analogous benefits. This possibility cannot perhaps be dismissed out of hand; given the tiny numbers of amulets in question, however, it can at best be considered a marginal phenomenon, for which other explanations have anyway been offered.[103] In the first part of his paper, Alvar argues against the view that the Greek text dubbed by Albrecht Dieterich the 'Mithras Liturgy' offers any significant insight into the actual practice of the mysteries. In the context of the wider aims of the volume, this discussion serves to remind us *per contrarium* of the central role played by divinatory magic in Pliny the Elder's conception of the topic, in the public discourse of magic, and surely also in professional practice, a centrality not adequately reflected in any of the other contributions.

The next two papers concern the interface in the late-Roman world between pagan and Christian modes of protective magic. Two Spanish contributions focus on the well-known Visigothic texts on slate. The general familiarity with magical practice in antiquity, as many have pointed out, made it inevitable that, despite the opposition of Christian bishops and councils to such practice (which their highly partial representation of paganism vigorously distorted), situations of need would be met by traditionally-appropriate methods. Given the official dichotomy between God and the Devil and his servants, and the pagan tradition of protective magic by means of written amulets,[104] such recourse was primarily of the latter type: Christian phylacteries, amulets, talismans abound.

In his learned contribution, which is actually a translation and revision of an article that appeared in Spanish in 1997, F.J. Fernández Nieto discusses a particular type of amuletic or apotropaic text, against meteorological threats to agrarian prosperity, above all hail (*ad grandinem*). Beginning with the latest in the series, an VIII[p] text on a slate from Carrio, prov. Asturias, he examines seven parallel inscriptions, in Greek and Latin, all but one Christian, an analogous document

[103] E.g. R.L. Gordon, Small and Miniature Reproductions of the Mithraic Icon: Reliefs, Pottery, Ornaments and Gems, in: M. Martens and G. de Boe (eds) *Roman Mithraism: the Evidence of the Small Finds*. Archeologie en Vlaanderen, Monogr. 4 (Brussels 2004) 259–83 at 276–78.

[104] Cf. Kotansky 1991; on Jewish amuletic magic, which was heavily dependent upon pagan practice, see Bohak 2008, 149–53; 158–65; 231–34.

invoking the aid of Hermes/Mercury against attack by locusts, and an anti-hail phylactery-text preserved in a Byzantine ms. It is probably mistaken to think of such texts, which are found over a relatively wide area of the Mediterranean, as belonging to a genre with specific rules; the surviving examples are rather living texts, deploying an optional variety of themes and techniques. Typical features include the naming of powers, beneficent and maleficent; the intermingling of Christian and pagan agencies; the invocation of sacred objects, including the blood of martyrs; and the motif of dismissal of ills (*apopompê*).

In the tradition of the Catholic convert Erik Peterson (1890–1960), Fernández Nieto is at pains to demonstrate the antiquity of this type of text, and its emergence out of pagan sacrificial rituals, stressing the existence in the classical period in places such as Kleonai in the Peloponnese of rituals against hail (indeed of local 'priests' with this function), the use of parts of apotropaic animals, such as seal- and hyena-skin, and the little information we possess about practitioners of weather-magic. Emphasis upon continuity however comes at a price that some historians may consider rather high. Consideration of the temporal distribution of the texts suggests rather that they are a primarily Christian phenomenon, encouraged by the specific exemption of such ritual efforts from suspicion of magic. The very fact that Kleonai and Methana became famous, indeed 'interesting', in the early Principate for their rituals against adverse meteorological phenomena indicates that by that time such practices had otherwise largely disappeared from public religion, whatever the case with private remedies. Moreover the very traditional model of magical action used by Fernández Nieto impels him to treat what he identifies as the magical elements as primitive, smuggled into the Christian context and sustained by rural 'superstition'.[105] It might have been more rewarding to examine 'incertitude', the mentality of those who, in varying degrees, do "not cease being…pagan but…[do] not cease being…Christian either" (Kahlos 2007, 30–57 at 31).[106] Or to think in terms of the 'trans-subjectivity'

[105] On the polemical Christian use of 'superstition', see H. Cancik, Nutzen, Schmuck und Aberglaube: Ende und Wandlungen der römischen Religion im 4. und 5. Jhdt., in H. Zinser (ed.), *Der Untergang von Religionen* (Berlin 1986) 65–90; M.R. Salzman, Superstitio in the Codex Theodosianus and the Persecution of Pagans, *VigChr* 41 (1987) 172–88; Kahlos 2007, 96–112.

[106] Cf. also the different categorisations of J.J. O'Donnell, The Demise of Paganism, *Traditio* 35 (1979) 45–88 and G. Bonner, The Extinction of Paganism and the Church Historian, *JEcclHist* 35 (1984) 339–57.

of magical beliefs, backed as they are by forms of reasoning widely shared in a population without being objectively valid (Boudon 1995, 67f.). An analysis of the texts in rhetorical terms (code-switching and meta-pragmatic strategies) and discussion of the mechanisms of discontinuous transmission would also have been welcome.

For her part, Isabel Velázquez suggests that two factors facilitated the transformation of a pagan magical tradition into a Christian one. First, the efforts of the Church to extend its pastoral mission into the countryside, where the great bulk of the population resided, required a deliberate effort of simplification of Christian ideas, resulting in the unintended consequence that traditional rural 'superstitions' were allowed to be effective even if not approved of by the Church. This possibility is illustrated through a brief sixth-century tract, *De correctione rusticorum* by Martin of Braga, but something could have been said of the role of compulsory conversions in this context, or of the effects of the Christian trope that ordinary folk are by definition *superstitiosi* (Rufinus, *Hist.* 6.41.1). Second, the issue of 'vertical communication': the school-system, where ecclesiastical institutions had a virtual monopoly, taught literacy through snippets taken from the liturgy and the Bible, and so provided a fund of decontextualised but authoritative sacred material, simultaneously devotional and charged with power, that lent itself particularly to protective magical practice.[107] The Christian magical texts from Egypt certainly seem to have been composed in this manner.[108] A handful of texts among the Visigothic slates from Salamanca province apparently represent a continuation of this tradition into the eighth century or even later; but they cannot be said to amount to very much.

---

[107] Cf. L. van Acker, Dans les méandres de la communication verticale mérovingienne: connaissances passives et pertes d'informations, in R.P.H. Wright (ed.), *Latin vulgaire—latin tardif VIII: Actes du VIII^e colloque international sur le latin vulgaire et tardif, Oxford 6–9 sept. 2006* (Hildesheim 2008) 463–72. We might also think of the role of repeated readings at services, iterated psalms, and communally-sung hymns of doctrinal content: N. Horsfall, Statistics or States of Mind?, in AA.VV., *Literacy in the Roman World.* JRA Supplement 3 (Ann Arbor MI 1991) 59–76 at 73–75. Skemer 2006 is an exceptionally interesting investigation of a parallel phenomenon in the medieval Church; he can show, for example, that many of his amulets were written by members of the clergy. In early Protestant England, "the physical force of the book as object was indistinguishable from the sacred power of its words": A. Cambers, Demonic Possession, Literacy and 'Superstition' in Early Modern England, *Past & Present* 202 (2009) 3–35 at 16.

[108] L. Pernigotti, La magia copta: i testi, ANRW II.18.5 (1995) 3685–730; Brashear 1995, 3471f.

Devoted to the medieval Irish *loricae* ("cuirass"), the paper by P.-Y. Lambert provides a sort of valediction to the theme of protective magic. These texts, which are of greatly varying lengths and elaboration, were intended to provide the person who recited them with divine protection against harm, especially spiritual harm, and various temptations sent by the Devil. Generally speaking, they combine a list of the powers invoked with a list of the body-parts to be protected and a list of dangers and/or enemies. In this extravagant, sometimes virtuoso, employment of anaphora and lists they resemble, but outshine, earlier Christian phylacteries.[109] The question arises whether a still earlier antecedent might not have been the pre-Christian protective amulets. Lambert can however find no trace of a genre of pagan phylacteries intended to provide a direct counter to the listing of body-parts, even though the latter is a common feature of ancient aggressive magic (Versnel would say rather of the prayers for justice). That being the case, we are forced to assume that there were specific conditions in the Celtic Christian world that led to the greater emphasis on the theme of magical attack there. At the same time however the possibility that the *lorica* did in fact develop out of the Christian amuleto-phylactery tradition, and so ultimately from its pagan predecessors, cannot be finally dismissed. If we are to argue this, however, it cannot be on the basis of specific content; the Irish *loricae* are best understood as a local elaboration of the widespread rhetorical technique of creating lists as a means of producing impressive performances. It is as much the sheer use of repetition and the formal stylisation as the holy names invoked that generate the protective power of these texts; such repetition may suggest an ultimate origin in pagan defensive magical practice, but it is more likely to originate in a particular predilection in the Celtic monastic tradition for extended rhythmic liturgical performance. Here again the search for some specifically 'magical' quality or model proves illusory.

It is naturally difficult to summarise the results of a diverse collection such as this. Not only did some contributors find it difficult to pose the question of specificity, so that their view of the matter is at best implicit, but any conceivable answer would need to be nuanced. Magic is in fact a good minor yardstick of the extent and limitations of cultural borrowing within the 'long' Roman Empire from 200 BCE

[109] Cf. also E. Bozóky, *Charmes et prières apotropaïques* (Turnhout 2003).

to Constantine. If we allow that the basis of specialist magical practice was innumerable, mainly illiterate, indigenous wise-folk, rhizotomists, diviners and healers, east and west, their practice is likely to have changed little over centuries, remaining bound to the plants and other substances available in the locality, and to the charm-repertoire and divinatory methods specific to the individual and his or her family tradition. This quasi-professional practice was subtended by belief in the evil eye and by non-specialist practices available within the oral folk-culture of each locality.[110] To that extent, magic practice in the Latin-speaking West was surely conservative.

Its major instability however was its moral ambivalence: the claim to be able to intervene in such matters for good implied also the ability to intervene for ill. In relation to magic there can be no neutrality, only ambivalence, which is mediated by the relevant stock of gossip, rumours and historico-mythic narratives. The rhetoric and forms of public religion are never more than a fraction of the story. To this we must add the role of writing in the creation of a complex meta-tradition. Already in the classical period in Greece, the demands of school medicine led to the emergence of a written herbalist tradition that expressly suppressed the incantatory element of rhizotomic practice. The Hellenistic discourse, itself a composite partly constructed out of mediated materials from the high cultures of the Near East, provided a multi-layered mythography of magic that provided a language within which some of the stresses of the collapsing Republic and emergent Principate could be expressed. It thus formed an aspect of 'modernity'. This language also selectively shaped the nature of the evidence advanced at trials and the expectations of judges, and so the terms of Senatus consulta and legal opinions, influenced gossip and rumour, and finally also conditioned the styles not only of defensive magic, amulets and phylacteries of all kinds, but also of active magic. There is nevertheless a major, indeed crucial, difference, so far as we can tell, between the Hellenistic discourse and the Roman imperial one, namely the central role played by the figure of the emperor in the articulation and social meaning of magic. It was this shift that in

[110] Raymond Boudon has used this sort of line to defend a non-symbolic account of magic (what he sees as the Durkheim-Weberian theory): "La cause de toutes ces croyances magiques est… que l'inférence causale est une opération délicate et difficile, qui mobilise des *a priori* plus au moins valides selon les cas, mais qui sont facilement traités comme allant de soi par le sujet social" (1995, 133f.).

turn conditioned the legislation of Christian emperors and the formal attitudes of the Church.

The introduction into the Roman world of the practice of writing curses on lead is poorly dated, but no one doubts that it was a) derived from Hellenistic Greek models and b) rapidly resonated among the non-Roman population of Central and Southern Italy. Much the same can be said about prayers for justice, whose Greek models can be relatively closely located and specified.[111] Both in a sense provided a new technology for long-standing needs. But under ancient conditions of communication, it is not so much the general technology as the reception that must interest us. Generally speaking, so far as we can tell, it was not written models with precise formulations that were disseminated, but loosely articulated ideas, tropes and themes, as at Mainz, which fed directly into local rhetorical strategies of cursing and self-help. Until, and even long after, the (geographically restricted) advent of Graeco-Egyptian models of malign and protective magical practice in the late I–II^{p},[112] written curses are locally diverse and variable in scope and ambition. In other words, they conform to the local diversity of the rhizotomic tradition, without being remotely connected to it. There is therefore no simple centre-periphery pattern to be traced here. The Oscan-language *defixiones* in fact provide a perfect metaphor for the reconstruction of Greek models in the West. Much the same

---

[111] Note also the possibility that they have a still more remote origin in the NE: C.A. Faraone, B. Garnand, and C. López-Ruiz, Micah's Mother (*Judg.* 17:1–4) and a Curse from Carthage (*KAI* 89): Canaanite Precedents for Greek and Latin Curses against Thieves? *JNES* 64 (2005) 161–186.

[112] The prestige of Greek as a magical language, and as a medium of Graeco-Egyptian magical competence, in the western Empire is indicated by the well-known texts from Carthage and Hadrumetum, many of which are wholly or partly in Greek (some in Latin transliterated into Greek characters) (*DTAud* nos. 213–98 etc.); the texts from Amphitheatre II at Carnuntum (e.g. Egger 1926 = *AE* 1929: 228); the late IV^{p} Porta S. Sebastiano texts (Wünsch 1898); odd finds such as *DTAud* 123 (Bordighera); and the phylacteries on precious metal collected by Kotansky *GMA* nos. 1–23, 25–27, 29–30, 32–33, the earliest of which are nos. 2 (Caernarvon), 10 (Limoges), 13 (Carnuntum: Antaura) and 29 (Ciciliano: Vermaseren's 'Time-god') (I-II^{p}), then nos. 7 (Badenweiler), 11a,b (hail phylacteries from S. Gaul) (II^{p}). Finds of such materials continue to be made, e.g. the elaborate phylactery for Tertius from Arco, Lago di Como, late II-III^{p}, from a grave: *AE* 2002: 577; or the *niketikon* on a gold lamella for Tib. Claudius Similis from Billingford nr. Dereham, Norfolk, with the Latin partly written in Greek characters; the *charakteres* suggest that it may have been made in Colonia Agrippina, Germania Inferior: R.S.O. Tomlin, A Bilingual Charm for Health and Victory, *ZPE* 149 (2004) 259–66 = *AE* 2004: 853. It is obvious that small objects such as phylacteries may have travelled long distances and thus be a poor index of the presence of practitioners able to compose in Greek.

might no doubt be said about non-verbal forms of magical action, such as the defunctive nails discussed by Alfayé. They likewise seem to have been an originally Greek institution whose significance was inflected in accordance with local perceptions and requirements. In the Late-Roman period, for example at the Fountain of Anna Perenna, we can likewise find fragments or shards of the by then widespread Graeco-Egyptian tradition, such as the cock-headed anguipede, adapted and creatively misunderstood to fit local imaginative requirements. In other words, the general conclusion to be drawn regarding the specificity of magical practice in the Latin-speaking West is a form of the point made by Perea and Fernández Nieto about 'living texts', which can be endlessly adapted to specific local circumstances.[113] In the case of *defixiones*, as Kropp points out, all one needed was a repertoire of themes and some conception of the appropriate ritual methods. The determinate context is always local.

Future Prospects

It is reported that in 2008 some 35 albinos, perhaps more, were killed in Tanzania in order to supply magical practitioners with limbs, organs, skin and hair for use in their medicines.[114] Such murders are lucrative: the body-parts of an albino sell for well over $1000, and there is a lively demand, especially among miners and fishermen in the region of Lake Victoria, for amulets and powders made from them. Niche-exploitation, commodification and marketing are all at work here in the modernisation of traditional beliefs about albinos (which held them to be evidence of a curse on the family), in the context of greatly increased competition for livelihoods in northern Tanzania.[115]

---

[113] Compare again the approach to Christian medieval amulets advocated by Skemer 2006.

[114] See *Independent* (London) April 4, 2008; *ABC News*, July 28 2008; *Al Jazeera*, Aug. 4, 2008; *Suite 101.com*, Sept. 30 2008; *UN News Centre*, Dec. 24 2008.

[115] For some reason, albinism is far more frequent in Tanzania than elsewhere in Africa. Prior to the colonial period, albinos in this area were routinely killed at birth; one name for them was zeru-zeru, "ghosts". With the imposition of colonial rule this practice was forbidden, so their numbers greatly increased; one common explanation for them was then that the mother must have slept with a white man (*mzungu*, a term now also applied to albinos). The population of the area round Lake Victoria has increased massively since independence, putting increased pressure on livelihoods. The ecological disaster created by the explosion of Nile perch numbers has led to a dramatic fall in catches (also of the Nile perch itself). The mining sector in northern

Such modern reports send the ancient historian a twofold message. On the one hand, except perhaps in the case of reported late-antique magical attacks on emperors and saints,[116] we almost always lack the background knowledge that might enable us to understand ancient incidents in the way we can modern ones. What social changes and anxieties might lie behind the depositions at Mainz over a half-century, which were certainly far more numerous than the thirty-four surviving tablets? Why Mater Magna and Attis? What might explain the highly variable incidence of charioteer-*defixiones* and similar texts? How did shrines like that of Aquae Sulis or Uley obtain such reputations? On the other, awareness of modern incidents and trends, such as the rise of 'witch-finding' movements in sub-Saharan Africa in the context of post-colonialism, modernisation and impoverishment, may provide us with the parallels required to set up explanatory models. How far, and in what areas, does magical action represent an accommodation to, or exploitation of, social changes?[117] When it comes to details, the historian will find numerous suggestive parallels; in the Tanzanian case, the selection of a natural sort-crosser, a classificatory anomaly, as a source of magical power, just like the seal or the hyena in antiquity—where the norm is black, melanin-deficiency becomes a sign connoting the other: a natural fact is read for its metaphysical significance. Ritual murder evokes Horace's 'Victim's Complaint', an imagined scenario in which Canidia is about to use a boy's body-parts for a potion to 'catch' her faithless husband (*Epode* 5); and even Erictho's scouring of sarcophagi for body-parts (Lucan, *BC* 6.538–43) may no longer seem merely a flight of dark imagination.[118]

More systematic exploitation of modern ethnographic material is one way of creating explanatory models for antiquity that go beyond the narrow focus on positive evidence that is both the strength and

---

Tanzania has been growing by 15% a year since 2002. Although gold production is dominated by a Canadian firm, there are many 'independent' gold miners; many others search for semi-precious tanzanite under equally adverse conditions. Explosions and deaths by suffocation are common, as are labour-unrest and even riots.

[116] Cf. Brown 1970, whose model is still broadly accepted by many scholars. But would it fit the Ampurias *defixiones* discussed by Marco Simón here (Chap. 11)?

[117] P. Geschiere, Witchcraft and the State: Cameroon and South Africa. Ambiguities of 'Reality' and 'Superstition', in Smith and Knight 2008, 313–35.

[118] In each context, it may of course be that these are just thematically similar rumours; in the Tanzanian case, however, the murders and mutilations at least are not imaginary (legs, feet and arms are the preferred parts).

weakness of ancient history.[119] Another approach that would likewise widen the horizon is the investigation of concepts of risk and strategies of risk management in the Roman world. Such an approach has already been applied interestingly by Esther Eidinow to classical Greece (Eidinow 2007). She has creatively aligned the questions posed to the Zeus-oracle at Dodona as assembled by A.F. Christidis with the curse-tablets, conceived as an index of the types of anxieties that prompted individuals to appeal to deities for specific assistance or intervention. Such appeals rely heavily on tacit compositional rules, such as the patterning of lists, but their generic distribution points to the existence of a number of neuralgic risk-points in Greek society. How far do these shift in the Roman world? How are we to interpret the rise of magical measures against 'self-induced risk' in competitive contexts (or rather, we incline to think, of 'deep gaming') in the Empire?

Another tack would be to approach prayers for justice, which mainly concern theft, embezzlement or other (claimed) financial loss, in terms of conceptions of property, and legal regulation of loans, deposits and debts, in a very unevenly monetarised society; the relation between property and identity, property and honour, theft and humiliation; and the role of what is now called the 'endowment effect' (the psychological phenomenon whereby an item of property, merely by virtue of being one's own, acquires a subjective value far greater than its exchange or intrinsic value) in legitimating the violent demands of the deity expressed in the prayers. Conceptions of (subjectively but also consensually) legitimate versus illegitimate aggression are also relevant here (cf. Goody 1970). Suggestive remarks about the place of revenge in Athenian society by Fiona McHardy could profitably be explored and nuanced in relation to local societies in the western Empire.[120] Such prayers might also be contextualised within some of the larger trends in the economic and social history of the Empire, such as the marked increase in the production of finished metal-products, the relatively high quality of clothing owned by "modest but not impoverished citizens", and the growth in services and secondary exchanges.[121]

---

[119] An obvious candidate here is the evil eye, the subject of a forthcoming dissertation by A. Alvar Nuño.

[120] F. McHardy, *Revenge in Athenian Culture* (London 2008).

[121] Cf. W.M. Jongman, The Early Roman Empire: Consumption, in W. Scheidel et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge 2007) 592–618.

Their relation to institutionalised, 'regular', features of the legal system also needs investigation, as does their role in the maintenance of more abstract social goods such as trust. Finally, can any correlation be made between the frequency of recourse to malign and aggressive magic and empire-wide albeit regionally-differentiated negative factors such as the Antonine plague (and its successors) and the political, fiscal and economic troubles of the mid- third century?[122]

Moving away from socio-historical considerations to the level of the discourse about magic, we note that the level of modern discussion of the literary representation of magic, which is central because of the ambiguities and contradictions it is able to sustain, is far more sophisticated than it was. There was no single discourse of magic in the Empire, just as a complex society of this type can sustain many different types of thinking.[123] Whereas historians tend to see literary representations as straightforwardly reflective of, or even parasitic upon, reality, the critic views the reality (particularly in this area) as itself textual or narratological, mediated by the appropriate generic forms. This distance gives the relevant, and highly diverse, texts the chance to establish their own types of authority in relation to magic (or magics), and their own relationship to the audience.[124] We therefore see the sensitive handling of literary texts in this area as an essential preliminary to the construction of a more sophisticated and diverse understanding of the discourse of magic in our period.

There are finally the primary documents themselves. In the first place, the notion of document needs to be broadly applied: we need to consider, at least in principle, not merely the epigraphic texts but also the whole range of artefacts from archaeological sources. The inventory of at least the Latin *defixiones* has now been made available by Amina Kropp;[125] part of our continuing project at Zaragoza is to construct a more extensive data-base that will include not only these

---

[122] R. Duncan-Jones, Economic Change and the Transition to Late Antiquity, in S. Swain and M.J. Edwards (eds.), *Approaching Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2004) 20–52.

[123] P. Worsley, *Knowledges: Culture, Counterculture, Subculture* (New York 1999), cited by D. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2007) 217 n. 9.

[124] D. Feeney, On not Forgetting the "Literature" in "Literature and Religion": Representing the Mythic and the Divine in Roman Historiography, in A. Bierl et al. (eds.), *Literatur und Religion 2: Wege zu einer mythisch-rituellen Poetik bei den Griechen.* MythosEikonPoieses 1/2 (Berlin and New York 2007) 173–202.

[125] See n. 55 above.

texts but several different types of archaeological materials.[126] The ultimate aim is to relativise the importance of the texts, which for obvious reasons tend to occupy our attention; this can best be done by creating the sort of new, especially numerical and statistical, facts that a data-base can provide, facts that will in turn raise new sorts of questions. Secondly, the existence of a searchable data-base of texts will allow further studies of the rhetorical strategies, generic constraints and implicit ethics of these documents, thus helping to narrow the ideological gap between 'document' and 'literary text'.

The Editors

Bibliography

Alvar, J. 2008. *Romanising Oriental Gods: Myth, Salvation and Ethics in the Cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras*. RGRW 165 (Leyden).

Belayche, N. (ed.). 2009. *Représentation du divin dans les pratiques "magiques": Actes de la 1ère rencontre FIGURA, Paris 27–28 juin 2008*, in *Mythos* (Univ. Palermo) 2.

Besnier, M. 1920. Récents travaux sur les *Defixionum Tabellae* latines (1904–14), *RPh* 44, 5–30.

Blänsdorf, J. 2005a. Cybèle et Attis dans les tablettes de *defixio* inédites de Mayence, *CRAI* 2005, 669–692.

——. 2005b. The Curse-tablets from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Mater in Mainz, *MHNH* 5, 11–26.

——. 2005c. Survivances et métamorphoses des cultes orientaux dans l'empire romain, in H. Duchêne (ed.), *Survivances et métamorphoses* (Dijon) 95–110.

——. 2008. Die Defixionum tabellae des Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtum, in M. Heinzmann and R. Wedenig (eds.), *Instrumenta inscripta Latina, 2. Akten des 2. Internationalen Kolloquiums, Klagenfurt 2005*. Aus Forschung und Kunst 36 (Klagenfurt) 47–70.

Bohak, G. 2008. *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Oxford).

Boudon, R. 1995. *Le juste et le vrai: Études sur l'objectivité des valeurs et de la connaissance* (Paris).

Brashear, W.M. 1995. The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994), *ANRW* II.18.5, 3380–684.

Brodersen, K. and Kropp, A. (eds.) 2004. *Fluchtafeln: Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt a.M.).

Brown, P. 1970. Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: From Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages, in Douglas 1970, 17–45. Repr. in P. Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London 1972) 119–46.

Carastro, M. 2006. *La cité des mages. Penser la magie en Grèce ancienne* (Grenoble).

Clerc, J.-B. 1995. Homines magici: *Étude sur la sorcellerie et la magie dans la société romaine impériale*. Publ. Univ. Europ., Serie III, no. 673 (Bern).

[126] Funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (FFI2008/015111/FISO).

Cogitore, I. 2002. *La légitimité dynastique d'Auguste à Néron à l'épreuve des conspirations.* BEFAR 330 (Rome and Paris).
Collins, D. 2008. *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Oxford).
Dickie, M.W. 2001. *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York).
Dieleman, J. 2005. *Priests, Tongues and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE).* RGRW 153 (Leyden).
Diouf, E. 2000. Magie et droit chez Pline l'Ancient, in Moreau-Turpin 3, 71–84.
Douglas, M. (ed.) 1970. *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations.* ASA Monographs 9 (London).
Egger, R. 1926. Ein Zaubertext aus Carnuntum, part of Das zweite Amphitheater, in *Der römische Limes in Österreich* 16 (Vienna 1926) 136–56 no. 72.
——. 1962–63. *Römische Antike und frühes Christentum: Ausgewählte Schriften*, A. Betz and G. Moro (eds.). 2 vols. (Klagenfurt).
Eidinow, E. 2007. *Oracles, Curses and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford).
Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D. (eds.). 1991. *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York).
Fögen, T. 1993. *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager: Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der Spätantike* (Frankfurt a.M.).
Garosi, R. 1976. Indagine sulla formazione del concetto di magia nella cultura romana, in P. Xella (ed.), *Magia: studi di storia delle religioni in memoria di Raffaela Garosi* (Rome) 13–93.
Gluckman, A. 1997. *The End of Magic* (New York and Oxford).
Goody, E. 1970. Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African State, in Douglas 1970, 207–44.
Gordon, R.L. 1999. Imagining Greek and Roman Magic, in Ankarloo/Clark 159–275.
Graf, F. 1996. *Gottesnähe und Schadenzauber: Die Magie in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Munich). Revised ed. of *La magie dans l'antiquité gréco-romaine* (Paris 1994); ET by F. Philip, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge MA 1997).
Jeanneret, M. 1916/17–1918. La langue des tablettes d'exécration latine, 1, *RPh* 40, 225–58; Part 2, *RPh* 41, 5–99.
Kahlos, M. 2007. *Debate and Dialogue: Christian and Pagan Cultures c. 360–430* (Aldershot and Burlington VT).
Kotansky, R. 1991 Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on inscribed Greek Amulets, in Faraone & Obbink 1991, 107–37.
Kropp, A. 2008a. Defixiones. *Ein aktuelles Corpus lateinischer Fluchtafeln*, Kartoffeldruck-Verlag Kai Brodersen (Speyer).
——. 2008b. *Magische Sprachverwendung in vulgärlateinischen Fluchtafeln (defixiones).* ScriptOralia 135 (Tübingen).
Marco Simón, F. 2001. La emergencia de la magia como sistema di alteridad en la Roma del siglo I d.C., *MHNH* 1, 105–32.
——. 2002. Magia literaria y prácticas mágicas en el mundo romano-céltico, in Pérez Jiménez and Cruz Andreotti 2002, 189–219.
Martin, M. 2005. *Magie et magiciens dans le monde greco-romain* (Paris).
Mastrocinque, A. (ed.). 2002. *Atti dell'incontro di studio "Gemme gnostiche e cultura ellenistica"*, Verona, 22–23 ottobre 1999 (Bologna).
Morandi, A. 1982. *Epigrafia italica.* Bibliotheca Archaeologica 2 (Rome).
Pecere, O. and Stramaglia, A. (eds.) 1996. *La letteratura di consumo nel mondo greco-romano. Atti del convegno internaz., Cassino 14–17 sett. 1994* (Cassino).
Pérez Jiménez, A. and Cruz Andreotti, G. (eds.) 2002. *Daímon Páredros. Magos y prácticas mágicas en el mundo grecorromano* (Madrid and Malaga).
Phillips, C.R. III 1991. *Nullum Crimen sine Lege*: Socio-religious Sanctions on Magic, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 260–281.

Reynolds, J.M. and Volk, T. 1990. Gifts, Curses, Cult and Society at Bath, *Britannia* 21, 379–91.
Rüpke, J. (ed.) 2007. *A Companion to Roman Religion* (Malden MA and Oxford).
Skemer, D.C. 2006. *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (University Park PA).
Smith, J.Z. 1995. Trading Places, in *AMRP* 13–27; repr. Smith 2004, 215–29.
——. 2004. *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago and London).
Smith, S.A. and Knight, A. (eds.). 2008. *The Religion of Fools? Superstition Past and Present*. Past & Present Supplement 3 (Oxford).
Stratton, K.B. 2007. *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York).
Tambiah, S.J. 1968. The Magical Power of Words, *Man* 3, 175–206. Repr. Tambiah 1985, 17–59.
——. 1973. Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View, in R. Horton and R. Finnegan (eds.), *Modes of Thought* (London 1973) 199–229. Repr. Tambiah 1985, 60–86.
——. 1979. A Performative Approach to Ritual, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 65, 113–69. Repr. Tambiah 1985, 123–66.
——. 1985. *Culture, Thought and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge MA).
Tomlin, R.S.O. 1988. The Curse Tablets: Roman inscribed tablets of tin ands lead from the Sacred Spring at Bath, in: B. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath*, 2: *The Finds from the Sacred Spring*. OUCA Monograph 16 (Oxford) 59–265.
Tremel, J. 2004. *Magica agonistica: Fluchtafeln im antiken Sport*. Nikephoros Beihefte 10 (Hildesheim).
Trzcionka, S. 2007. *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth-century Syria* (London and New York).
Witteyer, M. 2004. Verborgene Wünsche: Befunde antiken Schadenzaubers aus Mogontiacum-Mainz, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 41–50.
——. 2005. Curse-tablets and Voodoo-dolls from Mainz. The Archaeological Evidence for Magical Practices in the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna, *MHNH* 5, 105–24.
Woodward, A. and Leach, P. 1993. *The Uley Shrines: Excavation of a ritual complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire: 1977–79* (London).
Wünsch, R. (ed.) 1898. *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* (Leipzig).

CHAPTER ONE

MAGUS AND ITS COGNATES IN CLASSICAL LATIN*

James B. Rives

One of the most persistent problems in the study of magic in the ancient Mediterranean is the term 'magic' itself. There has been much debate over the extent to which this word helps or hinders our understanding of the Graeco-Roman world, a debate that is perhaps now dying down not as the result of any resolution but through sheer exhaustion among the participants.[1] The reader will be glad to know that I do not intend here to add to that debate, except in one particular and slightly oblique way. The English word 'magic', together with cognate words in other European languages (*magie, magia*, etc.), brings with it a complicating factor from which similar terms (e.g., witchcraft, *sorcellerie, Zauberei*) are free: because its derivation from the Greek and Latin word group of μάγος/*magus* is apparently so clear and direct, it is easy to assume that it reproduces the semantic range of those words in a relatively straightforward way. As a result, there is a constant temptation simply to translate μάγος as 'magician' and so let the ancient texts 'speak for themselves'. But 'magic' and 'magician' are in this respect truly false friends; even a brief consideration of the significant differences between the conceptual landscape of ancient Mediterranean culture and that of modern western culture will immediately suggest that the modern words 'magic' and the like must have connotations that are quite remote from the ancient Greek and Latin

* I am grateful to the other participants in the conference for their comments on my paper. I have presented other versions of this research at the Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of Canada and at the York-Toronto Work in Progress Seminar in Ancient Greek and Roman History; I owe thanks to the audiences on both these occasions for their comments as well. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[1] Exhaustion prevents me from citing here more than a few of the main contributions: Remus 1982; C.R. Phillips III, The Sociology of Religious Knowledge in the Roman Empire to AD 284, *ANRW* II.16.3 (1986) 2677–773 at 2711–32; idem 1991; H.S. Versnel, Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion, *Numen* 38 (1991) 177–97; J.Z. Smith, Trading Places, in *AMRP* 13–27; Bremmer 1999, 9–12; 2002b; 2008b; H. Remus, 'Magic', Method, Madness, *MTSR* 11 (1999) 258–98; J. Braarvig, Magic: Reconsidering the Grand Dichotomy, in *WAM* 21–54; E. Thomasson, Is Magic a Sub-class of Ritual?, *WAM* 55–66; C.A. Hoffman, Fiat Magia, in *MRAW* 179–94.

words.[2] In this paper, then, rather than add to the discussion of the modern word-group, I hope to contribute to our understanding of the ancient word-group. Some valuable work has already been done on this topic, particularly on the Greek μάγος and its cognates. The word-group in Latin, however, has received much less attention, and it is on this that I focus here.[3]

I take as my data base all instances of *magus* and its cognates in extant Latin texts from the origins down to the Severan period. It would of course have been possible, and no doubt profitable, to widen the scope of this study, but practical considerations necessitated some limitations. In the conclusion I will briefly consider some of the possible avenues for further research, but even a fairly restricted study such as this can, I believe, add something to our understanding of this terminology.

1. *The* Apology *of Apuleius*

It is easiest to begin this study at the end, with the only reliably dated extant Latin writer between Juvenal and Tertullian to employ the word *magus* and its cognates.[4] Apuleius' *Apology* is by far our richest source for the use of these words, and allows us to sketch in some detail their

---

[2] Perhaps the most important of these arise from the modern word's complex interrelationship with 'religion' and 'science', important modern concepts that have at best only rough analogues in the Graeco-Roman world; see esp. Phillips 1991.

[3] The classic study is that of A.D. Nock, Paul and the Magus, in his *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Oxford 1972) 308–30 at 308–24 (first published in 1933). The most thorough and careful study of the word-group in Greek, down to the end of the fourth century BCE, is that of Bremmer 1999, 2–6 = 2002a, 1–7 = 2008a, 236–43. The only focused discussion of the word-group in Latin is that of F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA 1997) 36–41.

[4] The words do not appear in Fronto, Gellius, or Gaius. They do appear in three texts of uncertain date: Q. Curtius Rufus' life of Alexander, one of the pseudo-Quintilianic *Declamationes Maiores*, and Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus. I here follow the majority opinion in assigning Curtius a Claudian date. I accept a second-century date for the *Declamatio* and for the sake of convenience group it with texts from the first half of that century, with which it fits well in its usage of *magus* and its cognates; some scholars, however, have advanced strong arguments for a fourth-century date. Both the date of Justin's epitome and the extent to which it reproduces the vocabulary of the Augustan-era original are uncertain; on the date, I follow the arguments of John Yardley, who assigns Justin to the late second century CE or slightly later: e.g., J.C. Yardley and W. Heckel, *Justin:* Epitome *of the* Philippic History *of Pompeius Trogus*, *Books 11–12* (Oxford 1997) 8–19.

semantic range.[5] According to Apuleius, they had two distinct meanings. On the one hand, they were terms from Persian religion: *magus* was simply the Persian word for 'priest' and *magia*, consequently, was the art of cultivating the gods that had been established by Zoroaster.[6] But this, he makes clear, was a learned usage, one that he mentions largely in order to contrast his own learning with the ignorance of his accusers. They, not surprisingly, used the word in its 'vulgar' sense, to denote a person "who through shared speech with the immortal gods has ability in all things that he wishes, by means of a certain amazing power of incantations".[7] It is worth noting that in substance these two definitions are not so very different, since in both *magia* appears as a type of interaction with the divine. What distinguishes them is instead their respective connotations: in the former, there is a stress on piety and respectability, and in the latter, a stress on power and the fulfilment of desires. It was with *magia* in the latter, negative, sense that Apuleius was charged, and it is consequently on this meaning of these words that his speech is most informative.

The first point to note is simply that *magia* is being used here specifically as a legal charge, a *crimen*, and thus by definition connotes something undesirable and socially unacceptable. Apuleius repeatedly describes the accusation that his opponents brought against him as one of *magia* or, less commonly, being a *magus*.[8] We may thus deduce that the specific details that they alleged in their case against him were illustrative of things that their contemporaries would normally have associated with a *magus*, although in discussing them we must remember that we know about them only from Apuleius' rebuttals. Given the stress that Apuleius places on the power of the *magus*, it is interesting

[5] Apuleius uses them much less frequently in his other works; for the details, see below, n. 48.

[6] See especially *Apol.* 25.9: *Persarum lingua magus est qui nostra sacerdos*; 26.1–2: *Auditisne magian, qui eam temere accusatis, artem esse dis immortalibus acceptam, colendi eos ac venerandi pergnaram, piam scilicet et divini scientem, iam inde a Zoroastre et Oromaze auctoribus suis nobilem, caelitum antistitam.* In citing the *Apology* I follow the numbering in the Budé edition of Paul Vallette (1924).

[7] *Apol.* 26.6: *more vulgari eum isti proprie magum existimant, qui communione loquendi cum deis immortalibus ad omnia quae velit incredibili quadam vi cantaminum polleat*, cf. Remus 1982, 151f.

[8] See, e.g., *Apol.* 2.2: *calumnia magiae* (cf. 67.1); 9.5: *me magiae deferre*; 25.5: *crimen magiae* (cf. 81.1 and 96.2); 29.9: *accusatio magiae*; 47.1: *magiae accusare* (cf. 83.5); 25.8: *quae* [*accusatio*]*…Aemiliano fuit in isto uno destinata, me magum esse.* For a broader statement, see 47.3: *magia ista, quantum ego audio, res est legibus delegata.*

to note how little he says about the sorts of things over which a *magus* was believed to have power. The one that he discusses most is sexual desire: not surprisingly, since it was Apuleius' marriage to the wealthy widow Pudentilla that incited his enemies to bring their charge in the first place. Thus she is said to have never thought about marriage until she was forced by the *magica maleficia* of Apuleius (*Apol.* 69.4) and to have confessed in a letter that he had drawn her into love by means of his *magia* (78.5).[9] Apuleius' opponents evidently also alleged that he had caused one of his slave boys to collapse, perhaps in some sort of trance (*Apol.* 42–7). Apuleius himself points out that if they really knew what they were talking about, they would have also asserted that he had used the boy as a medium in a divinatory procedure, something that *magi* were known to do.[10] But apart from love charms and divination, the goals towards which a *magus* was thought to direct his power are left unspecified.

What we find instead is an emphasis on the techniques and even more the general style that characterised a *magus*. A *magus* was for one thing thought to employ certain types of rituals; so for example Apuleius' accusers alleged that he had engaged in the nocturnal sacrifice of some birds (*Apol.* 57.2–3). The use of *carmina et venena*, verbal formulae and natural substances, was especially associated with *magi*. Apuleius twice uses this pair as a virtual synonym for *magia* (*Apol.* 84.3, 90.1); *cantamina* figure largely in his initial definition of a *magus* (26.6); and the assertion that he had sought to buy certain types of fish, something Apuleius discusses at great length (29–41), presumably played on popular ideas about *venena*. But it was above all a particular style that marked a *magus*, that distinguished 'magical' rituals and formulae and substances from their non-magical counterparts. For one thing, *magia* involved secrecy; according to Apuleius, so strongly entrenched was the belief that anything magical was secret that his opponents could easily reverse the logic to argue that anything secret was magical.[11] Connected with this emphasis on secrecy was

[9] See also 41.5, 102.7, and especially 87.2, where Apuleius responds to the allegation that he wrote a seductive letter to Pudentilla*: cur ego blandirem, si magia confidebam?* The idea of *magia* as something that enables a person to achieve his goals is here very clear.

[10] See the anecdotes in *Apol.* 42.4–8, which Apuleius sums up by saying *haec et alia apud plerosque de magiis et pueris lego* (43.1).

[11] Apuleius develops this theme particularly in connection with the allegation that he had placed a secret object, wrapped up in a cloth, among the *lares* of his son-in-

the association of magical activities with the night, as appears in the allegation of nocturnal sacrifice. As we have already seen in Apuleius' brief definition (*Apol.* 26.6), *magi* were apparently also associated with the gods; as is clear from another of the allegations brought against Apuleius, namely, that he had commissioned a seal depicting a ghoulish figure, *magi* seem to have been particularly associated with the gods of the underworld.[12] Lastly, *magi* were thought to draw on arcane knowledge and mysterious traditions, particularly those that derived from the ancient cultures of the orient.[13]

To sum up, Apuleius' *Apology* indicates that in popular usage the word *magus* and its cognates implied the use of secret and arcane rituals, chants, and substances, the knowledge of exotic oriental traditions, and the invocation of superhuman powers, especially those of the underworld, in order to achieve specific ends, such as inspiring sexual desire in another person or gaining access to otherwise inaccessible information. This conclusion may not seem particularly noteworthy: after all, these are more or less the connotations of this word-group that most people today would take for granted. It is therefore worth stressing that Apuleius' *Apology* is in many ways a highly unusual text, at least as regards its use of *magus* and its cognates. For one thing, these words occur far more frequently in it than in any other Latin text from Classical antiquity: *magus* appears a total of thirty-seven times, *magicus* twenty-two times, and *magia* forty times.[14] The word *magia*

---

law Pontianus (*Apol.* 53–4); note especially 54.8: *praesertim quod conditum cumque, quod obsignatum, quod inclusum domi adservatur, id omne eodem argumento magicum dicetur*.

[12] *Apol.* 61.2: *quod* [*sigillum*] *me aiunt ad magica maleficia occulta fabrica, ligno exquisitissimo, comparasse et, cum sit sceleti forma turpe et horribile, tamen impendio colere et Graeco vocabulo* βασιλέα *nuncupare*; cf. the description at 63.1: *macilentam vel omnino evisceratam formam diri cadaveris fabricatam, prorsus horribilem et larvalem*; this is surely meant to imply some underworld deity.

[13] So at *Apol.* 38.7, when Apuleius is about to read the Greek names of fish for which he has provided Latin translations, he says *iam me clamabis magica nomina Aegyptio vel Babylonico ritu percensere*. Cf. his list of famous *magi* at 90.6: *Carmendas vel Damigeron vel †his† Moses vel Iohannes vel Apollobex vel ipse Dardanus vel quicumque alius post Zoroastren et Hostanen inter magos celebratus est*; among these exotic names are some that would have been generally recognised as Judaean (Moses, Iohannes) and Persian (Zoroastres, Hostanes).

[14] *Magus*: 9.3, 25.8 (*bis*), 25.9, 26.3, 26.6, 26.9, 27.2, 28.4, 30.1, 30.2, 30.9, 31.9, 32.1, 32.2, 32.5, 40.3, 43.2, 43.8, 43.10, 45.5, 48.2, 51.10, 54.7, 66.3, 78.2, 79.1, 79.2, 79.4, 79.6, 81.1, 82.1, 82.6, 84.4, 90.1, 90.6, 91.1.

Magicus: 1.5, 9.2, 17.3, 32.2, 34.5, 36.7, 38.7, 41.5, 42.2, 42.6, 47.2, 47.5, 53.4, 53.9, 53.12, 54.1, 54.8, 61.2, 63.6, 69.4, 80.1, 102.7.

appears here in Latin for the first time, and remains a fairly rare word. More important is the fact that the text is unusual in precisely those respects in which it initially seems most ordinary. The connotations of the word *magus* and its cognates that we find in the *Apology* are normal only in hindsight; if we consider the speech in the context of what precedes it rather than what follows it, they are rather more surprising. Even more unusual is the fact that Apuleius uses all three words with more or less the same semantic range, so that *magia* denotes the knowledge, abilities, or activities of a *magus*, and *magicus* qualifies things associated with *magia* or a *magus*. In order to appreciate how unusual all this really is, it is necessary to examine the earlier material without reference to Apuleian usage.

2. *Some General Patterns*

Prior to Apuleius, only the noun *magus* and the related adjective *magicus*, *-a, -um* appear with any frequency in extant texts. As I have already mentioned, the abstract noun *magia* is first found in Apuleius. It is worth noting that whenever Apuleius uses the word in the accusative, he consistently employs the Greek ending *-an* rather than the Latin ending *-am*; this suggests that he regarded it to some extent as a Greek word not fully assimilated into Latin.[15] Similarly, the elder Pliny uniquely uses the abstract noun *magice*, which is clearly a transliteration of the Greek feminine adjective μαγική and presumably stands for ἡ μαγικὴ τεχνή.[16] We may also note two other cognates, both very rare: the feminine noun *maga*, found twice in the Senecan *Hercules Oetaeus* (523, 526), and the adjective *magus, -a, -um*, found twice in Ovid (*Am.* 1.8.5, *Med. fac.* 36) and once in *Hercules Oetaeus* (467).

It is thus on *magus* and *magicus* that I focus here. A brief examination of the evidence reveals a very clear and rather striking pattern: the noun is more common in prose, whereas the adjective is far more

---

Magia: 2.2, 9.5, 25.5, 25.10, 26.1, 27.9, 27.12, 28.4, 29.1, 29.2, 29.6, 29.9, 30.5, 31.1, 31.2, 31.4, 43.1, 47.1, 47.3, 53.2, 54.6, 58.5, 62.3, 63.2, 64.8, 67.1, 67.3, 70.3, 78.5, 80.5, 81.1, 82.4, 83.5, 84.3, 84.4, 87.2, 90.4, 96.2, 102.1, 102.2.

[15] *Apol.* 26.1, 27.12, 28.4, 29.2, 31.1, 31.4, 80.5, 84.4, 102.2. Later writers likewise use the Greek accusative: Tertullian, *De anim.* 57.2, Ammianus Marcellinus 23.6.32.

[16] Pliny is even more consistent than Apuleius in his use of Greek endings: in addition to the accusative *magian* (30.10), we also find the genitive *magices* (1.30 [*bis*], 28.188).

common in poetry. Leaving aside for the moment the elder Pliny, who uses both noun and adjective much more frequently than any extant writer before Apuleius, I have found forty-three examples of the noun *magus* in twelve different prose authors, as opposed to fourteen examples in six poets.[17] In contrast, I have found forty-eight examples of the adjective *magicus* in fifteen poets, as opposed to a mere six examples in four prose authors.[18] This general association of the noun *magus* with prose and the adjective *magicus* with poetry can be corroborated by some observations about individual writers. Ovid, for example, uses the noun only twice, but the adjective ten times; Seneca uses the adjective three times in his tragedies and never in his prose, whereas he uses the noun twice in his prose and never in his verse; Columella and Petronius use the adjective only in their verse and never in their prose; Justin's epitome of Trogus has two examples of the adjective in contrast to eleven examples of the noun.[19] The figures for the elder Pliny add considerably to the totals, but do not substantially alter the overall pattern: there are nineteen examples of the adjective in his *Natural History* as opposed to seventy-nine examples of the noun.[20] Although

---

[17] Prose authors: Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.108; *Leg.* 2.26; *Div.* 1.46 [*bis*], 47, 90–1 [*bis*]; *ND* 1.43; *Fin.* 5.89), Nigidius Figulus (F 67 Swoboda), Vitruvius (8.pr.1), Valerius Maximus (8.7.ext.2, 1.6.ext.16, 3.2.ext.2, 7.3.ext.2, 9.2.ext.6), Velleius Paterculus (2.24.3), Q. Curtius Rufus (3.3.10, 4.6.6[?], 5.1.22), Seneca (*Ep.* 58.31; *De ira* 3.16.3), Quintilian (*Inst. orat.* 2.10.5, 7.3.7), Pseudo-Quintilian (*Decl. Mai.* 10 tit. and 4), Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.27.2, 2.32.2, 6.29.4, 12.22.1, 16.30.2), Suetonius (*Nero* 34.4), Justin (1.9.7–10.1 [nine examples], 12.13.3 and 5).

Poets: Catullus (90.1 and 3), Horace (*Carm.* 1.27.22; *Epist.* 2.1.213), Ovid (*Met.* 7.195[?]; 196), *Ciris* (374[?]), Lucan 6.431, 440, 450, 577, 767; 8.220), Juvenal (3.76).

[18] Poets: Vergil (*Ecl.* 8.66; *Aen.* 4.493), Horace (*Epist.* 2.2.208), Tibullus (1.2.42, 47, 63; 1.5.12; 1.8.5 and 24), Propertius (1.1.20, 2.28.35, 4.1.106, 4.4.51), Ovid (*Am.* 3.7.35; *Ars* 2.102 and 425; *Rem.* 250; *Fast.* 2.426; *Met.* 3.534, 5.197, 7.330, 10.398, 14.58), Grattius (*Cyn.* 405), Manilius (5.34), Seneca (*Med.* 684, *Oed.* 561, *Herc. Oet.* 452), Lucan (3.224, 4.553, 6.460, 6.576, 6.822, 9.923), Columella (10.367), Petronius (134.12), Statius (*Achil.* 1.135), Silius Italicus (1.97, 1.432, 8.98), Valerius Flaccus (6.151, 6.449, 7.212, 7.327, 7.389, 8.351), Juvenal (6.610, 15.5).

Prose authors: Q. Curtius Rufus (7.4.8), Pseudo-Quintilian (*Decl. Mai.* 10.2), Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.59.1, 16.31.1), Justin (1.1.9, 36.2.7).

[19] The details can be found in the two preceding notes. Ovid also uses the alternative adjective *magus* twice, adding to the imbalance. Seneca (if he is indeed the author of *Hercules Oetaeus*) does use the feminine noun *maga* in that play, but never the masculine *magus*.

[20] *Magicus*: 1.24, 8.106, 11.203, 24.156, 25.25, 25.113, 25.127, 26.18, 27.57, 28.92, 28.105, 29.81, 30.1, 30.17 (*bis*), 30.51, 32.33, 37.118, 37.133.

Magus: 1.26, 1.28, 1.30, 6.116, 16.249, 21.62, 21.66, 21.166, 21.176, 22.20, 22.50, 22.61, 24.72, 24.156, 24.160 (*bis*), 24.164, 24.165, 24.167, 25.13, 25.106, 25.129, 26.20, 28.47, 28.69, 28.85, 28.89, 28.92, 28.94, 28.104, 28.198, 28.201, 28.215, 28.226, 28.228,

issues of style and prosody may partly account for this striking pattern, I would argue that there is a semantic component as well: prose writers generally used these words in a different sense than did poets. In order to substantiate this assertion, it is necessary to examine the evidence in more detail.

3. *Prose*

As we have seen, Apuleius asserted that *magus* was actually the Persian word for 'priest'. This statement is correct, at least insofar as the word is indeed Old Persian in origin (*makuš* or *maguš*): by the mid-fifth century BCE, it had passed from Persian into Greek as the loanword μάγος, and then from Greek eventually into Latin. Whether the word was in fact the Persian equivalent of the Latin *sacerdos* is much less certain, since in Persian documentary texts it often appears with no obvious religious associations. In the Classical and early Hellenistic Greek sources, by contrast, the only non-religious context in which the word features prominently is the story of two brothers, described as *magoi*, one of whom usurped the Persian throne by masquerading as Cambyses' dead brother Smerdis.[21] Otherwise, the Greek sources are fairly consistent in their presentation of *magoi* as religious specialists. They appear above all as experts in divination and divine lore, and are said to practice incest and leave the bodies of their dead to be torn by birds and beasts.[22] They are also, and increasingly in late Classical and Hellenistic writers, depicted as 'barbarian philosophers' who maintain the teachings of Zoroaster.[23] From the beginning, however, the word

---

28.229, 28.232, 28.249, 28.260, 29.53, 29.59, 29.66, 29.68 (*bis*), 29.76, 29.117, 29.138, 30.16 (*bis*), 30.17, 30.18, 30.51, 30.54, 30.64, 30.82, 30.84, 30.91, 30.100, 30.110, 30.141, 32.34, 32.55, 32.72, 32.115, 36.139, 36.142, 37.54, 37.124, 37.135, 37.142, 37.144, 37.145, 37.147, 37.155, 37.156, 37.165, 37.169, 37.185, 37.192.

[21] Herodotus 3.61–79; cf. the very different version in Ctesias (*FGrHist* 688 F 13); there are later brief references in Diodorus Siculus (11.57.1, 16.47.2, 19.40.2, 31.19.1) and Strabo (15.3.24).

[22] Divination: the early sources emphasize especially the interpretation of dreams (Hdt. 1.107–8, 1.120, 7.19; Dinon *FGrHist* 690 F 10 = Cicero, *Div*. 1.46), but note also the interpretation of omens (Hdt. 7.37). Divine lore: Hdt. 1.132, 7.43, 7.113; Xenophon, *Cyr*. 4.5.14, 7.5.57, 8.1.23, 8.3.11, etc. Incest: Xanthus *FGrHist* 765 F 31 = Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 3.2.11.1 and Sotion frg. 36 Wehrli = Diog. Laert. 1.7; treatment of dead: Hdt. 1.140; both customs are noted by Strabo (15.3.20).

[23] See Plato, *1 Alc*. 121e–22a, Aristotle, *Met*. 14.4.5, 1091b8, and the array of authorities cited by Diogenes Laertius at 1.2 and 1.6–9 (Xanthus, Eudoxus, Theopompus, Aristotle, Eudemus).

μάγος also had in Greek a very different sense, one with no overt connection to Persia: it instead denoted free-lance ritual specialists, usually with a derogatory connotation.[24]

In Latin, the word *magus* is not attested before the 50s BCE, and when it does appear, it denotes only the Persian religious specialists. Thus Cicero refers several times to the expertise of the *magi* in divination (*Div*. 1. 46, 47, 90–1), notes their treatment of the dead (*Tusc*. 1. 108), says that they reject the practice of enclosing the gods in temples (*Leg*. 2. 26), and reports the story that Pythagoras studied with them (*ND* 1. 43; *Fin*. 5. 87). In extant prose texts, this usage remains entirely consistent down to the second half of the first century CE. *Magus* regularly denotes a Persian expert in divination and ritual lore or a Persian 'philosopher', although two writers also refer to the usurping *magi*.[25] The only instance of the adjective *magicus* is in Curtius Rufus, again with specific reference to a Persian context; for this reason it might be better translated as 'magian' than as 'magic'.[26] Latin prose authors thus seem to adhere very closely to the traditions about the Persian *magi* that had been established in earlier Greek history, ethnography, and philosophy.

It is only in the elder Pliny's *Natural History* that we find any major changes in this word-group. One of the most obvious is simply the increase in its abundance and variety. As I noted above, Pliny uses the word *magus* far more frequently than any earlier writer. He is also the first extant prose author apart from Curtius to use the adjective *magicus*, which he, like Curtius, employs as more or less the equivalent of *magorum*, meaning 'of or associated with *magi*'. Lastly, he is the first extant Latin writer to use an abstract noun to describe the *ars* of the *magi*, the otherwise unattested *magice*.[27] The other significant

---

[24] Heraclitus DK 22 B 14 = Clem. Alex., *Protr*. 2.22.2; Sophocles, *OT* 387; Euripides, *Or*. 1494–8; Derveni papyrus col. vi; [Hippocrates], *Morb. Sacr*. 1.10; note also μαγεύων 1.26 and 31 Grensemann.

[25] Barbarian philosophers: Nigidius Figulus frg. 67 Swoboda; Vitruvius, *De arch*.. 8.pr.1; Valerius Maximus 8.7.ext.2; Seneca, *Ep*. 58.31. Experts in divination: Val. Max. 1.6.ext.1b; Vell. Pat. 2.24.3. Experts in ritual lore: Curtius Rufus, *Alex*. 3.3.10, 5.1.22. Usurpers: Val. Max. 3.2.ext.2, 7.3.ext.2, 9.2.ext.6; Seneca, *De ira* 3.16.3.

[26] 7.4.8: *Erat in eo convivio Gobares, natione Medus, sed magicae artis--si modo ars est, non vanissimi cuiusque ludibrium--magis professione quam scientia celeber, alioqui moderatus et probus.*

[27] *Magice* is clearly a transliteration of μαγική, which is used, e.g., by Philo, *De spec. leg*. 3.100 to denote 'true' magian practice as opposed to what Plato calls μαγγανεία, cf. G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic* (Cambridge 2008) 78–9; also n. 55 below. As a

change that we can observe in Pliny's use of this word-group is his repeated association of it with arcane lore about the unusual effects that various plants, animal substances, and stones allegedly have on human subjects.[28] In the vast majority of relevant passages, Pliny uses the word *magus* in the plural simply to denote authorities in this sort of lore. A few examples selected at random will illustrate the general pattern.

"The *magi* are of the opinion that those who thoroughly rub themselves [with a plant called *antirrinum*] or wear it in an armband become more attractive and cannot be injured by any harmful drug. Likewise the plant they call *euplia*: they report that those who thoroughly rub themselves with it acquire a better reputation. They also assert that neither harmful drugs nor any wild beast nor even the sun can harm those who keep *artemisia* with them" (*HN* 25.129–30). "The *magi* say that sleep is induced by the gall of a nanny-goat, provided she has been sacrificed, either smeared on the eyes or placed under the pillow" (*HN* 28.260). "The *magi* assure us that tertian fevers are dispelled by crabs' eyes attached to the patient before sunrise, as long as the blinded crabs are released into water; they also report that crabs' eyes, wrapped up with nightingales' flesh in a deer skin, drives away sleep and produces wakefulness" (*HN* 32.115–16).

Although most of the lore that Pliny attributes to the *magi* does not seem to differ much from other such material that he records with evident approval, he often dismisses it with hostility and contempt:[29]

> The following is also generally agreed (and there is indeed nothing that I would more willingly believe): that for doorposts to be so much as touched with menstrual blood renders useless the *artes* of the *magi*, a *genus vanissimum*, as one may determine. For I will set forth the most restrained of their promises: they give instructions that you should take the parings from a person's fingernails and toenails and mix them with wax (saying that you want them as a remedy for a tertian, quartan, or daily fever), and before sunrise affix them to another person's door as a

---

syncopation of the full ἡ μαγικὴ τέχνη (p. 58 above), it can be counted a late Hellenistic usage that Pliny adapts to his own ends.

[28] The distribution of the words is in itself revealing: the largest clusters occur in the three books concerning *medicinae ex animalibus* (Books 28–30: thirty-seven instances of *magus* and seven of *magicus*) and the book on gems (Book 37: thirteen instances of *magus* and two of *magicus*): together, these four books contain half the instances of both words in the entire text.

[29] See Dickie 1999, 172f.

> cure for these diseases. How fraudulent [*quanta vanitate*], if false, and how harmful, if they pass on the disease!
>
> *HN* 28.85–6

Phrases like *vanitas magorum* or *magicae vanitates* constitute a virtual leitmotiv in certain parts of the work.[30] Similarly, Pliny particularly associates the *magi* with prescriptions of which he disapproves. So for example he declares that he does not discuss abortifacients and love potions or other *magica portenta*, except by way of caution or refutation (*HN* 25.25). Elsewhere he asserts that it would be a waste of time to describe a certain plant that is used only for love potions, although he allows himself one observation about it in order to expose *magicae vanitates*.[31] In some passages he characterises the prescriptions of the *magi* as *insidiae*, against which people must protect themselves, as we see in the passage quoted above.[32] *Magus* and its cognates thus have in Pliny a marked negative connotation.

Throughout most of the *Natural History*, the *ars* of the *magi* appears as the dark side of *medicina*: a use of natural substances that is disreputable either because it is fraudulent or because it is directed towards improper ends. It is thus not surprising that Pliny associates the word *magus* and its cognates with a more traditional Latin word-group that had similar connotations, that of *venenum* and *veneficium*. So for example after describing various *venena*, he goes on to list remedies "against all these and against *magicae artes*" (*HN* 25.127). In another passage he explains that the flesh of tortoises is said to be peculiarly suitable for fumigations, for dispelling *magicae artes*, and as a cure for *venena* (*HN* 32.33), and in a third he touts a certain type of stone as effective against all *veneficia*, especially those of the *magi* (*HN* 36.139).[33] Insofar as this fraudulent *ars* has any substance at all, he concludes,

---

[30] *Magorum vanitas*: *HN* 22.20, 28.89 and 94 (cf. 100), 37.54 and 124; *magica vanitas*: *HN* 29.81, 37.118; *magicae vanitates*: *HN* 26.18, 27.57, 30.1.

[31] *HN* 27.57: *Catanancen Thessalam herbam qualis sit describi a nobis supervacuum est, cum sit usus eius ad amatoria tantum. Illud non ab re est dixisse ad detegendas magicas vanitates, electam ad hunc usum coniectura, quoniam arescens contraheret se ad speciem unguium milvi exanimati*. For other passages associating *amatoria* with *magi*, see, e.g., *HN* 22.20 and 30.141.

[32] *HN* 28.105: *excrementa sive ossa reddita, cum [hyaena] interematur, contra magicas insidias pollere*; cf. *HN* 37.169.

[33] Cf. *HN* 29.68, where remedies for the bites of serpents may be described as *magorum veneficia*; but the text is very uncertain.

it derives more from the techniques of the *veneficus* than from those of the *magus*.[34]

This association of the word *magus* and its cognates with lore about animal substances and stones, with *medicina* and *veneficium*, is very different from anything that we find in earlier Latin prose authors. Where did it come from? A passage in Book 24 gives us a fairly good idea. Pliny begins by saying that "in connection with the promised subject of wonderful herbs, it occurs to me to say something also about magical herbs; for what herbs are more wonderful? The first men in our part of the world to discuss them were Pythagoras and Democritus, who followed the *magi*" (*HN* 24.156). He goes on to discuss several plants described by Pythagoras in a book that others attribute to the doctor Cleemporus (24.156–9). He then turns to the *Chiromecta*, a work universally attributed to Democritus, "the most zealous student of the *magi*" next to Pythagoras (24.160), and summarises its descriptions of fourteen different plants (24.160–6). Matthew Dickie has cogently argued on the basis of this and similar passages that Pliny took his information about the *magi* and their lore from Hellenistic pseudepigrapha: collections of prescriptions for the use of plants, animal substances, and stones that circulated under the names of Pythagoras and Democritus and presented this information as the wisdom of the *magi*.[35] These texts evidently built on the established Greek view of the *magi* that I sketched above; indeed, it presupposed the tradition that the *magi* were barbarian philosophers with whom Greek philosophers had studied. If we can take Pliny as a guide, they seem to have represented the *magi* as eastern, and specifically Persian, ritual specialists with a particular expertise in divination.[36] But these works augmented

---

[34] *HN* 30.17: *proinde ita persuasum sit, intestabilem, inritam, inanem esse, habentem tamen quasdam veritatis umbras, sed in his veneficas artes pollere, non magicas.*

[35] Dickie 1999, 173–83, summarising the work of Max Wellmann, e.g. Die φυσικά des Bolos Demokritos und der Magier Anaxilaos aus Larissa, *APAW* 1928.7 (Berlin 1928); idem, Die Stein- und Gemmenbücher der Antike, in *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Medizin* 4.4 (1935) 86–110; cf. R.L. Beck, Thus Spake not Zarathuštra: Zoroastrian Pseudepigrapha of the Greco-Roman World, in M. Boyce and F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism, 3: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leyden 1991) 491–565, esp. 532–34.

[36] All the plants mentioned by Pliny in his excerpts from the *Chiromecta* are said to be native to various eastern regions, e.g., Arabia, India, Armenia, Cappadocia, Ethiopia, Bactria, and Persia, and several of them are said to be used by the Persian kings as well as the *magi* (*HN* 24.162–66; cf. 26.18–19); one of them the *magi* use *cum velint deos evocare* (24.160) and another they drink when they divine (24.164). Cf. 21.62: Democritus describes a certain plant found in Gedrosia, and says that *magos*

these established traditions about the *magi* by also ascribing to them authority in the arcane use of plants, animal substances, and stones.

It was no doubt in part the influence of treatises such as these that caused Pliny to use *magus* and its cognates with a wider range of associations than we find in earlier prose writers. In the famous discussion of *magicae vanitates* with which he opens Book 30, however, we find an even wider range yet. Since this passage has been so often discussed, I will confine myself here to a few key points.[37] First, although he asserts that *magice* or the *ars magica* began in Persia with Zoroaster, he also associates it with many other places, persons, and traditions: with Telmessus and Thessaly, with Orpheus and Thrace, with Moses and the Judaeans, with Cyprus, with archaic practices in Italy and Rome, and with Gaul and Britain.[38] Secondly, although he analyses it as drawing on *medicina, religio*, and the *artes mathematicae*, he associates with it a whole mélange of miraculous feats and 'foreign' ritual practices: the shape shifting of Proteus and Circe and the consultation of the dead in the *Odyssey*, the Thessalian trick of calling down the moon, human sacrifice, and various forms of divination, including necromancy. All of this suggests that for Pliny the semantic range of *magus* and its cognates was by no means limited to what we find in earlier prose, or even to what we find in the rest of the *Natural History*, but was almost indefinitely extendable.

The use of this word-group in prose writers later than Pliny presents a contrast both with that of the earlier period and with that of Pliny himself. It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions, because we have so very few examples: *magus* occurs twice in Quintilian and twice in one of the pseudo-Quintilianic *Declamationes Maiores*, five times in Tacitus, and once in Suetonius; *magicus* appears once in the *Declamationes Maiores* and twice in Tacitus.[39] Nevertheless, some interesting patterns

---

Parthorumque reges hac herba uti ad vota suscipienda. See also 28.104, on the powers of a hyena's blood: *eodem tactis postibus ubicumque magorum infestari artes, non elici deos nec conloqui, sive lucernis sive pelvi, sive aqua sive pila, sive quo alio genere temptetur*.

[37] *HN* 30.1–18. See especially R. Garosi, Indagine sulla formazione del concetto di magia nella cultura romana, in P. Xella (ed.), *Magia: Studi di storia delle religione in memoria di Raffaela Garosi* (Rome 1976) 13–93 at 17–31.

[38] On the association with Gaul, cf. the very interesting comment at *HN* 16.249 that the Gauls call their *magi* Druids; see also Gordon, Joly and Van Andringa elsewhere in this volume (p. 503f.).

[39] I note here only briefly the evidence of Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus, which seems to follow the usage of an earlier period; most instances of the word *magus*

emerge. For one thing, in none of these passages is there any explicit connection with Persian tradition. Secondly, the skills associated with this word-group are effectively limited to two areas: divination on the one hand and expertise with spirits of the dead on the other. Only Quintilian suggests another association, when he illustrates the issue of definition with the question of whether *carmina magorum* can be considered *veneficium*.[40] Regarding expertise with the spirits of the dead, Suetonius reports that Nero attempted, by means of a rite performed by *magi*, to summon up and placate the ghost of his mother; and one of the *Declamationes Maiores* deals with a case in which a father employed a *magus* to prevent the spirit of his dead son from leaving the tomb.[41] Tacitus, by contrast, consistently uses the word *magus* to denote a free-lance expert in divination. Libo Drusus, for example, is accused of having resorted to the promises of Chaldaeans, the rites of *magi*, and the interpreters of dreams (*Ann.* 2.27.2), and as a result the senate issues a decree for the expulsion of *magi* and *mathematici* from Italy (2.32.2); in a later passage, Lollia Paulina is charged with consulting Chaldaeans, *magi*, and the oracle of Clarian Apollo about Claudius' marriage (12.22.1). In both cases, the juxtaposition of *magi* with other types of diviners makes Tacitus' meaning clear.[42]

---

in fact occur in his account of the false Smerdis (whom he calls Mergis: 1.9.7–10.1). Elsewhere, he describes Zoroaster as the inventor of the *artes magicae* (1.1.9) and records the story that a *magus* warned Alexander not to enter Babylon (12.13.3–5). The most intriguing passage comes in his account of Joseph, who became in Egypt an expert in the *magicae artes*, by which he means specifically the interpretation of omens and dreams (36.2.6).

[40] *Inst. orat.* 7.3.7; whether or not we should consider this as an issue that arose in actual court cases is called into question by a comment in his discussion of the utility of declamation: *Nam magos et pestilentiam et responsa et saeviores tragicis novercas aliaque magis adhuc fabulosa frustra inter sponsiones et interdicta quaeremus* (2.10.5).

[41] *Nero* 34.4: *facto per magos sacro evocare manes et exorare temptavit*. *Decl. Mai.* 10 tit.: *Quae amissum filium nocte videbat in somnis, indicavit marito. Ille adhibito mago incantavit sepulcrum. Mater desiit videre filium; accusat maritum malae tractionis*. Cf. 10.2 and especially 10.4: after the mother loses her son, *iam magum misera quaerebat, ut umbra evocaretur*.

[42] The same is true in the trial of Barea Soranus' daughter Servilia, accused of spending money on *magi* and the performance of *magica sacra* (*Ann.* 16.30.2 and 31.1): Tacitus claims that she merely made inquiries as to the fate of her father. In the two remaining instances (6.29.4: Mamercus Scaurus accused of *magorum sacra*; 12.59.1: Tarquitius Priscus accused of *magicae superstitiones*), Tacitus does not provide enough information to make it clear what exactly these terms mean. It is worth noting, however, that in contexts where the issue is explicitly one of *veneficia* and *devotiones* (the death of Germanicus and the trial of Piso at *Ann.* 2.69–73 and 3.10–16, the trial of

Looking at the evidence as a whole, we can make a few observations about the semantic range of *magus* and its cognates in prose. First, as I noted in the previous section, the adjective is relatively rare in prose, and when it does appear its derivation from the noun *magus* is clearly and immediate: it in effect functions as the equivalent of *magorum*. Secondly, down to the second half of the first century CE, the word-group refers exclusively to the Persian ritual specialists and their traditional areas of expertise, notably divination. Thirdly, in Pliny the Elder we see a strikingly different tradition, which represented the Persian *magi* as authorities in the arcane properties of plants, animal substances, and stones; in his general discussion of *magice*, Pliny also reveals a tendency to link the word-group with a much wider range of traditions, including well known scenes from literature. Lastly, although prose writers of the late first and early second centuries no longer use the word-group with specific reference to Persia, they do for the most part associate it with techniques such as divination in which the Persian *magi* were traditionally thought to be expert.

4. *Poetry*

In poetry, the first appearance of this word-group is precisely in line with what we initially find in prose. Catullus cattily suggests that a *magus* may be born from his enemy Gellius' union with his own mother, "for a *magus* must be born from a mother and son, if the impious religion of the Persians is true" (90.1–4). Catullus, who also refers explicitly to *Persicum haruspicium* and to the *magus*' veneration of the gods, is here clearly drawing on the Greek ethnographic tradition about the Persian *magi* that also informed the references in Cicero and other prose writers. After Catullus, however, the usage of poets and prose authors diverges radically. Not only do poets show a strong preference for the adjective *magicus* over the noun *magus*, but they tend to use both words with a range of connotations that differs significantly from what we find in prose texts.

Numantina at 4.22, the trial of Claudia Pulchra at 4.52, and the trial of Domitia Lepida at 12.64–5), *magus* and its cognates do not appear at all. See also Matthew Dickie's discussion elsewhere in this volume (pp. 88–91, 96–9), who independently reaches the same conclusion about Tacitus' use of this vocabulary.

The essential pattern was established by Vergil, the first extant Latin writer to use the adjective *magicus* at all. The word appears twice in his works: in the eighth *Eclogue* (8.66) he describes the rites that a girl employs to bring back her estranged lover as *magica sacra*, and in the *Aeneid* (4.493) he refers to the rites that Dido will use to win back Aeneas as examples of the *magicae artes*. Although in both cases the primary reference of the word is to love charms, Vergil elaborates on its connotations through a plethora of allusions. In the eclogue, for example, the *magica sacra* involve not only ritual actions but also *carmina*, 'spells', and *venena*, 'potions'. With *carmina* he associates the 'Thessalian trick' of drawing down the moon, the spells of Circe that transformed Ulysses' men, and the charms that the Italic tribe of the Marsi reputedly used to kill snakes. Similarly, with *venena* he links the power to transform oneself into a wolf, to summon shades from the grave, and to move crops from one field to another. It is also worth noting that *magicus* here has no overt or even implicit connection with Persia: the *magi* as Persian ritual specialists are one of the few motifs that he does not invoke. In short, in this passage of the *Eclogues* Vergil brings together a wide range of literary traditions and folk beliefs that have to do with the marvellous, and presents them as different elements within a single general category that he denotes with the adjective *magicus*. This usage is fundamentally different from what we find in contemporary prose.

The usage of Vergil's contemporary Horace is in essence very similar. Horace is one of the very few poets to use the noun *magus*, but he uses it with connotations that are much closer to those of Vergil's *magicus* than to the normal meaning of *magus* in prose. In one of his Odes, for example, he presents a *magus* working with Thessalian *venena* as someone who, along with a *saga*, might free a lovesick lad from his passion (*Carm*. 1.27.21–2). In his epistles, he praises the power of the poet to fill his audience with false terrors, *ut magus* (*Epist*. 2.1.210–13), and presents a list of superstitious fears that include *terrores magici* along with *sagae, nocturni lemures*, and *portenta Thessala* (*Epist*. 2.2.208–9). Again, instead of reference to the ethnographic traditions about Persian *magi*, we find associations with folk beliefs and literary commonplaces about witches. It is interesting, however, that Horace never makes use of this word-group in his treatments of the witch Canidia and her cronies, because it is precisely in stereotyped descriptions of witches that later poets most commonly employ the

adjective *magicus*.[43] Tibullus provides the first example of this in his extended sketch of a *saga* who has given him a charm to deceive his lover's husband. He presents a bundle of motifs very similar to what we find in Vergil, with some variations: his witch can draw the stars from the sky, turn the course of a stream with a *carmen*, cleave the ground and call forth the dead with a *cantus*, and chase the clouds from the sky; she possesses the evil herbs of Medea and has tamed the hounds of Hecate; she can loosen the poet's passion by means of chants and herbs (1.2.41–62). Tibullus uses the adjective *magicus* three times in this description: of the aid that the *saga* gave him (42, *magicum ministerium*), the shriek with which she rouses the spirits of the dead (47, *magicus stridor*), and the gods to whom she slaughters victims (62, *magici di*).

There is no need to look in detail at the use of the word in later poetry, since this would only reveal variations on the general pattern that I have already sketched out. Latin poets consistently use the adjective *magicus* to characterise rituals, herbs, and especially chants that bring about some alteration in the natural world, and they typically employ it in descriptions of witches, especially famous mythic figures like Circe and Medea. It very commonly modifies nouns meaning 'chant' or 'spell', although the phrase *artes magicae* also often appears as shorthand for the entire bundle of stereotyped wonders that I have outlined.[44] Even poets who were not working with the particular literary stereotype of the witch tended to associate the adjective *magicus* with herbs and chants. Grattius, for example, describes old fashioned amulets used to protect hunting dogs as *herbae* aided by *magici cantus* (*Cyneg*. 405). The noun *magus*, in contrast, continues to be very rare in poetry. Apart from a doubtful example in *Ciris*, Ovid is the only poet between Horace and Lucan to use it, and he does so with precisely the same connotations as the adjective *magicus*; indeed, he employs the

[43] There are extended accounts of Canidia in *Epod*. 5 and 7 and *Sat*. 1.8, and brief references in *Epod*. 3.7–8 and *Sat*. 2.1.48 and 2.8.95.

[44] Modifying *carmen, cantamen, cantus*: Tib. 1.5.12; Prop. 2.28.35, 4.4.51; Ovid, *Fast*. 2.426 (cf. *Ars*. 2.102, *Met*. 7.330, *Met*. 14.58); Grattius, *Cyneg*. 405; Seneca, *Med*. 684, *Oed*. 561 (cf. *Herc. Oet*. 467, *carmen magum*); Lucan, *BC* 4.553, 6.822; Columella, *RR* 10.376; Petronius, *Sat*. 134.12; Silius Italicus, *Pun*. 1.97 (cf. 1.432); Valerius Flaccus, *Arg*. 8.351 (cf. 7.389–90); Juvenal, *Sat*. 6.610. *Artes magicae*: Vergil, *Aen*. 4.493; Ovid, *Am*. 3.7.35, *Ars* 2.425, *Rem*. 250 (cf. *Am*. 1.8.5, *magae artes*, and *Medic*. 36, *maga ars*); Manilius, *Astr*. 5.34; [Seneca], *Herc. Oet*. 452.

phrase *cantus artesque magorum* as an obvious variation of the more common *cantus artesque magici*.[45]

It is only in Lucan that we find any significant shift. Although his use of the adjective *magicus* does not differ significantly from that of other poets, he employs the noun *magus* more frequently: six times in the *Bellum Civile*. To a certain extent, he seems to follow Horace and Ovid in using the noun with the same connotations that had become traditional for the adjective *magicus*. Thus Sextus Pompeius knows "the secrets of savage *magi*, hateful to the gods above" (6.430–2), and the rocks of Thessaly hear *magi* chanting dire secrets (6.439–40). But in one passage he quite explicitly uses the word *magus* to mean a Persian functionary: when Pompey sends Deiotarus to ask aid of Arsaces after the battle of Pharsalus, he refers to a treaty that had been ratified by the *magi* (8.218–20). By using the noun in both these senses, Lucan implies a link between the 'magic' of the poetic tradition and the activities of the Persian *magi*. This association is even more explicit in other passages, where he sets up the Persian *magi* as in some sense the competitors of Thessalian witches: not only does Erichtho use words that are unknown to the *magi* and their gods (6.577), but the murmurs of Thessalian witches will force the gods from others' altars, "even though Persian Babylon and secret Memphis unlock every sanctum of their ancient *magi*" (6.448–51). In this last passage it is also worth noting the apparent attribution of *magi* to Egypt as well as to Persia. Although we might analyse this simply as an example of zeugma, Lucan similarly associates *magi* with Egypt in an earlier passage, where he speaks of Egyptian hieroglyphics that preserve *magicae linguae* (3.222–4).

Apart from Lucan, the use of this word-group in Latin poetry remains remarkably consistent from Vergil through Juvenal, both in the general preference for the adjective over the noun and in the range of connotations that the words normally carry. What is surprising in all this, and worthy of comment, is the extent to which this usage differs from what we find in prose texts.

---

[45] *Met*. 7.194–5, in Medea's invocation of deities to aid her work: *Tuque, triceps Hecate, quae coeptis conscia nostris/adiutrixque venis cantusque artisque magorum* [obelized by R.J. Tarrant in OCT (2004)]. The other instance occurs in the following line: *quaeque magos, Tellus, pollentibus instruis herbis*. Cf. *Ciris* 374, where Scylla's nurse performs rites for Jupiter Magus (or *magnus*, as the majority of manuscripts read).

5. *The Meaning of* Magus *and its Cognates*

Having completed this survey of *magus* and its cognates in Latin prose and poetry, I now turn to some of the general issues that arise from it. First of all, what accounts for the very different patterns of usage in prose and poetry? It is not possible to give a simple and definite answer to this question. It is clear enough that the initial use of the noun *magus* derives from Greek antecedents, especially ethnographic, historical, and philosophical texts. But we cannot with any confidence say the same about the use of the adjective *magicus* in poetry. There are certainly antecedents for the constellation of associations that we find in Vergil and other Augustan poets, notably Apollonius' description of Medea and Theocritus' second *Idyll*. But neither Apollonius nor Theocritus employ the adjective *magikos* or any other cognate of *magos* in these passages. Since our knowledge of Hellenistic Greek poetry is so limited, it may be that the use of these words in similar contexts was a well established practice that simply happens not to be represented in the surviving texts.[46] It is equally possible, however, that it was an innovation of Latin poets, perhaps even of Vergil himself. The fact that Horace does not make use of this word-group in his earlier poetry, even in places where we might expect it, but only in his poetry of the 20s and 10s, might indicate that he adopted it only after his friend had set the example; certainly the practice of the elegists and later poets can be explained on the basis of the Vergilian precedent. Given Vergil's interest in arcane traditions, such as we find for example in the fourth Eclogue, it is not impossible that he adopted the word from the sort of sub-literary Hellenistic pseudepigrapha on which the elder Pliny drew.

Whatever the reason, however, the Latin adjective *magicus* quickly became dissociated from any particular reference to Persian ritual specialists, and acquired instead a more flexible and evocative semantic range. The noun *magus*, by contrast, remained largely restricted to its original technical meaning. It was perhaps for this reason that poets made much greater use of the adjective, and employed the noun only occasionally as a derivative, so to speak, of the adjective. By the second

[46] A fragment of Sosiphanes' *Meleager* suggests that this may have been the case: μάγοις ἐπῳδαῖς πᾶσα Θεσσαλὶς κόρη/ψευδὴς σελήνης αἰθέρος καταιβάτις (*TGrF* 1 p. 261 no. 92 frg. 1 = Σ Apoll. Rhod. 3.533b). According to the Suda (Σ 863) Sosiphanes' *floruit* was the third quarter of IV[a] (died either 336/3 or 324/1).

half of the first century, however, the very clear pattern in the use of these words begins to break down. Lucan reintroduces into poetry the technical meaning of the noun *magus* and associates it with the well-established connotations of the adjective *magicus*; as a result, in Lucan we find for the first time Persian *magi* presented as exponents of the *magicae artes*. Not much later, the elder Pliny associates the noun with a body of lore that had not been linked to it before: expertise in the arcane powers of plants, animal substances, and stones. But this sort of expertise, we should note, had long been associated with the adjective *magicus* in poetry. Pliny's own use of the adjective *magicus* consequently involves a certain ambiguity: on the one hand, it is clearly tied to the Persian *magi*, but on the other it also has something of the broader connotations that we find in poetry. The full range of connotations that this word-group could have for Pliny becomes startlingly explicit in his general discussion of *magice* at the start of Book 30, which encompasses everything from the teachings of Zoroaster to human sacrifice in Gaul. Lastly, we find that prose writers of the early second century no longer restrict the noun *magus* to the Persian ritual specialists; instead both Quintilian (and his anonymous follower) and Tacitus seem to use it to refer to free-lance specialists operating in Italy. This use of the noun may in fact go back to the early part of the first century CE, if Tacitus' reference to the expulsion of *magi et mathematici* under Tiberius reproduces the language of the original decree.[47]

Yet even given these developments, Apuleius' use of *magus* and its cognates in the *Apology* comes as something of a surprise: there we find that the entire word-group has much the same semantic range that the adjective *magicus* had had in poetry since Vergil. It is interesting to note that in his other works we still find the old distinction between the noun *magus* on the one hand and its cognates on the other.[48] We

[47] *Ann*. 2.32.3. Other sources vary in the terms they use to describe those affected by the decree: Suetonius (*Tib*. 36) names only *mathematici*, Dio says ἀστρολόγοι καὶ γόητες (57.15.8), and Ulpian, who apparently quotes the actual text of the decree, specifies *mathematici, Chaldaei, arioli, et ceteri, qui simile inceptum fecerunt* (ap. *Coll. Mos. et Rom.* 15.2.1). See further L. Desanti, *Sileat omnibus perpetuo divinandi curiositas: Indovini e sanzioni nel diritto romano* (Milan 1990) 33–41.

[48] Apuleius uses the noun *magus* only in his epideictic and philosophical works: twice to refer to the Persian priests in their role as barbarian philosophers (*Flor*. 15.14, *De dogm. Plat*. 1.3), and once to mean 'wonder-worker' (*De deo Soc*. 6). In the *Metamorphoses*, by contrast, he uses *magicus* nine times (1.3, 2.1, 2.6, 2.20, 2.21, 2.30, 3.18, 3.22, 3.29), *magia* three times (3.16, 3.19, 6.26), and the rare feminine noun *maga*

may accordingly wonder whether Apuleius' insistent use of this word-group in the *Apology* reflects a specific rhetorical strategy rather than general contemporary usage: by representing his opponents' charge in terms more appropriate to the literary stereotype of the witch, he perhaps intended to make them appear as absurd and ignorant as he repeatedly claims them to be. Yet there is some evidence in the text that Apuleius' accusers employed this word-group themselves. According to Apuleius, one of the people behind the charge brought against him was Rufinus, the father-in-law of Pudentilla's son Pontianus, who had hoped through this connection to gain access to her wealth. He therefore tried to use Pontianus to dissuade Pudentilla from marrying Apuleius; when this brought a sharp retort from Pudentilla, he attacked her as a slut and Apuleius as a *magus et veneficus* (*Apol.* 78.2). It was in response to this outburst that Pudentilla wrote a letter to Pontianus in Greek, rebuking him for his behaviour: it was he, she said, who had first suggested Apuleius to her as a potential husband and had encouraged their affection for each other; but now that Rufinus has poisoned his mind, "all of a sudden Apuleius is a *magos* and I have been bewitched to love him!"[49] Rufinus then pounced on this phrase and constantly repeated it out of context as proof of his allegations.[50] The very fact that Apuleius takes such pains to explain this letter and reveal its true significance suggests the importance of Pudentilla's remark in the case that his accusers brought against him.[51] There is thus strong reason to believe that the stress on the word *magus* and its cognates that we find in the *Apology* is not something that Apuleius himself introduced but instead originated with Apuleius' opponents,

---

probably twice (2.5 and 6.16, the latter being Helms' almost certain emendation for the manuscript reading *magna*); in all instances the words have the associations normal in poetry. On the tension between two modes of magic in the *Met.*, one literary/popular, the other 'parareligious', see N. Fick, La magie dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Apulée, *REL* 63 (1985) 132–47.

[49] *Apol.* 83.1: Νῦν δὲ ὡς κατ<ήγ>οροι ἡμῶν κακοήθεις σε ἀναπείθουσιν, αἰφνίδιον ἐγένετο Ἀπολέϊος μάγος, καὶ ἐγὼ μεμάγευμαι ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐρῶ.

[50] *Apol.* 82.6: *Turbabat impurus hic in medio foro bacchabundus, epistulam saepe aperiens proquiritabat: "Apuleius magus: dicit ipsa quae sentit et patitur; quid vultis amplius?"*.

[51] On the prosecution's use of the letter, see *Apol.* 27.8, 67.3 (*altera res est de epistulis eius, quam confessionem magiae putant*), and 78.5 (*litteras, quibus, ut isti aiebant, confessa est sese mea magia in amorem inductam dementire*), as well as Apuleius' detailed rebuttal at 79–84.

and accordingly that Apuleius' use of this word-group reflects the generally accepted usage of his day.[52]

Although the patterns for the use of this word-group in our evidence are clear enough, their significance is not. One possibility is that they are not in fact significant at all but merely reflect the accidents of survival: if we had a broader or even different selection of evidence, we might see completely different patterns. It is naturally impossible to rule this out, but in my view the overall patterns are strong enough that they cannot be entirely accidental. Nevertheless, since the evidence derives almost entirely from highly sophisticated literary texts, we may wonder about its relation to the usages of everyday life. Two very different scenarios may be imagined. On the one hand, it is possible that for most people the word *magus* and its cognates connoted the sort of thing that we find in poetry from the start, but in prose only in later writers, Apuleius above all. In this case, it is poetic usage that reflects the ordinary meaning of this word-group, whereas prose writers deliberately confined themselves to the technical and somewhat learned meaning of the noun *magus*. This is in fact what Apuleius implies when he distinguishes the learned and the vulgar meanings of this word (*Apol.* 25.8–26.9). On the other hand, it is equally possible that poetic usage was deliberately exotic and remote from the language of everyday life, and that prose usage provides a more reliable guide to the way people used these terms in ordinary circumstances. If so, we might postulate a gradual shift in the meaning of the noun, a development to which the poetic use of the adjective *magicus* contributed. In this scenario, the word *magus* would at first have had a fairly restricted meaning, denoting the Persian ritual specialists; it then began to be used more loosely of free-lance ritual specialists of various sorts, and lastly acquired the broad range of association that we find sketched in Pliny and accepted without comment in Apuleius. Which scenario is more plausible is not at this point easy to determine.

[52] For the use of the term in legal contexts, see my two papers, Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime, *Classical Antiquity* 22 (2003) 313–39 and Magic, Religion, and Law: The Case of the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis*, in C. Ando and J. Rüpke (eds.), *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome* (Stuttgart 2006) 47–67. On Apuleius' strategy in the *Apology*, see my paper: Legal Strategy and Learned Display in Apuleius' *Apology*, in W. Riess (ed.), *Paideia at Play: Learning and Wit in Apuleius* (Groningen 2008) 17–49.

6. *Possibilities for Further Research*

The fruits of this study are admittedly rather modest, and a broader field of investigation would undoubtedly produce a more ample harvest. There are various options for extending its scope. The first is to take into account other languages. As has been apparent at numerous points in this paper, it is hardly possible to study the Latin word *magus* in isolation from the Greek word μάγος, of which it is an adaptation. Some other members of the Latin word-group seem also to be loans from Greek, and not derived independently from the Latin *magus*: this is certainly true of the abstract nouns *magice* and *magia*, both of which are clearly marked as Greek by their declensions, and may to some extent also be true of the adjective *magicus* (cf. Greek μαγικός). It is *a priori* highly likely that Greek usage in the Hellenistic and imperial periods had considerable influence on the Latin usage. Moreover, the words eventually appear in other languages as well, such as Syriac and Coptic, and a comparison of their meaning in these languages with those in Latin and Greek may well yield some interesting results. A second way to broaden the scope of this study is to extend it into later antiquity, and to trace what changes occurred in the use of these words with the spread of Christianity. Lastly, it would be useful to study *magus* and its cognates in relation to other word-groups that had overlapping semantic ranges, notably the Greek words γόης/γοητεία and the Latin words *veneficus*/*veneficium* and *maleficus*/*maleficium*. The term Χαλδαῖος/*Chaldaeus* presents some particularly intriguing parallels: both words originally denote a person from a specific ethnic group who was expert in a particular kind of arcane lore, and both gradually come to lose their specific ethnic connotations and simply denote an expert in a particular kind of lore.

Although it is not possible here to pursue these various avenues of inquiry, I can at least offer a few preliminary observations. First, as other scholars have pointed out, the existence of γόης and its cognates meant that Greek writers had available a more purely Hellenic alternative to μάγος and its cognates.[53] This may account for the absence of the word in many later literary texts, whose authors were concerned with the purity of their Greek. Likewise, the absence of such an alternative in Latin may have meant that *magus* absorbed some of the

[53] See especially Bremmer 1999, 9 = 2002a, 11 = 2008a, 247.

semantic range of the Greek word γόης.[54] Secondly, although poets such as Apollonius and Theocritus avoided μάγος and its cognates, the use of these words may have flourished in other contexts of which we can now gain only fitful glimpses. A closer examination of the available evidence would undoubtedly shed further light on developments in the Hellenistic period. We have already seen that the evidence of Pliny indicates the importance of this word-group in pseudepigraphic treatises of arcane lore. Similarly, Hellenistic Jewish texts hint at some interesting semantic developments at the popular level: the tendency to apply these terms to wonder-workers of varied ethnic backgrounds, particularly Egyptians and Judaeans, and to associate them more insistently with φάρμακα and similar terms.[55] Lastly, the later evidence for *magus* and its cognates in Latin, although limited, does provide some confirmation that Apuleius' *Apology* reflected contemporary usage. Legal writers use these words to denote improper or illegal activities: Ulpian equates *libri magici* with *mala medicamenta et venena* (D. 10.2.4), and the redactor of *Pauli Sententiae* specifies the appropriate penalties for *conscii magicae artis, ipsi magi*, and possessors of *libri magicae artis* (5.23.17–18). But Christian Latin writers, especially Tertullian but also Arnobius and Lactantius, are the ones who provide the most extensive evidence for the later use of this word-group; careful study might be able to distinguish connotations that are specifically Christian (e.g., heresy) from those that may have been more widespread.[56]

---

[54] We may note, for example, that Apuleius twice translates γοητεία in Plato, *Symp*. 202e by *magorum miracula*: *Apol*. 43.2 and *De deo Socr*. 6.

[55] For example, the author of the *Testament of Reuben* describes how Potiphar's wife summoned μάγοι and used φάρμακα in her attempts on Joseph's chastity (4.9); Pseudo-Phocylides advises his readers to avoid φάρμακα and μαγικοὶ βίβλοι (149); the author of *The Wisdom of Solomon* notes the failure of the Egyptians' μαγικὴ τέχνη (i.e. between 100 BCE and 100 CE, one of the earliest surviving examples of this phrase) during the plague of darkness (17.7); Philo describes the Egyptian priests who challenged Moses as σοφισταὶ καὶ μάγοι (*Mos*. 1.91; cf. Jos. *AJ* 2.286) and sharply distinguishes true μαγική from the false, which employs φίλτρα καὶ ἐπῳδαί to inspire hate and love (*Spec. leg*. 3.100–1), cf. n. 27 above; the author of Acts reports how Simon had won over Samaria with his μαγείαι (8.9) and describes Elymas, the Judaean wonder-worker who accompanied the Roman governor of Cyprus, as a μάγος (13.6–8); Josephus reports that the procurator Felix employed a Judaean μάγος named Atomos to win over the sister of Agrippa II (*AJ* 20.142).

[56] Cf. F.C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen 1984) 316–448.

Further investigation of these topics may well yield some valuable results. Although the results of the present inquiry are necessarily limited and provisional, I hope that they nevertheless contribute something to our understanding of the meaning of these terms in antiquity. At the least, they may highlight the problems involved in simply equating the Latin words *magus* and *magicus* with the modern English 'magician' and 'magic' (or their equivalents in other languages) without a careful consideration of the specific context.

Bibliography

Bremmer, J.N. 1999. The Birth of the Term 'Magic', *ZPE* 126 (1999) 1–12.
——. 2002a. The Birth of the Term 'Magic' [somewhat revised version of the previous article], in Bremmer and Veenstra 2002, 1–11.
——. 2002b. Appendix: Magic and Religion, in Bremmer and Veenstra 2002, 267–72.
——. 2008a. Persian *Magoi* and the Birth of the Term 'Magic', in idem 2008c, 235–47.
——. 2008b. Magic *and* Religion?, in idem 2008c, 347–52.
——. 2008c. *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible and the Ancient Near East*. Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 8 (Leyden).
Bremmer, J.N. and Veenstra, J.R. (eds.) 2002. *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Leuven).
Dickie, M.W. 1999. The Learned Magician and the Collection and Transmission of Magical Lore, in *WAM* 163–93.
Phillips, C.R. 1991. *Nullum Crimen sine Lege*: Socioreligious Sanctions on Magic, in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York) 260–76.
Remus, H. 1982. "Magic or Miracle?" Some Second-Century Instances, *The Second Century* 2, 127–56.

CHAPTER TWO

MAGIC IN THE ROMAN HISTORIANS

Matthew W. Dickie

There are a number of questions that can be asked about the part magic plays in the writings of historians of Rome.[1] One may ask what the feelings of a historian are about magic, whether he thinks it is effective and has a reality to it and then what he thinks of the people who practise it and of those who resort to them. A related and important question is how does the historian think the state should deal with magic-workers? The attitude of the historian to magic and magic-workers is one order of question. There is another order of question: why does magic in some historians play no part, while in others it looms large? When magic does play a role in the writings of a historian, it is proper to examine the circumstances in which reference is made to it. One can then see whether a pattern emerges and whether the same pattern obtains in other historians who cover the same period. It goes without saying that the comparison will only be meaningful if the historians compared are independent of each other; that is to say, when one does not mechanically reproduce what the other has said or when both do not follow the same authority.

So much for preliminaries. We may now turn our attention to which historians have something to say about magic and which do not. The list of those in whom magic goes unmentioned is at least as long as that of those who believe it merits attention. It is a remarkable fact that magic is never mentioned in what survives of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, bar a passing reference to it in the account of the suppression of the Bacchanal cult.[2] Nor is there any hint of it in the *Periochae*.

---

[1] For the purposes of this paper 'Roman historian' means anyone who wrote a history of Rome, whether in Greek or in Latin. No account, therefore, will be taken of biographical writers such as Suetonius and Plutarch. Considerations of space have meant the exclusion of Ammianus Marcellinus.

[2] 39.11.2: *confestim mulier exclamat Hispalae concubitu carere eum decem noctes non posse; illius excetrae delenimentis et venenis imbutum nec parentis nec vitrici nec deorum verecundiam habere.*

It is less remarkable that magic receives no mention in Velleius Paterculus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Appian; the texture of the stories they tell does not obviously admit reference to magic. Mild surprise may be registered that magic is not one of the vices with which Sallust credits Catiline in his *Catilinae Coniuratio*. Magic is after all one of the charges employed in ancient invective.

The absence of any mention of magic in Livy is something of a puzzle. One explanation for the absence might be that Romans in the time of Livy, let alone in earlier centuries, had no concept of magic, since it was not until Pliny the Elder that the concept was formulated. Whatever the explanation is, this is surely not it. There is an overwhelming body of evidence that the Romans operated with a concept of magic long before the middle of the first century CE and that magic was practised as such. A rather more plausible explanation is that since the concern of Roman historiography was with war and high politics, there was no occasion to mention magic, since it just so happened that in the period Livy dealt with magic never intersected with high politics, although it most certainly did so later. As an explanation this has a lot to recommend it, but it is a little too neat. Other circumstances may lead to the mention of magic. We know that L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi (cos. 133 BCE), presumably in his *Annales*, relates that a freedman, Furius Chresimus, because his farm, though small, was so much more productive than the farms of his neighbours, was charged with having used spells (*veneficia*) to entice the crops of his neighbours to desert them for him and that he was acquitted, after having pointed to his well-turned out slaves and the well-kept equipment that he had brought to the forum, which he declared were his spells, although he was not able to show the sweat that he had expended and the long hours of the night when he had stayed up to work.[3] The chances are that Calpurnius Piso told the story to illustrate the virtues of hard work. There was a strongly moralising strain to his writing: he dated the destruction of a sense of shame in Roman life to a prodigy that occurred in 154 BCE.[4] Livy too might have told such a story. It may then be a matter of accident that no such story is to be found in what survives of Livy.

---

[3] Pliny, *HN* 18.41–43: *veneficia mea, Quirites, haec sunt, nec possum vobis ostendere aut in forum adducere lucubrationes meas vigiliasque et sudores.*

[4] Pliny, *HN* 17.244: *hac tempestatibus prostrata eodem loco ficus enata est M. Messalae C. Cassii censorum lustro, a quo tempore pudicitiam subversam Piso gravis auctor prodidit.*

There is rather more solid reason to suppose that the accident of survival accounts in part for the absence of any mention of magic in what we have of Livy. In the glorificatory version of Roman history composed by L. Annius Florus in the third century CE or later, the slave revolt that began in Sicily in the early 130's BCE is dealt with. Some attention is devoted both to the conditions that made it so dangerous and to its leader, a Syrian slave called Eunus. Despite the constraints of space, Florus gives a sketch of the trick that Eunus employed to persuade his fellow-slaves to follow him: he was a priest of the Syrian goddess and as such simulated possession; while giving what appeared to be inspired utterances, he breathed fire, a feat that he achieved by hiding a nut in his mouth in which there was sulphur and fire.[5] Diodorus Siculus, in his account of the slave revolt in Sicily, gives a rather more detailed picture of Eunus' trick that by and large tallies with Florus. He calls him a μάγος and τερατουργός, wonder-worker (34/35.2.5–7). Diodorus' source will be the eighth book of the *Histories* of the Stoic philosopher, Posidonius.[6] It is most unlikely that Florus draws on Posidonius directly; his account is sufficiently different from that of Diodorus to rule Diodorus out. The chances are that Livy, who did describe the revolt and its suppression (*Per.* 56.58), is his source for the episode. Florus does after all rely on Livy, though not exclusively, for a good deal of earlier Roman history. Livy for his part will have used Posidonius.

The conclusion to be drawn is that Livy may well have had occasion to refer to magic-working when it impinged on public life. It was unquestionably a topic that his predecessors treated. No more general conclusions can be drawn about the contexts in which Livy introduces mention of magic-working into his narrative, nor is it possible to say anything at all about Livy's feelings about magic. There is, on the other hand, a clue to how Livy may have treated magic when he did write about it: it lies in the amount of space Florus devotes to Eunus and his wonder-working. The attention to detail on Florus' part encourages

[5] 5.2.7: *Syrus quidam, nomine Eunus,—magnitudo cladium facit ut meminerimus—fanatico furore simulato dum Syriae deae comas iactat, ad libertatem et arma servos quasi numinum imperio concitavit. itaque ut divinitus fieri probaret, in ore abdita nuce quam sulpure et igni stipaverat, leniter inspirans flammam inter verba fundebat.*

[6] Athen. 12.59, 542b = *FGrH* 87 F7, appealing to the eighth book of the *Histories* of Posidonius, cites a description of the luxury in which Damophilus of Enna lived. This tallies with the story Diodorus tells (34/35.2.34).

the suspicion that Livy had worked up the episode and had described with some care Eunus' wonder-working.

The historians of Rome in whose narrative magic plays a significant part are Tacitus and Dio Cassius; Herodian mentions it on one occasion. The first question to be addressed is what Tacitus and Dio Cassius make of magic: did they believe in it; what did they personally think of those who practised it and of those who resorted to magicians; and finally, what, as a matter of public policy, did they think should be done about magic-workers. The last question is particularly interesting, since both historians write from the standpoint of men who had been involved in public affairs at a high level. Tacitus, writing under Nerva and Trajan, was suffect consul in 97 and proconsul of Asia in 112/13; Dio Cassius had a yet more distinguished career: suffect consul around 204 and *consul ordinarius* in 229 with the Emperor, Severus Alexander; from 218 until 228 he held a series of important provincial posts, culminating in a proconsulship of Africa and legateships of Dalmatia and then Pannonia Superior. About priesthoods held by Dio nothing is recorded, but Tacitus himself tells us, in describing the *ludi saeculares* that took place in 47 CE under Claudius, that in 88 both in his capacity as a priest of the college of *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* and as a praetor he had been present at and had paid close attention to the *ludi saeculares* celebrated by Domitian in that year. He explains that it is not out of boastfulness that he records his offices, but because the college had since the distant past been charged with overseeing the *ludi* and because the magistrates carried out the celebrations.[7] It rather sounds as if he took his religious office seriously.

The suggestion that Tacitus took his duties as *quindecimvir* seriously may surprise those who are inclined to believe that Tacitus was, so far as religion went, something of a sceptic. It is probably still widely believed that most educated Romans went through the motions of religious ritual without according much credence to what they did. Roman religion is, on this understanding, an empty husk without a kernel. Its emptiness is invoked to explain why Rome was so receptive

[7] *Ann.* 11.11.3–4: *nam is quoque edidit ludos saecularis iisque intentius adfui sacerdotio quindecimvirali praeditus ac tunc praetor; quod non iactantia refero sed quia collegio quindecimvirum antiquitus ea cura et magistratus potissimum exsequebantur officia caerimoniarum.* For the functions of the college, see Livy 10.8.2: *decimviros sacris faciundis, carminum Sibyllae ac fatorum populi huius interpretes, antistites eosdem Apollinaris sacri caerimoniarumque aliarum.* G. Radke, s.v. Quindecimviri, *RE* 24 (1963) 1114–48 provides an historical account.

to foreign cults and especially to the foreign cult *par excellence*, Christianity; the so-called oriental cults addressed men's moral and spiritual concerns in a way that traditional Roman religion could not.[8] It hardly needs to be said that specialists in Roman religion do not necessarily subscribe to such a view. It is a point of view that nonetheless still colours what is said about Tacitus. Comments about prodigies, for instance, tend to be construed as the ironic asides of a sceptic and non-believer and are asserted to have been made for rhetorical effect. That another construction can be put upon what Tacitus has to say about prodigies and omens is not entertained. The perspective from which Tacitus speaks about religious matters is difficult for us to grasp, not because the historian conceals his position by his ironic style, but because his world-view is so very different from that of our own. His contemporaries are unlikely to have seen him as a rootless and subversive ironist and a mocker of all religious belief.

Tacitus presents himself as a man concerned to preserve traditional Roman religious practice, convinced that when religious matters are allowed to slide or are completely disregarded, the gods will vent their anger on the Roman people to correct the error.[9] What on his view angers the gods is not so much failure to observe the niceties of ritual practice, as disdain for the moral order that the gods uphold. Thus his moral outrage at the enormity of the crime committed by the forces of Vitellius in setting fire to the temple of Jupiter Maximus on the Capitol goes hand in hand with the observation that the gods would have been well-disposed, if the conduct of the Roman people had permitted them.[10] The unstated corollary of the observation is that the Roman people had by their misdeeds brought the anger of the gods on their

---

[8] For a recent expression of a view similar to the one sketched above, see R. Turcan, *Les cultes orientaux dans le monde romain*² (Paris 1992) 23–28.

[9] So Davies 2005, 143–225, who presents a much more detailed case than can be given here. The point of view espoused by Davies is at odds with what is now apparently the orthodoxy amongst English-speaking Taciteans. In recent commentaries on Tacitus (Martin and Woodman 1989, 84; Damon 2003, 97f.), the dictum of Syme 1958, 521 that Tacitus' invoking of the anger of the gods against the Roman people is "a striking and ominous phrase, but no confession of a creed", is endorsed, as is the pronouncement of F. Goodyear, *The Annals of Tacitus, 1 (Annals 1. 1–54)* (Cambridge 1972) 276 on Tacitus' use of the expression *deum ira*: "nothing more than devices of style, calculated to enhance his presentation of particular scenes and serving as convenient ways of expressing pathos and indignation".

[10] *Hist.* 3.72.1: *id facinus post conditam urbem luctuosissimum foedissimumque rei publicae populi Romani accidit, nullo externo hoste, propitiis, si per mores nostros liceret, deis.*

own heads.[11] Exactly the same point of view is to be found in the preface to the first book of the *Histories*, in which Tacitus records the total breakdown of the moral order in Rome after Nero's death, even though some individual instances of virtue were to be found: the defeats that the Roman people incurred and the prodigies and signs that appeared showed that what was in the fore-front of the minds of the gods was not the well-being of the Roman people, but their punishment.[12] The outrage that Tacitus registers at the destruction of the temple Jupiter Maximus has its counterpart in the appreciative notice that he gives Lucius Vestinus, the man who was given the task of rebuilding the Capitol; Vestinus' careful attention to religious nicety clearly met with Tacitus' approval and is recorded in considerable detail.[13] It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the proper observance of Roman religious rites mattered to the historian.

The episode in the *Annals* that describes Nero's swimming in the spring of *Aqua Marcia* neatly illustrates Tacitus' religious sensibility. The incident occurred in 60 CE. It exemplifies in Tacitus' eyes the disgrace and personal danger that Nero's excessive appetite for self-indulgence brought upon him in venturing into the *Aqua Marcia* for a swim. The incident gave rise to a feeling that Nero had polluted the sacred waters and the sanctity of the spot by washing his body in it. An illness that threatened his life followed; it made it clear, the historian says, that the gods had been angered.[14] What is to be extracted from the account is that Tacitus unequivocally condemns Nero's contempt for the sanctity of the spring and finds in the illness that came on the heels of the escapade proof that the gods were, as people thought, angered at Nero's polluting the spring by washing his body in it.

Tacitus conspicuously does not like foreign cults. Yet his disdain for foreign religious practice significantly does not extend to the cults of the Greeks; they are treated with respect and are not dismissed as

---

[11] Similarly K. Wellesley, *Cornelius Tacitus, The Histories, Book iii* (Sydney 1972) 172: "the disasters of this year were clearly divine retribution for sin, a view traditional in ancient thought".

[12] 1.3.2: *nec enim umquam atrocioribus populi Romani cladibus magisve iustis indiciis adprobatum est non esse curae deis securitatem nostram, esse ultionem.*

[13] *Hist.* 4.53.1: *curam restituendi Capitolii in Lucium Vestinum confert, equestris ordinis virum, sed auctoritate famaque inter proceres.*

[14] 14.22.6: *isdem diebus nimia luxus cupido infamiam et periculum Neroni tulit, quia fontem aquae Marciae ad urbem deductae nando incesserat; videbaturque potus sacros et caerimoniam loci corpore loto polluisse. secutaque anceps valetudo iram deum adfirmavit.*

externae superstitiones as are Egyptian rites and the religious practices of the Celts, Germans, Jews and Christians.[15] I see no reason to suppose that this is a pose on Tacitus' part and not what he and most of his kind believed.[16]

So much then for Tacitus' religious standpoint, we can now turn to what magic meant to him.[17] Tacitus makes no statement of his views on the subject. He does, on the other hand, give expression to his feelings on a closely related topic, astrology. There is, in addition, some indication in one of the terms in which he refers to magic what his attitude to the practice of it was.

One way of dealing with Tacitus' silence is to argue that as belief in magic was widespread in all sections of Roman society under the Empire, the historian will necessarily have subscribed to the belief. The truth of the matter is that we are in no position to assert that belief in magic was the norm at any period in Classical Antiquity, let alone in the first three centuries of our era. What can be demonstrated is that there were persons in the Roman ruling class who did not give any credence to the claims that magicians made and were inclined to suppose that all magicians, not just some of them, were frauds.

Pliny the Elder is one such. The most explicit statement of his views is to be found in the short disquisition on the origins and spread of magic at the beginning of Book 30 of the *Natural History* (*HN* 30.1–18). The disquisition culminates in what in Pliny's eyes is conclusive proof of the fraudulence of magic: the inability of the magicians that Tiridates of Armenia brought with him to Rome to impart the art of magic to Nero, despite the fact that conditions could not have been more favourable and the pupil could not have been more receptive; the failure constituted a huge and unquestionable instance of the falsity of the art.[18]

---

[15] There is something of an exception at *Ann.* 3.60.2, where the myths on which Greek cities based their claims to the right of asylum are called *vetustae superstitiones*. *Externae superstitiones*: *Ann.* 11.15.1, 13.32.4; Egyptians: *Ann.* 2.85.5, *Hist.* 1.11.1, 4.81.3; Druids: *Ann.* 14.30.3, *Hist.* 4.54.3; Jews: *Ann.* 2.85.5, *Hist.* 2.4, 5.8, 5.13; Christians: *Ann.* 15.44.4

[16] In contrast to the view of J. Henderson, Tacitus—A World in Pieces, *Ramus* 16 (1987) 167–210 at 168 n. 4, cited with approval by Davies 2005, 148: "we will not catch Tacitus with his rhetorical trousers down".

[17] The reason given by Tavenner 1916, 50–51 for supposing Tacitus believed in magic, which is that he at no time time disavows belief, is not compelling.

[18] 30.14–17; 30.15: *inmensum, indubitatum exemplum est falsae artis, quam dereliquit Nero.* D. Martin, *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians*

Then there were persons who composed exposés of the tricks magicians used to deceive the gullible. They did so, presumably because they thought magic a fraud. Lucian's *Alexander* is in part such an exposé. It is dedicated to an Epicurean called Celsus, who had himself written a treatise laying bare the tricks of magicians (*Alex.* 21). It may reasonably be inferred that Lucian did not place any credence in magic. Flavius Philostratus, the author of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, knows of tracts exposing the tricks magicians played and approves of them.[19] He himself attributes the continued existence of magic to its users persuading themselves when confronted by failure that they themselves had made a mistake in performing a ritual.[20] Philostratus' scepticism is not what might have been expected in a man who is essentially a Platonist, since Platonists tend to believe in magic; Origen's opponent Celsus and Apuleius of Madaura, both Platonists, take the view that magicians achieve the extraordinary feats they do by employing demons.[21]

It would, accordingly, be imprudent in the extreme to argue on *a priori* grounds that Tacitus believed in magic or again that he did not. A clue to his feelings about magic is to be found in the ways in which he characterises it on one occasion.[22] He says that a man who had been the legate to the proconsul of Africa charged his former superior with

---

(Cambridge MA 2004) 265 n.7 goes seriously astray in criticising M. Beagon, *Roman Nature: The Thought of Pliny the Elder* (Oxford 1992) 97, 106–08 for implying 'that Pliny rejected magic because its claims to be able to manipulate nature were false'. In Martin's view, Pliny rejects magic 'for *social* rather than *physiological* or *methodological* reasons'. The paragraphs from Pliny (*HN* 28.94–95) cited by him in support of his thesis that for Pliny magicians are 'the evil enemies of humankind' will sustain no such interpretation.

[19] *VA* 7.39. Philostratus is the exact contemporary of Dio Cassius, who may have known his writings. So Millar 1964, 19–20.

[20] *VA* 7.39. Much the same position is taken in a speech that Philostratus puts into the mouth of Apollonius of Tyana. There, the pretensions of magic to be an art are said to lie in the folly of those deceived by it (πάντα ταῦτα προστίθημι τῇ τῶν ἐξαπατωμένων δόξῃ, τὸ γάρ σοφὸν τῆς τέχνης ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν ἐξαπατωμένων τε καὶ θεωμένων ἀνοίᾳ κεῖται: *VA* 8.10).

[21] The crucial text for the Platonist understanding of magic is Plato *Symp.* 201e1–203a2.

[22] The characterisation of Scribonius Libo Drusus at *Ann.* 2.27.2 as *improvidus et facilis inanibus*, "imprudent and prone to empty fantasies", does not refer to his being prepared to give credence to magicians, interpreters of dreams and astrologers, but to the empty fantasies he entertained. Davies 2005, 168 renders *facilis inanibus* as "prone to dabbling in the ridiculous", and seems to think that the expression refers to Libo's faith in astrologers, magicians and interpreters of dreams.

res repetundae and with *magicae superstitiones*.[23] It is unlikely that the words *magicae superstitiones* were to be found in the actual charge.[24] The form of expression will be Tacitus' own; he refers to charges of magic-working under a variety of descriptions. The term *superstitio* may encourage the unwary to suppose that Tacitus did not believe in magic and dismissed it as a mere superstition. That would be an unwarranted inference. *Superstitio* is a false friend to the translator; it does not in Tacitus' Latin have the same meaning that its descendants in the Romance languages and English possess; it does not necessarily mean a religious practice based on mistaken beliefs.[25] All that can be inferred from Tacitus' use of the term *superstitio* is that it was a religious rite of which he disapproved, in part at least because it was at odds with the forms of piety that he supposed appropriate to the worship of the gods.[26]

There is one possible hint of what Tacitus' beliefs about magic may have been in his account of an incident in 24 CE in which the *praetor urbanus*, Plautius Silvanus, caused his wife to fall headlong to her death. Why Silvanus had acted as he did the historian says was unclear; he gave the impression, when interrogated by Tiberius, of being disturbed in mind and of answering as if drugged by sleep and so of not being fully cognisant.[27] His former wife was accused of having employed incantations and spells to drive her husband out of his

---

[23] *Ann.* 12.59.2: *pauca repetundarum crimina, ceterum magicas superstitiones obiectabat.*

[24] But cf. Grodzynski 1974, 53: "Pratiquer les superstitions magiques tout comme les superstitions étrangères est donc un chef d'accusation valable".

[25] Cf. Beard, North and Price 1998, 216: "The traditional Roman distinction seems to have made no such assumption about truth and falsehood; when Romans in the early empire debated the nature of *religio* and *superstitio* they were discussing instead different *forms* of human relations with the gods".

[26] Of Tacitus' use of *superstitio* at *Hist.* 2.78.2 (referring to prophecies and astrology), at *Hist.* 3.58.3 (*superstitione nominis*) and at *Ann.* 12.59.2 (*magicae superstitiones*) Grodzynski 1974, 53 says: "Néanmoins, dans quelques cas rares, superstitio a le sens de magie ou de divination, sens déjà établi pour la période antérieure". It is very far from certain that the word in two of the instances has either sense, nor is it an established fact that in earlier Latin *superstitio* and its cognates can mean 'magic' or 'divination.' The use of the term needs to be revisited.

[27] *Ann.* 4.22.1: *per idem tempus Plautius Silvanus praetor incertis causis Aproniam coniugem in praeceps iecit, tractatusque ad Caesarem ab L. Apronio socero turbata mente respondit, tamquam ipse somno gravis atque eo ignarus, et uxor sponte mortem sumpsisset.*

senses, but was acquitted of these charges.[28] The way in which the episode is related gives the reader the impression that Tacitus does not exclude the possibility that the man was in fact driven to do what he did by incantations and spells. He certainly does not dismiss the possibility as beyond belief.

Whatever Tacitus' views may have been about the effectiveness of magic, it may be inferred that he thought it a deviant form of religious behaviour. Warrant for the inference is to be found in his use of the expression *magicae superstitiones* (*Ann.* 12.59.2). It is virtually certain that he would have included the use of spells directed at others under the heading of *magicae superstitiones*. In support, it is possible to point to the defence Tacitus puts into the mouth of Servilia, a young woman accused of paying *magi* to perform what Tacitus calls *magica sacra*: she had invoked no impious gods, had performed no curses and had done nothing other than ask through her ill-favoured prayers that Nero and the senate preserve her father unharmed.[29] We have just been told that she had paid the magicians to learn what the outcome of the trial in which her father was the accused would be (16.30.2). Her defence would have had little point, if putting curses on others were not also equally an aspect of *magica sacra*.

Whether Tacitus believed magical ceremonies performed to discover what the future had in store were a threat to public order and how he thought the Roman authorities should deal with those who engaged in them is a question that cannot be answered directly. We do know what Tacitus views were on a closely related form of divination, astrology. Whether magic and astrology were generally imagined to be discrete intellectual categories is less than clear.[30] Pliny the Elder in his disquisition on the history of magic treats astrology as a constituent element in the mix that gave magic a peculiar hold on the human mind.[31] Tacitus, for his part, at one point lumps together, as though they were of a

[28] *Ann.* 4.22.3: *mox Numantina, prior uxor eius, accusata iniecisse carminibus et veneficiis vaecordiam marito, insons iudicatur.*

[29] *Ann.* 16.31.1: *nullos impios deos, nullas devotiones, nec aliud infelicibus precibus invocavi quam ut hunc optimum patrem tu, Caesar, vos, patres, servaretis incolumem.*

[30] Luc. 6.425–34 distinguishes between legitimate forms of inquiry into the future (*aut siquid tacitum sed fas erat* 430), amongst them astrology (*et Assyria scrutetur sidera cura* 429) and the *saevorum arcana magorum* (431) that Sextus Pompeius favoured.

[31] *HN* 30.2: *atque, ut hoc successerit, miscuisse artes mathematicas, nullo non avido futura de se sciendi atque ea e caelo verissime peti credente.*

piece, astrology, magical divination, and divination based on dreams. What from his point of view they undoubtedly had in common was that they could be used to raise the hopes of ambitious young men whose grasp of reality was shaky.[32]

Syme maintains that Tacitus leaves it unclear whether he believed in astrology or not.[33] That is very far from being the case. Tacitus in fact says that Tiberius had in 33 CE told Servius Galba, who was then consul, that he would have a taste of power, meaning that his reign would be late and brief. The prediction, Tacitus says, was based on his knowledge of the Chaldaean art, an art that he had used his leisure on Rhodes to acquire under the tutelage of the Alexandrian astrologer, Thrasyllus. He goes on to recount how Tiberius had put Thrasyllus to a test from which the astrologer had emerged triumphant to be taken into Tiberius' inner circle (*Ann.* 6.21). He then proceeds to set out various theories about the factors that govern men's destiny. He concludes his digression by remarking that, despite everything, most men still believe that their destinies are determined at birth, although matters may turn out in a way contrary to the predictions made by charlatans who do not know what they are talking about; confidence in astrology is corrupted in this way, even though both the past and the present bear clear witness to its truth. At this point, the historian stops reporting what the mass of men believe about astrology; he now, as an instance of a successful forecast of the future, draws our attention to a prediction about Nero's coming to the throne made by a son of Thrasyllus that he will in due course recount.[34] It would be perverse to deny that Tacitus has stacked the cards in favour of astrology, though it is true that he does not endorse it outright.

Tacitus may be inclined to believe in genethliac astrology, but he has some of the same religious reservations about it that he has about magical divination: he says of Vespasian that he was not untouched by

---

[32] *Ann.* 2.27.2: *Firmius Catus senator, ex intima Libonis amicitia, iuvenem inprovidum et facilem inanibus ad Chaldaeorum promissa, magorum sacra, somniorum interpretes impulit.*

[33] Syme 1958, 523–26. The assessment of Tacitus' position by Tavenner 1916, 50 is succinct and accurate: "The attitude of Tacitus towards magic and astrology can scarcely be doubted. He believed in astrology but despised astrologers."

[34] *Ann.* 6.22.5–6: *ceterum plurimis mortalium non eximitur quin primo cuiusque ortu ventura destinentur, sed quaedam secus quam dicta sint cadere fallaciis ignara dicentium: ita corrumpi fidem artis cuius clara documenta et antiqua aetas et nostra tulerit. quippe a filio eiusdem Thrasulli praedictum Neronis imperium in tempore memorabitur, ne nunc incepto longius abierim.*

the *superstitio*, meaning astrology, and in fact openly supported, when he came to the throne, an astrologer called Seleucus.[35] What exactly caused Tacitus unease about astrology must remain uncertain. Perhaps he thought the gods resented men prying into affairs that were none of their business. He takes a rather dim view of the character of most astrologers and of their influence on public affairs, but does not think there is much to be done about them. It is the astrologers who urged Otho to seize power in 69 CE that move the historian to reflection: those in power cannot depend on the loyalty of their astrologers; as for those who have aspirations, astrologers are likely to lead them astray; they are a class of men who always will be banned from Rome and always will be found there; Poppaea, Nero's wife, had many astrologers at the heart of her household, a very poor practice in the wife of an emperor.[36] Tacitus is, in short, resigned to astrologers' continuing to play a part in Roman life, even though they are a baneful influence, since they encourage the aspirations of pretenders to the throne and cannot be trusted by those in power. Although Tacitus doubts whether banning astrologers would in the long term be successful, we have no reason to suppose that he thought they should be tolerated; the difficulty was taking effective measures against them.[37] I suspect that he took a similar view of magicians, perhaps believing them to be an even lower form of humanity.

Two episodes in the *Annals* tell us something about how Tacitus viewed those who turned to magicians to find out what the future held in store for them. The view that he takes of the actions of the two per-

---

[35] *Hist.* 2.78.1: *nec erat intactus tali superstitione, ut qui mox rerum dominus Seleucum quendam mathematicum rectorem et praescium palam habuerit.*

[36] *Hist.* 1.22: *genus hominum potentibus infidum, sperantibus fallax, quod in civitate nostra et vetabitur semper et retinebitur. multos secreta Poppaeae mathematicos, pessimum principalis matrimonii instrumentum, habuerant.*

[37] Of the *senatus consultum* of CE 52 expelling astrologers from Italy in the aftermath of the exile of Furius (Camillus) Scribonianus for consulting Chaldaeans concerning the death of the Emperor, Tacitus says it was *atrox et inritum*, by which he will have meant that it was couched in minatory language, but that it did not have the effect intended (*Ann.* 12.52.3). Potter 1994, 175 suggests that laws banishing astrologers and seers "do not seem to have been intended to have permanent force". That goes rather against the grain of Tacitus' resigned observation on the continued presence of astrologers in Rome, despite their being banned, at *Hist.* 1.22.2: *quod in civitate nostra et vetabitur semper et retinebitur.* Damon 2003, 150 describes it as "a neat, if somewhat overstated, *sententia*". She takes the view that the prohibition against astrologers was not a blanket one, by which she seems mainly to mean that it was not forbidden to consult such persons.

sons who consult magicians is affected by their age and circumstances. He would not necessarily have taken so indulgent a view of persons whose conditions and circumstances were different. The protagonist in the earlier of the two episodes (16 CE) was M. Scribonius Libo Drusus, a young man, the scion of a noble family (he was the great-grandson of Pompeius Magnus) with a colourable claim to the throne. According to Tacitus, the ease with which an *agent provocateur* induced him to approach astrologers, magicians and interpreters of dreams to enquire about his prospects could be accounted for by his youth, his lack of prudence, and an excessive willingness to entertain wild hopes (2.27.2). Of the questions that the young man put to those whom he consulted, one of which was whether he would be rich enough to cover the road from Rome to Brundisium in specie, the historian says they could be treated as stupid and silly, or, if one was prepared to put a kinder construction on them, as pitiable.[38]

The second episode, to which I have already referred, involved Servilia, the daughter of Q. Marcius Barea Soranus (*PIR*^{2} B 55), who was on trial for fostering sedition. She had used part of her dowry to consult magicians. All she asked them, Tacitus says, prompted by a feeling of family duty, love of her father and a youthful failure of prudence, was whether the family would remain unharmed, whether Nero's wrath could be assuaged and whether the outcome of the trial before the senate would be a terrible one.[39] Again Tacitus is prepared to take an indulgent view of consulting magicians, if the questioner was young and foolish, motivated by a sense of loyalty to her father and asked only harmless questions. It rather looks as if he might not have been so uncritical if the questioner had been an older person whose questions had a more sinister intent.

Dio Cassius' standpoint on religion is not very different from that of Tacitus.[40] His views on the topic are to be inferred from the words that he puts into the mouth of Maecenas in the debate he says took place in 29 BCE in Octavian's presence over the form of government most

[38] 2.30.2: *inerant et alia huiusce modi stolida vana, si mollius acciperes, miseranda.*

[39] 16.30.2: *acciderat sane pietate Serviliae (id enim nomen puellae), quae caritate erga parentem, simul imprudentia aetatis, non tamen aliud consultaverat quam de incolumitate domus, et an placabilis Nero, an cognitio senatus nihil atrox adferet.* The date was 65 or 66 CE.

[40] On Dio's attitude to dreams and prodigies, see Millar 1964, 179–81.

suitable for Rome (52.2–41).[41] In the debate, Marcus Agrippa makes the case for democracy and Maecenas for monarchy. The discussion is weighted heavily in favour of the latter option. Maecenas argues that the monarch should in every way and on all occasions give due reverence to the divine and should follow ancestral practice in doing so; he should compel others to do the same and should hate and punish those who engage in foreign religious practices (τοὺς δὲ δὴ ξενίζοντάς τι περὶ αὐτό), not only for the sake of the gods themselves, since a man who does not honour them will honour nothing, but because those who introduce new deities encourage the widespread adoption of alien practices (ἀλλ' ὅτι καὶ καινά τινα δαιμόνια οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἀντεσφέροντες πολλοὺς ἀναπείθουσιν ἀλλοτριονομεῖν); that in its turn leads to conspiratorial associations utterly inimical to monarchy.[42] It is impossible to say when Dio composed the debate, though it does seem likely that it was written up before the death of Elagabalus in 222 CE. It is the case that in Dio's eyes one of the principal sins of that monarch was his introduction of the cult of Elagabalus at Rome and his giving precedence to the worship of the Syrian god over Jupiter (79.11.1).

Dio's thoughts on the way in which the state should handle magicians are again to be sought in Maecenas' speech. They follow directly on the proposals Maecenas makes about religious policy. Godless persons and sorcerers are not to be tolerated (μήτ' οὖν ἀθέῳ τινὶ μήτε γόητι ξυγχωρήσῃς εἶναι); divination is needed; since that is so, *haruspices* and *augures* should be appointed; those who need to will deal with them; but magicians are not to be permitted (τοὺς δὲ δὴ μαγευτὰς πάνυ οὐκ εἶναι προσήκει); they frequently provoke rebellions, sometimes by saying what is true, but for the most part by telling falsehoods (36.2–3).[43]

The transition from the regulation of foreign cults to the complete suppression of magic-workers is probably an indication that, in the thinking of persons of Dio's class, the two are bound up.[44] The term

---

[41] So Millar 1964, 107–08. For an assessment of Dio's view of Augustus, see J. Rich, Dio on Augustus, in A. Cameron (ed.) *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History* (London 1989) 86–110.

[42] 52.36.1–2. Millar 1964, 108 is inclined to believe that Christianity was one of the new cults Dio thought should not be countenanced.

[43] ἄθεοι and γόητες are not separate categories of person, but γόητες are a species of the genus ἄθεοι.

[44] It is worth noting that Dio is prepared to believe that the Emperor Elagabalus engaged in the sacrifice of boys and in magical practices in his worship of the god Elagabalus (80.11).

ἄθεος shows that the topic is still religion. Magicians, accordingly, are in the eyes of Dio godless persons; that is to say, they do not accord the gods the respect that is their due. The context very strongly suggests that Dio's concern with magic is with the threat to public order that the divinatory practices of magicians present; they encourage rebellion. Other aspects of the magicians' craft do not engage his attention. It may well be the case that magicians were only a concern to the authorities in Rome and the provinces to the extent that their predictions presented a threat to public order. There can be no question that what moved the Senate to expel astrologers and magicians in 16 or 17 CE was that a person with a plausible claim to the throne had consulted them about his prospects. We can only guess at Agrippa's reasons for expelling astrologers and magicians in 33 BCE, but since both categories were driven out, we may surmise that predictions were being made that offered hope to the supporters of Mark Antony.

It can be categorically asserted that Dio Cassius believed that magic can alter the course of nature. He happily and unquestioningly regales his readers with stories in which magic causes rain, makes men fall for a woman, sends dreams, cures sickness and induces madness.[45] It does not follow that Dio does not think that magicians did not engage in sharp practice and in fraud. The shock that he expresses at Caracalla's having admired and encouraged magicians suggests that he very much disapproved of magicians: Caracalla, under whom Dio served, gave a position of power to a Spaniard, Sempronius Rufus, whom Dio calls φαρμακεὺς καὶ γόης, and so rejoiced in the company of magicians that he set up a shrine to Apollonius of Tyana, ὅστις καὶ γόης καὶ μάγος ἀκριβὴς ἐγένετο.[46]

There is evidence that Dio's views on the particular threat that magicians presented to the public order and on how that threat should be dealt with are those of a senior official in the Roman administration of his day. In his book on the duties of a proconsul (*De officio proconsulis*), the jurist Ulpian, a contemporary of Dio, takes it for granted

[45] Rain: 60.9.4, 72.8.4; dreams: 57.15.7; love-magic: 61.11.3; cures illness: 69.22.1; induces madness: 78.15.2.

[46] 77 (78).17.2; 18.4. Two other emperors, Hadrian and Septimius Severus, do not escape criticism for their excessive interest in what was properly, it is implied, hidden from human view. Hadrian is explicitly said to have used magic to that end (69.11.2–3), while in the case of Septimius Severus we are left with the impression that he searched for magical books in Egyptian temples (75 [76].13.2). The tradition concerning Hadrian re-appears, rather unexpectedly, in the proem to *PGrMag* IV 2441–2662 at 2448f.

that astrologers and prophets should be banned or executed.[47] Ulpian points out that the suppression of astrologers and seers was a policy of longstanding: a *senatus consultum* of 17 CE banishes astrologers, Chaldaeans, seers and other such persons and confiscates their goods and further proposes that they be executed, if they are foreigners (*Coll. Mos. et Rom. leg.* 15.2.1).[48] Two rescripts from emperors to governors are cited that deal with diviners. At the end of his discussion Ulpian quotes from one of them, evidently to endorse it. It is a rescript of Caracalla addressed to the legate of Gallia Lugdunensis: "Men who under cover of having received warnings from the gods either make pronouncements or disseminate warnings or knowingly invent them ought not to go unpunished".[49]

Ulpian gives explicit expression to his own views at the end of the paragraph in which he gives a summary of the history of imperial policy affecting astrologers. He adds that the policy affects prophets in general (*vaticinatores*); they too need to be punished, since they sometimes employ their disreputable craft to the detriment of the public peace and the imperial order.[50] There is little room for doubt that those

---

[47] On Ulpian's career, see Honoré 2002, 1–36 and on the date of composition of the *De officio*, 181–85; see also Millar 2002. Fögen 1993, 178–82, who holds that the Roman state was not concerned about the beliefs of those it ruled until the time of Diocletian, argues that Ulpian cannot have taken the view that seers should be executed or expelled; a later interpolator has been at work. On Ulpian, see Honoré 2002 and Millar 2002, 83f. The *De officio proconsulis* belongs to a recognised class of handbook. It may for all that have been treated as more authoritative than other works of the genre. An inscription, perhaps of the Tetrarchy, recording what must have been a letter of the proconsul to Ephesus, recommends that amongst sources of law that the city may use to support its claims is the *De officiis* of Ulpian (*AE* 1966: 436 = *IEph* 2 no. 217 ll. 7–9). Although Ulpian wrote other works under the heading *De officio*, concerning the duties of respectively the *consul*, the *curatores rei publicae*, the *praefectus urbi*, and the *quaestor*, the *De officio proconsulis* will have contained what was relevant to Ephesus. For an appreciation of the importance of the treatise, see Honoré 2002, 227f.

[48] *praeterea interdictum est mathematicorum callida inpostura et obstinata persuasione. nec hodie primum interdici eis placuit, sed vetus haec prohibitio est. denique exstat senatus consultum Pomponio et Rufo conss. factum, quo cavetur, ut mathematicis, Chaldaeis, ariolis et ceteris, qui simile incertum fecerint, aqua et igni interdicatur omniaque bona eorum publicentur et si externarum gentium quis id fecerit, ut in eum animadvertatur.*

[49] *Coll. Mos. et Rom. leg.* 15.2.6: *et sane non debent impune ferri huiusmodi homines, qui sub obtentu monituum deorum quaedam enuntiant vel iactant vel scientes fingunt.*

[50] *Coll. Mos. et Rom. leg.* 15.2.3: *inter hos habentur etiam vaticinatores, hi quoque plectendi sunt quoniam nonnumquam contra publicam quietem imperiumque populi Romani improbandas artes exercent.*

who had recourse to magic for divinatory purposes would in Ulpian's view have merited the same punishment.

The policy that Ulpian recommends was in fact pursued by provincial governors. An edict issued by the Prefect of Egypt in 198/199 CE is proof (*PYale inv.* 299).[51] He took action against two divinatory procedures and any other forms of magic (μαγγανεῖαι) of the same order.[52] The Prefect declares that he has been moved to action by the deceits of divination. His justification for so acting is that such enquiries presume to look into matters that lie beyond human ken, περιεργία.[53] Two forms of divination are specified, written responses given as though under divine inspiration and the parading of statues.[54]

To sum up, Tacitus and Dio Cassius both disapprove of magic-working or to be more precise, magical divination, because it is at odds with proper religious practice. Dio's disapproval comes in part from the feeling that magicians presume to know more than is vouchsafed to mortals. He unquestionably believed in the efficacy of magic; Tacitus may also have done so. As regards public policy, only one aspect of magic engages Dio's interest: its claim to be able to divine the future. It is a reasonable supposition that Dio's view of magic is that of a senior official of the Roman government concerned to suppress forces disruptive of the peace. A case can be made for supposing that Tacitus took the same view of magic and for the same reasons.

So much for Tacitus' and Dio Cassius' views on magic. We now turn to another order of question, the contexts in which Tacitus and

---

[51] See the improved text by J. Rea, A New Version of *PYale inv*. 299, *ZPE* 27 (1977) 51–57; the relevant passage is cited in n. 54 below. Potter 1994, 176 rather implies that what gave rise to the edict was an imperial visit to Egypt, that of Septimius Severus. The edict itself gives no hint that such concerns prompted the Prefect, Q. Aemilius Saturninus, to issue it. So also Lane Fox 1986, 213.

[52] Translating μαγγανεῖαι by 'chicanery' (Lane Fox 1986, 213) or 'charlatanry' (Potter 1994, 176) is at best misleading, since the Greekless reader does not realise that the Prefect treats the forms of divination banned as magical procedures.

[53] The rendering by D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton 1998) 233 of ἐπισφαλοὺς περιεργίας as 'hazardous conjuring' is some distance off the mark.

[54] Lines 4–9:…διαγ[ορ]εῦσαι εἴρ[γεσ]θ[α]ι τῆς ἐπισφαλοῦς ταύτης περιεργίας. μήτ' οὖν διὰ χρη[σμῶ]ν ἤτοι ἐνγράφων διὰ γραφῶν ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ θείου διδομένων μήτε διὰ κωμασίας ἀκαλμάτω[ν] (*sic*) ἢ τοιαύτης παγγανίας (*sic*) τὰ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπόν τις εἰδένα[ι] προσποιείσθω καὶ τὴν τῶν μελλόντων ἀτελείαν (= ἀδηλίαν) ἐπαγγε[λ]λέσθω…. Rea translates: "Therefore, let no man through oracles, that is, by means of written documents supposedly granted under divine influence, nor by means of the parade of images or such like charlatanry, pretend to know things beyond human ken and profess (to know) the obscurity of things to come…" (p. 153).

Dio mention magic. There is not complete uniformity here, but patterns do emerge. It is conspicuously the case that it is only in Tacitus' *Annals* and in the corresponding portions of Dio Cassius' *Histories* in which reference is made to trials in which the accused are charged with magic-working. That there are no such trials in what survives of Tacitus' earlier work, the *Histories*, is something of a puzzle. Why they receive no mention in Herodian and the *Historia Augusta* is more easily explained: the focus of both writers is on the lives and characters of the emperors they portray, not on the events that occurred each year in the reigns covered. It certainly will not do to say that important persons after the Julio-Claudians were no longer brought before the courts and charged with magic. The testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus shows that this is an untenable hypothesis.

In all but one of the trials recorded by Tacitus under Tiberius, Claudius and Nero in which magic was part of the charge the accused seem to have been tried for a contravention of the *lex maiestatis*; that is, with having done something prejudicial to the well-being of the emperor or his immediate family. Sometimes the offence consisted in using magical divination to discover what lay in store for the emperor, and sometimes the accused were charged with having cast malign spells against the emperor or some member of his household. Paulina Lollia will have been charged in 49 CE under Claudius with *maiestas*, because she had consulted Chaldaeans, magicians and the oracle of Clarian Apollo about the marriage of the emperor.[55] Two women were brought to trial for having practised magic against the emperor himself and his wife: Claudia Pulchra was accused under Tiberius in 25 CE of adultery and of having directed spells and curses *(veneficia in principem et devotiones*) at the emperor; in 53 CE, Domitia Lepida was charged with curses (*devotiones*) directed against the wife of Claudius and with having allowed her gangs of slaves to terrorise Calabria (*Ann.* 4.52.1; *Ann.* 12.65.1). Amongst the charges brought against Gn. Piso, in the aftermath of the death of Germanicus, was that he had killed Germanicus by means of poison and curses (*devotionibus et veneno*: *Ann.* 3.13.2). There are three instances of persons charged with having had recourse to magic where Tacitus does not make it clear to what

[55] *Ann.* 12.22: *et accusatorem qui obiceret Chaldaeos, magos interrogatumque Apollinis Clarii simulacrum super nuptiis imperatoris.*

end the magic was performed.[56] In one of these instances the accused was charged with having resorted to *magorum sacra*. The chances are that the expression is Tacitus' paraphrase of the actual charge. It is certainly true that the expression Tacitus uses to refer to Libo Drusus' consultation of magicians about his future is *magorum sacra*, but it does not follow that it was a turn of phrase only used to refer to such inquiries. *Magica sacra*, an expression that would appear to be a variation on it, seems to encompass not only magical divination, but also putting a magical curse on someone.[57] It is quite unclear what Statilius Taurus is supposed to have done to be charged with what Tacitus calls *magicae superstitiones*. The *diri ritus* with which Iunia Lepida was charged in 65 CE sound rather more menacing than consulting magicians about the future; it is to be imagined that she was accused of having directed *devotiones* against someone in the imperial family.[58]

Tacitus reports trials in which the accused was charged with *maiestas*, since he felt they represented an unhealthy tendency that undermined the well-being of the Roman state. He explicitly says of the trial of Libo Drusus in 15 CE in which the accused was charged with having consulted magicians, astrologers and interpreters of dreams that he will give a careful account of its course, since it was the beginning of a practice that ate away at the structure of the state.[59]

The one trial mentioned by Tacitus in which charges of magic not affecting the imperial house were brought is that of Numantina, which I have already mentioned (p. 87f.). She will have been tried under the *lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis*.[60] Tacitus would probably not have mentioned the episode, had Tiberius not intervened directly in it.

---

[56] Mamercus Scaurus: *verum ab Servilio et Cornelio accusatoribus adulterium Liviae, magorum sacra obiectabantur* (*Ann.* 6.29.6); Statilius Taurus: *pauca repetundarum crimina, ceterum magicas superstitiones obiectabat* (*Ann.* 12.59.2); Iunia Lepida: *incestum cum fratris filio et diros sacrorum ritus confingerent* (*Ann.* 16.8.3).

[57] The phrase is used in connection with Servilia (see p. 88 above): *interrogante accusatore, an cultus dotalis, an detractandum cervici monile venum dedisset, quo pecuniam faciendis magicis sacris contraheret*… (*Ann.* 16.31.1). She however, according to Tacitus, explicitly denied this imputation: *nullos impios deos, nullas devotiones, nec aliud infelicibus precibus invocavi*….

[58] On Nero's anxieties about the threat to his rule posed by the family of the Silanii, of whom Iunia Lepida was one, and their connections, see Griffin 1984, 195.

[59] *Ann.* 2.27.1: *eius negotii initium, ordinem, finem curatius disseram, quia tum primum reperta sunt quae per tot annos rem publicam exedere.*

[60] So Garnsey 1970, 26 n. 5, followed by Martin and Woodman 1989, 155.

If we leave trials in which the accused was charged with magic out of account, there are only two other occasions in which Tacitus has anything to say about magic. In his account of the aftermath of the Libo Drusus affair in 15, Tacitus reports that the senate passed resolutions expelling astronomers and magicians from Italy (*facta et de mathematicis magisque Italia pellendis senatus consulta*) and that one of their number, a man named L. Pituanius, was cast from the rock, while the consuls had P. Marcius punished in the ancient way outside the Esquiline Gate, after the sounding of a trumpet (*Ann.* 2.32.3). Tacitus also records the expulsion of astrologers alone under Nero in 52 and under Vitellius in 69 (*Ann.* 12.52.3; *Hist.* 2.62.3). The expulsion of 52 was prompted by someone's having asked astrologers to calculate when Nero would meet his end; that of 69 will have been a response to the excessive rôle astrologers played in the affairs of Otho.[61] The historian evidently thought the expulsion of magicians and astrologers was a matter of some moment and something worth recording.

The other occasion in which Tacitus chooses to mention magic is in his account of Germanicus' death outside Antioch. In describing the illness that laid Germanicus low after his return from Egypt to Syria, he brings up Germanicus' conviction that Gn. Piso had had him poisoned and the discovery in the walls and floor of the house outside Antioch in which he was lodged of disinterred human remains, lead curse-tablets with Germanicus' name on them and partly burned bones from a pyre and other *instrumenta magica* intended to put Germanicus into the hands of the powers below.[62] The discovery accentuated Germanicus' fears.[63] Tacitus goes on to recount the arrest and dispatch to Rome of a woman named Martina, notorious in Syria for practising *veneficia* and an intimate of Piso's wife, Plancina.[64] She will have been suspected of helping poison Germanicus and of having tried to bring about his death by *devotio*. She never reached Rome, dying suddenly at Brindisi; poison was found knotted into her hair, but her body bore

[61] On Otho's dependence on astrologers, see *Hist.* 1.22.

[62] *Ann.* 2.69.3: *et reperiebantur solo ac parietibus erutae humanorum corporum reliquiae, carmina et devotiones et nomen Germanici plumbeis tabulis insculptum, semusti cineres ac tabo obliti aliaque malefica quis creditur animas numinibus infernis sacrari.*

[63] *Saevam vim morbi augeabat persuasio veneni a Pisone accepti* (ibid.). See also his death-bed speech: 2.71.

[64] *Ann.* 2.74.2: *isque infamem veneficiis ea in provincia et Plancinae percaram nomine Martinam in urbem misit.*

no signs of her having taken it.[65] The suspicion was that Piso had had her killed in an attempt to subvert the course of justice. These events are the background to Piso's being charged with amongst other crimes of having killed Germanicus by means of *devotiones* and poison.[66]

So much for the moment for Tacitus. Dio Cassius, writing more than a hundred years later, dealt in a more summary fashion with politically-motivated trials under Tiberius, Claudius and Nero, so far as it is possible to judge from what survives of his *Histories*. He prefers to present an analysis of the behaviour of the emperors in question, giving a few instances of trials to make his point. So the trial of Scribonius Libo Drusus is adduced as an instance of the inconsistency of Tiberius' practice in the administration of the judicial system. Dio has nothing to say about Drusus' consulting astrologers and magicians (57.15.4f.). We find an abbreviated version of the trial and execution of Soranus in 65 or 66 CE.[67] Dio tells not quite the same story that Tacitus had told at much greater length and without the pathos that marks Tacitus' account. The same holds true of Dio's version of the trial of Piso (57.18.9f.). In the form we have it (this part of Dio is of course lost, and we have to rely on the epitomes), it has none of the amplitude and pathos of Tacitus' treatment, nor does it tally with the Tacitean version.[68]

Like Tacitus, Dio records the expulsion of astrologers and magicians from Rome and Italy, first in the aedileship of Agrippa in 35 BCE, then in 16 CE under Tiberius, under Claudius, in 69 under Vitellius and

---

[65] *Ann.* 3.7.2: *nam vulgatum erat missam, ut dixi a C. Sentio famosam veneficiis Martinam subita morte Brundisii extinctam, venenumque nodo crinium eius occultatum nec ulla in corpore signa sumpti exitii reperta*.

[66] *Ann.* 3.13.2. This charge is not even mentioned in the *SC de Cn. Pisone*, however, which must make it doubtful whether, although the claims surely circulated as rumours and they were mentioned by P. Vitellius, the Senate took a position on them; cf. W. Eck, F. Fernández Gomez and A. Caballos (eds.), *Das SC de Cn. Pisone Patre*. Vestigia 48 (Munich 1996) 145f. Tacitus seems to concede that Piso successfully defended himself against the accusation that he had used *venena* against Germanicus: *solum veneni crimen visus est diluisse*.

[67] 62.26.2: Σωρανὸς μὲν οὖν ὡς καὶ μαγευματί τινι διὰ τῆς θυγατρὸς κεχρημένος, ἐπειδὴ νοσήσαντος αὐτοῦ θυσίαν τινὰ ἐθύσαντο, ἐσφάγη.

[68] Dio states clearly that Piso and Plancina arranged to have Germanicus killed by magical attack (φαρμάκῳ) and the appearance of his corpse when it was put on public show proved this. Piso is brought to trial by Tiberius himself to shake off the suspicion that it was he who was responsible for Germanicus' death; Piso uses the opportunity afforded by a postponement of the trial to kill himself.

finally in 70 under Vespasian.[69] In the case of the expulsions under Tiberius and Vespasian, Dio dwells on the inconsistency in the behaviour of these emperors in expelling astrologers while either consulting them themselves or practising the art: Vespasian consulted the best astrologers and was even persuaded by one of their number—Tib. Claudius Balbillus, prefect of Egypt—to allow the Ephesians to celebrate sacred games (66 [65].9.2); as for Tiberius, he had honed his skill in astrology to such a fine pitch through his daily association with Thrasyllus that when he was bidden in a dream to give money to someone, he realised it was a visitation from a demon conjured up by sorcery and put the man responsible to death (57.15.7).

Dio on several occasions draws the attention of his readers to the interest that an emperor took in magic. Tacitus in what survives of his work has nothing to say on the topic. It would be unwise to draw any conclusions from the absence, particularly if it is the case that an interest in magic and an interest in astrology were in Tacitus' eyes failings of very much the same order. The latter interest Tacitus most certainly records. With two exceptions, neither Tacitus nor Dio in what survives of their work mentions an interest in magic-working or astrology in their formal characterisations of emperors. Particular events provide the occasion for mention of the interest. In some cases, the historian goes out of his way to contrive an occasion to mention the interest, an indication perhaps that he thought the matter important and that he believed it was something about which his readers would enjoy hearing. Tacitus' digression on Tiberius' interest in astrology is a case in point. It follows on the mention of the marriage of Gaius Caesar, who had been sent to Capri to be Tiberius' companion. The historian declares that he should not fail to mention the prophecy made by Tiberius about Servius Galba when the latter was summoned as consul to Capri.[70] The accuracy of the prophecy, which Tacitus attributes

[69] Agrippa: 49.43.5; Tiberius: 57.15.8; Claudius 60.33.3b; Vitellius: 65.1.4; Vespasian: 66.9.2.

[70] *Ann.* 6.20.3: *non omiserim praesagium Tiberii de Servio Galba tum consule*. In Suetonius' version of the story, the prediction is made by Augustus to Galba as a boy (*Galb.* 4.1). Dio apparently dates the prophecy to CE 20, on the occasion of Galba's betrothal. The reason for his relating the anecdote at this point is that he has just recounted how Tiberius examined the day and the hour of the birth of all Rome's leading men and had them killed, if he saw anything untoward in what he found (57.19.2–4). The larger context is a discussion of Tiberius' increasing use of the charge of *maiestas*.

to the skill in astrology that Tiberius had acquired from Thrasyllus, provides the opportunity to tell the story about Tiberius' testing Thrasyllus' attainments as an astrologer on Rhodes, an event which led to Thrasyllus' being taken into the entourage of the emperor. The digression on astrology as a science follows (6.20.3–22).

Dio's pretext for introducing into his narrative Tiberius' association with Thrasyllus and the skill in astrology that he in consequence attained is Tiberius' inconsistency in executing and banishing magicians and astrologers in the aftermath of the Libo Drusus affair, while associating with Thrasyllus and perfecting his own expertise in astrology (57.15.7–9). It is this that prompts him to relate the story about the *daimon* sending the dream. It is hard to avoid the suspicion that the historian has gone out of his way to pull Tiberius' association with Thrasyllus into his narrative, in part because it will enable him to tell a rather frightening story about Tiberius' powers as an astrologer.[71]

The prophetic utterances and movements of stars brought to Vespasian's attention by those eager for him to seize power provide the occasion for Tacitus' mentioning Vespasian's addiction to astrology and the weight that he gave to the advice of his household-astrologer, Seleucus, when emperor (*Hist.* 2.78.1). Dio introduces the subject of Hadrian's active interest in magic to account for the death of Antinous, which in his view was caused not by the youth's falling into the Nile, but by his having been killed sacrificially, victim to the excessive curiosity that led Hadrian to engage in all forms of divination and magic.[72] The two cases in which Dio makes an interest in magic part of his summary of the characteristics of the emperor are Caracalla and M. Aurelius Antoninus, nick-named Elagabalus. I have already mentioned the story of Caracalla's admiration for Apollonius of Tyana (p. 93); Elagabalus, as part of the worship he paid the god after whom he was nicknamed, sacrificed boys and practised magic (παῖδας σφαγιαζόμενος καὶ μαγγανεύμασι χρώμενος).[73]

We may round off our catalogue of emperors who take an interest in magic or astrology with two stories of emperors having recourse to magic without achieving the ends they hoped for. Dio records that

---

[71] With due allowance for the interests of the epitomators.

[72] 69.11.3: τά τε γάρ ἄλλα περιεργότατος Ἀδριανός, ὥσπερ εἶπον, ἐγενετο, καὶ μαντείαις μαγγανείαις τε παντοδαπαῖς ἐχρῆτο.

[73] 79 [80].11. Cf. SHA *Ant. Heliog.* 8.1–2. On the cult of Elagabalus at Rome, see Millar 1993, 306–08.

Hadrian employed magic and sorcery to cure himself of dropsy, but that the condition quickly returned.[74] The same historian reports of Caracalla that he was so troubled by the ghostly visions he experienced of his murdered father and brother that he engaged in necromancy to summon up their spirits, but to no avail; there were those who had heard the Alemanni boast that their incantations were responsible for the ghostly visitations (77 [78].15.2–7). The evidence such as it is rather suggests that Tacitus and Dio Cassius thought it worth recording the engagement of an emperor with magic or astrology, since it was an indication of a failing on his part. Two instances of emperors having recourse to magic to no very satisfactory end are not a sufficient basis from which to draw any very secure conclusions, but they do raise the possibility that the historian recounts them, because he believes magic to be ultimately ineffective. It may also be surmised that the engagement of an emperor with magic was a topic that fascinated readers.

It is difficult to draw any very wide-ranging conclusions from the five other occasions on which Dio makes reference to magic-working. He three times invokes sorcery on the part of a woman to explain her hold over a man, and he twice tells of Roman armies threatened by heat and thirst receiving succour from rain brought on by magic.[75]

Conclusion

It is above all necessary to acknowledge that the accident of survival very much affects our understanding of the part that magic plays in the writings of historians of Rome. We cannot even be sure that what has been lost of the work of Tacitus and Dio Cassius did not contain surprises. Any conclusions drawn must, accordingly, be based on Tacitus and Dio Cassius and even they are subject to qualification. There is little room for doubt that Dio Cassius believes both in the efficacy of magic and astrology; Tacitus too believes that astrologers are capable of predicting the future and he probably also believes that the future could be foretold by magical divination and that magic could effect changes in the natural order. Both historians disapprove of magical

[74] 69.22.1: Ἀδριανὸς δὲ μαγγανείαις μέν τισι καὶ γοητείαις ἐκενοῦτο ποτε τοῦ ὑγροῦ, πάλιν δ᾽ αὐτοῦ διὰ ταχέος ἐπίμπλατο.

[75] Cleopatra over Mark Antony: 49.33.4, 50.5.3–4; Agrippina over Claudius: 61.11.3; 60.9.4, 72.8.4.

divination. A case can be made for supposing that Dio Cassius thought that the state should take action against those who used magic for divinatory purposes; we do not have Tacitus' views on the topic, although it is possible to infer what they would have been. Since he supposed astrology to be a disruptive factor in political life, he very likely took the same view of magical divination; he is after all inclined to lump astrology and magical divination together.

Most of the references to magic in Tacitus' *Annals* occur in the accounts he gives of trials in which the defendant is charged with actions threatening the well-being of the emperor or his family. In such cases, the defendants are charged either with having used magical means to divine the future or of having put a curse on a member of the imperial house. Of the three further references to magic in Tacitus one has to do with the fall-out from the trial of Libo Drusus, one with events that gave rise to Gn. Piso being charged with having killed Germanicus through poisoning and magic and one with an affair, allegedly involving magic, in which Tiberius took an active part. Tacitus has nothing explicit to say about emperors taking an interest in magic, but he does record as a matter of some significance an interest on the part of some emperors in a system of belief, astrology, that to his way of thinking was probably as dangerous as magic.

There are many more references to magic in Dio Cassius than in Tacitus. That is to be explained in part by the much larger compass of his surviving writings. There are differences in emphasis and interest between Dio and Tacitus. Dio is not so concerned with the trials in which magic was one of the charges and that Tacitus believed undermined the Roman state. He does record some of them, but not all. The accident of survival makes it difficult to say whether Dio's conscientious recording of the interest some emperors showed in magic distinguishes him from Tacitus. It is equally difficult to come to any determination about the references he makes to women seducing men by magic and magic being used to influence the weather. It is impossible to say whether they mark him off from Tacitus. What is not in doubt is the importance Dio attached to recording the interest that emperors showed in astrology and magic.

Bibliography

Beard, M., North, J. and Price, S.R.F. 1998. *Religions of Rome*, 1: *A History* (Cambridge).
Davies, J. 2005. *Rome's Religious History: Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus and their Gods* (Cambridge).
Damon, C. 2003. *Tacitus, Histories Book 1* (Cambridge).
Fögen, T. 1993. *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager: Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der Spätantike* (Frankfurt a.M.).
Garnsey, P.D.A. 1970. *Social Status and Legal privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford).
Griffin, M. 1984. *Nero: The End of a Dynasty* (London).
Grodzynski, D. 1974. Superstitio, *REA* 76, 36–60.
Honoré, T. 2002. *Ulpian: Pioneer of Human Rights* (Oxford).
Lane Fox, R.J. 1986. *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine* (Harmondsworth).
Martin, R. and Woodman, A. 1989. *Tacitus, Annals Book IV* (Cambridge).
Millar, F. 1964. *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Oxford).
——. 1993. *The Roman Near East 31 BCE–CE 337* (Cambridge MA).
——. 2002. Government and Law: Ulpian, a Philosopher in Politics, in G. Clark and T. Rajak (eds.) *Philosophy and Power in the Graeco-Roman World: Essays in Honour of Miriam Griffin* (Oxford) 69–90.
Potter, D.S. 1994. *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge MA).
Syme, R. 1958. *Tacitus* (Oxford).
Tavenner, E. 1916. *Studies in Magic from Latin Literature* (New York).

CHAPTER THREE

HERETICAL TEXTS AND *MALEFICIUM* IN THE *CODEX THEODOSIANUS* (*CTH.* 16.5.34)[1]

María Victoria Escribano Paño

A famous childhood anecdote recounted by John Chrysostom in *Homily* 38, delivered when he was bishop of Constantinople around 400/1,[2] neatly illustrates what Jules Maurice once called "la terreur de la magie au IV^e^ siècle" (Maurice 1927). The incident took place in Antioch and reflects the climate of fear that reigned in the city between 371 and 372, under Valens, when a serious but not infrequent administrative episode—the embezzlement of funds from the treasury by two *palatini*—gave rise to an accusation of sorcery that led to *maiestas*-trials: the alleged conspiracy of Theodorus. The trials resulted in mass death-sentences and the burning, in the presence of the judges, of vast numbers of codices and piles of books (*innumeri codices et acervi voluminum multi… ut illiciti*) suspected of containing magic predictions and spells, although most of them, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, our main source for this matter,[3] were treatises on liberal arts and law books.[4] Denunciation was the crucial factor in the discovery of the 'guilty'; the result was widespread terror. Ammianus sums up the atmosphere in

[1] This article is part of the HAR 2008–4355 Research project funded by the DGICYT (Department of Scientific and Technical Research) of the Ministry of Education and Science, Madrid.

[2] John Chrys., *Hom. in Act*. 38.5, *PG* 60, 274–76; cf. Kelly 1995, 25; Tiersch 2002; A.M. Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London 2004); R. Brändle, *John Chrysostom: Bishop, Reformer* (Sydney 2004).

[3] On the treason trials in Antioch, see Amm. Marc. 29.1.4–2.28; 31.14.8–9; Eunapius, *VS* 7.6.3–7; Zosimus 4.14.1–15.3; Libanius, *Or*. 1.171–73; *Epit*. 48.3–4; Philostorgius, *HE* 9.15; Socrates, *HE* 4.19.1–7; Sozomen, *HE* 6.35.1–11; John of Antioch., frg. 184. 2; *Chron. a.m*. 5865; 5867; Zonaras 13–16; Cedrenus 548. The best studies are those by Funke 1967; F. Paschoud, *Zosime, Histoire nouvelle*, 2.2 (Paris 1979) 356–62, nn. 129–32; J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London 1989) 204–228; Wiebe 1995, 86–168; also T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca NY 1998).

[4] Amm. Marc. 29.1.41: *Deinde congesti innumeri codices, et acervi voluminum multi, sub conspectu iudicum concremati sunt, ex domibus eruti variis ut illiciti, ad leniendam caesorum invidiam, cum essent plerique liberalium disciplinarum indices variarum et iuris.*

the city, overrun with soldiers searching for incriminating books, in the chilling phrase *horror pervaserat universos* (29.1.27).

It was against this backdrop of fear of denunciation and summary execution that John experienced the incident that he was to recall thirty years later. He was on his way with a friend to a *martyrium* situated on the outskirts of the city by the river, when his companion saw an object floating on the water:

> At first he thought it was a piece of linen, but when he got nearer he realised that it was a codex and he bent down to pick it up. As for me, I was happy to claim my part of the find. "Let's see what it is," he said, but when he opened it he saw that it contained magic symbols. Just then, a soldier came by. My friend hid the codex in my clothes and we left the scene, scared out of our wits. Who would have believed us, in fact, if we had said that we had found and pulled this book out of the river, when everyone was being arrested under suspicion? We dared not throw it away or destroy it for fear of being seen. In the end, God helped us get rid of it, and thus we rid ourselves of the greatest of perils.
>
> *Hom. in Act.* 38.5

In sharing this personal experience with his congregation, Chrysostom's intention was to show them the effectiveness of divine providence, but also to warn them—innocent and guilty alike—of the dangers of practising magic. Deep down, he wanted to frighten them with the realisation that the possession of a suspicious codex could lead to charges of sorcery.

The John Chrysostom who had himself experienced the terror of magic and the fear of being discovered with an illicit codex was court bishop in Constantinople—he had been enthroned a few days before, on 26th February 398[5]—when, on 4th March 398, the emperor Arcadius, advised by his powerful *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, the eunuch Eutropius,[6] the person who had brought about John's transfer and

---

[5] So Socrates, *HE* 6.2. The Constantinople calendar (or *synaxarion*) gives the date as 15th December 397: cf. H. Delehaye (ed.), *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, *Propylaeum ad Acta SS. Nouembris* (Brussels 1900) 312f. Most historians accept Socrates' date because of his habitual accuracy: G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale. Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 452* (Paris 1974) 464–65; K.G. Holum *Theodosian Empresses. Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 1982) 57.

[6] Although, according to Claudian (*In Eutropium*, 1.229–234), Eutropius did practise law, he was not a qualified jurist. Nevertheless, he was a decisive influence in the legislation issued during his period of office, and we know from Philostorgius (*HE* 11.5) that he was the driving force behind the law mentioned here. Tony Honoré

consecration as bishop of Constantinople,[7] signed a law under which the writings of heretics, in this case the Eunomians, were rendered legally equivalent to magical codices, and thus condemned to be burnt; their possession was classified as *maleficium*, punishable by death. The measure reads as follows:

> CTh.16.5.34: *Idem aa. Eutychiano praefecto praetorio. Eunomianae superstitionis clerici seu Montanistae consortio vel conversatione civitatum universarum adque urbium expellantur. Qui si forte in rure degentes aut populum congregare aut aliquos probabuntur inire conventus, perpetuo deportentur, procuratore possessionis ultima animadversione punito, domino possessione privando, in qua his consciis ac tacentibus infausti damnatique conventus probabuntur agitati. Si vero in qualibet post publicatam sollemniter iussionem urbe deprehensi aut aliquam celebrandae superstitionis gratia ingressi domum probabuntur, et ipsi ademptis bonis ultima animadversione plectantur et domus, in qua ea sorte, qua dictum est, ingressi nec statim a domino dominave domus expulsi ac prodiți fuerint, fisco sine dilatione societur. Codices sane eorum scelerum omnium doctrinam ac materiam continentes summa sagacitate mox quaeri ac prodi exerta auctoritate mandamus sub aspectibus iudicantum incendio mox cremandos. Ex quibus si qui forte aliquid qualibet occasione vel fraude occultasse nec prodidisse convincitur, sciat se velut noxiorum codicum et maleficii crimine conscribtorum retentatorem capite*

---

identifies the *quaestor* in charge of the formalisation of laws between 396 and 399 as an expert in *iuris scientia* (Honoré 1995). However, the fact that this *quaestor* was responsible for the style of the *constitutio CTh.* 16.5.34 (398)—which Honoré does not analyse—does not mean that he was the intellectual inspiration of its content. See comments on Honoré's method in J. Harries, The Roman Imperial Quaestor from Constantine to Theodosius II, *JRS* 78 (1988) 148–72, esp. 150–52 and the sharp criticisms by G. De Bonfils, Considerazione sui *quaestores* e la questura tardoantica. Un confronto con *The Law in the Crisis of Empire* di T. Honoré, *SDHI* 66 (2000) 289f. On the power of Eutropius, see Zosimus, *NH* 5.9.2; 11.1; 12.1; Pallad., *Dial.* 5.53; Eunapius fr. 69; Claudian, *In Eutrop.* 1.105; cf. in general A. Cameron, *Claudian, Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford 1970) 124–55; G. Albert, *Goten in Konstantinopel. Untersuchungen zur oströmischen Geschichte um das Jahr 400 n. Chr.* (Paderborn 1984) 38–46; J.H.W. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops. Army, Church and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1991) 89–110; A. Cameron and J. Long with L. Sherry, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley 1993) 6–8, 115–19, 227–30; F. De Martino, Ordo senatorius nel tardo impero e eunuchi di corte, *Parola del Passato* 289 (1996) 311–19; H. Scholten, *Der Eunuch in Kaisernähe. Zur politischen und sozialen Bedeutung des* praepositus sacri cubiculi *im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Frankfurt a.M. 1995); D. Schlinkert, *Ordo Senatorius und Nobilitas. Die Konstitution des Senatsadels in der Spätantike* (Stuttgart 1996) 266–70; E. Burrell, Claudian's *In Eutropium liber alter*. Fiction and History, *Latomus* 62 (2003) 110–38.

[7] Pallad., *Dial.* 5; cf. Socrates, *HE* 6.2; Sozomen, *HE* 8.2. For the various explanations, see Kelly 1995, 105 and Tiersch 2002, 35.

esse plectendum. Dat. IIII non mart. Constantinopoli Honorio a. IIII et Eutychiano conss. (398 mart. 4).

> The clergy of the Eunomian or Montanist superstition are to be expelled from association and human relationships in all communities and cities. Those who stay in the country and can be proved to have summoned the people or taken part in meetings shall be banished for life; if it is shown that the steward and owner of the property wherein the outrageous and damnable meetings took place knew about them, and said nothing, they shall be punished, the steward severely and the owner with the confiscation of his property.
>
> Anyone who, following the formal publication of this order, is arrested in any city for having been shown to have entered a *domus* to celebrate a superstition, shall have their goods confiscated and shall be put to death. As for the *domus* which they entered for this purpose, if they have not been expelled and handed over by the owner, it shall be expropriated by the prosecutor immediately.
>
> We order in the exercise of authority that the codices that contain the doctrine and subject matter of all their crimes be searched for thoroughly and handed over for them to be burnt immediately under the supervision of the judges. In the event that anyone is convicted for having hidden and not surrendered any of these works for whatever reason, or with criminal intent, he should know that he shall be put to death for possessing harmful codices classed as criminal *maleficium*.

Three comments may be made here. Firstly, *constitutio CTh* 16.5.34 is the most serious measure taken to repress the Eunomians (the mention of the Montanists is incidental, judging from what may be deduced from information provided by Philostorgius, our main source regarding the sect). It was also the first time that a *constitutio* equated the possession of heretical books with the *crimen* of sorcery.[8] Secondly, it forms part of a wider process, the use of law to threaten, intimidate, dissuade, even terrorise alleged religious dissidents; it represents in fact the first explicit association in a legal context between magic and heresy (it is clear for example that in 302, the probable date of the

[8] *HE* 11.5 attributes to Eutropius personally the order to burn the works of Eunomius after his death. The reference to the Montanists, who appear now for the first time in a law, was merely an attempt to add a certain credibility to the association proposed, as the prophetism of the followers of Montanus was well known in Asia Minor. They do not appear again in legal texts until 410, when they are linked to the Priscillianists (*CTh.* 16.5.48, 410 febr. 21). On the Montanists, see V.E. Hirschmann, *Horrenda Secta. Untersuchungen zum frühchristlichen Montanismus und seinen Verbindungen zur paganen Religion Phrygiens* (Stuttgart 2005).

rescript of Diocletian against the Manichaeans,[9] the legal category of heretic did not exist).[10] Thirdly, this legal provision is an example of the deliberate use of legal precedent in the framing of legislation: in view of the thematic, semantic and penal parallels between our law and the formulation of the penalty for possession of *libri magicae artis* in the Pauline *Sentences* (*Paul. Sent.* 5.23.18 = *FIRA*² 3 p. 410), I believe that in formulating the punishment the draftsmen of the *scrinia* were consciously drawing upon the commentaries of the third-century jurist.

My intention here is to set the law in its historical and juridical context in terms of these three perspectives. My argument is that Eutropius aimed to frighten the Eunomians by making use of the performativity and coercion inherent in legal language. It was their infiltration of the *sacrum cubiculum* and the central administrative departments under the powerful *magister officiorum*, that is, of the three *scrinia*, the dreaded *agentes in rebus*, and the *scholae palatinae* (the palace guard),[11] and their ability to stir up the people, together with ineffectiveness of previous legislation—harsh though it was—that account for the decision to frame the new version of the law in these terms.

1. *The Context of the Law*

This is the longest of the eleven chapters of *CTh.* 16: its sixty-six constitutions far exceed the twenty-five under the heading *de paganis, sacrificis et templis*, for example (although after 313 there were fewer heretics than followers of traditional cults). To these sixty-six we may add those in other chapters that deal directly or indirectly with heretics.[12] From this we may rightly conclude not only that heresy was

[9] See S. Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs. Imperial Pronouncements and Government A.D. 284–324* (Oxford 1996) 135. Besides 302, there are three other possible candidates, 287, 297 and 307, since there is evidence for the imperial presence in Alexandria in all three years. The arguments in favour of 302 are given by T.D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge MA and London 1982) 55 n. 41.

[10] On the formalisation of the legal category of heretic after Constantine and the procedures used, see Humfress 2000; also R. Maceratini, *Ricerche sullo status giuridico dell'eretico nel diritto romano-cristiano e nel diritto canonico-classico (da Graziano ad Uguccione)* (Padua 1994) 23–108.

[11] *CTh.* 16.5.29 (395 nov. 24). On these roles of the *magister officiorum*, see C. Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge MA and London 2004) 39f., 57f., 162f.

[12] See K.L. Noetlichs, *Die gesetzgeberischen Massnahmen der christlichen Kaiser des 4. Jhdts. gegen Häretiker, Heiden und Juden* (Cologne 1971); R. Delmaire, Introduction,

one of the favourite themes of imperial legislation but also that the compilers of the *Codex* intended it to be the main topic of the book. Moreover, a major characteristic of the book is its repeated use of derogatory and vilifying language.[13] The illicit in the sphere of religion at Rome had traditionally been constituted by terms such as *nefas, scelus, pollutio, sacrilegium, superstitio, perfidia, furor*.[14] As antonyms of the concept *pietas*, they had served to blacken those who acted against the claimed public good in a religious or moral context. All now reappear to describe the figure of the heretic, thereby turning him into the epitome of moral evil. We may take it that Theodosius himself was primarily responsible for this; his Christian predecessors had mainly issued legislation directed towards the governance of the Church and control of ecclesiastical personnel,[15] whereas the Theodosian *scrinia* were responsible for nineteen of the sixty-six laws making up the *de haereticis* chapter.[16]

---

in *Les lois religieuses des empereurs romains de Constantin à Théodose II, 1: Code Théodosien, Livre XVI* (Paris 2005) 37–52.

[13] See F. Zuccotti, Follia e ragione tra diritto pagano e mondo cristiano, *AARC* 8 (1990) 271–307; id., *Furor haereticorum. Studi sul trattamento giuridico della follia e sulla persecuzione della eterodossia religiosa nella legislazione del tardo impero romano* (Milan 1992); H. Zisner, Religio, Secta, *haeresis* in den Häresiegesetzen des *Codex Theodosianus* (16.5.1.66) von 438, in M. Hutter, W. Klein and U. Vollmer (eds.) *Hairesis. Festchrift für Karl Hoheisel zum 65. Geburtstag.* Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 34 (2002) 215–19.

[14] J. Scheid, Le délit religieux dans la Rome tardo-républicaine, in AA.VV., *Le délit religieux dans la cité antique* (Rome 1981) 117–71.

[15] See D. Gemmiti, *La chiesa privilegiata nel Codice Teodosiano. Vescovo, clero e monaci: aspetti emblematici* (Naples and Rome 1991); R. Klein, Theodosius der Große und die christliche Kirche, *Eos* 82 (1994) 85–121; R. Lizzi, Privilegi economici e definizione di status: il caso del vescovo tardoantico, *Rendiconti Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*[9] 11 (2000) 55–103; ead., Clerical Hierarchy and Imperial Legislation in Late Antiquity: The Reformed Reformers, in Ch.M. Bellito and L.I. Hamilton (eds.), *Reforming the Church before Modernity, Patterns, Problems and Approaches* (Aldershot 2005) 87–103.

[16] On the anti-heretical legislation of Theodosius I see e.g. A. Ehrhardt, The First Two Years of the Emperor Theodosius I, *JHE* 15 (1964) 1–17; G. Barone-Adesi, Primi tentativi di Teodosio il Grande per l'unità religiosa dell'Impero, *AARC 3* (1979) 49–55; D. Vera, Teodosio I tra religione e politica: i riflessi della crisi gotica dopo Adrianopoli, *AARC 6* (1986) 223–39, esp. 226; R. Lizzi, La politica religiosa di Teodosio I. Miti storiografici e realtà storica, *Rendiconti della Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche dell' Accademia dei Lincei*[9] 7 (1996) 323–61; R.M. Errington, Church and State in the First Years of Theodosius I, *Chiron* 27 (1997) 21–72; id. 1997; Leppin 2003, 35–86. See also M.V. Escribano, Graciano, Teodosio y el Ilírico: la *constitutio Nullus (locus) haereticis* (*CTh*. 16.5.6. 381), *RIDA* 51 (2004) 133–66; ead. 2005.

Theodosius had already outlined the intellectual, moral and religious profile of the heretic in a *constitutio* of 381 CE (*CTh.* 16.5.6); the trope subsequently reappears in his later ordinances, and those of his successors (Escribano 2008).[17] To this end, he adopted an insistent legal rhetoric of intimidation and marginalisation, aiming thereby to frighten the heretics themselves and instil fear of being even remotely associated with them. Indeed, by representing heretical dissidence as a criminal contagion, the work of irrational monsters possessed by the devil, the laws suggested that state intervention was imperative if such offenders were to be prevented from contaminating or undermining the social order.[18] They must be excluded from the city,[19] or punished with deportation, exile, confiscation of their goods, and public disgrace.[20]

The number and tenor of these laws might suggest that Theodosius I was a zealous persecutor of heretics.[21] The historian Sozomen, however, who had had a legal training, was familiar with the *Codex Theodosianus*, and included an analysis of the laws in his writings,[22]

---

[17] V.R. Charrow, J.A. Crandall and R.P. Charrow, Characteristics and Functions of Legal Language, in R. Kitredge and J. Lehrberger (eds.), *Sub-language: Studies of Language in Restricted Semantic Domains* (Berlin and New York 1982) 175–90.

[18] Gratian had used the terms *furor* and *uirus* to refer to the Donatists in 377 (*CTh.* 16.6.2, 377 oct. 17).

[19] H.O. Maier, The Topography of Heresy and Dissent in Late Fourth-Century Rome, *Historia* 44 (1995) 231–49; see also M.P. Baccari, Comunione e cittadinanza. A proposito della posizione giuridica di eretici, apostati, giudei e pagani secondo i codici di Teodosio II e Giustiniano I, *SDHI* 57 (1991) 264–96; ead., *Cittadini, popoli e communione nella legislazione dei secoli IV–VI* (Torino 1996); M.V. Escribano, El exilio del herético en el s. IV d. C. Fundamentos jurídicos e ideológicos, in F. Marco, F. Pina and J. Remesal (eds.), *Vivir en tierra extraña: emigración e integración cultural en el mundo antiguo* (Barcelona 2004) 255–72.

[20] See the critical apparatus in Escribano 2008.

[21] J. Ernesti, *Princeps christianus und Kaiser aller Römer: Theodosius der Große im Lichte zeitgenössischer Quellen* (Paderborn and Munich 1998); cf. H. Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Grossen zu Theodosius II. Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Socrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret* (Göttingen 1996); K. Gross-Albenhausen, *Imperator christianissimus. Der Christliche Kaiser bei Ambrosius und Johannes Chrysostomus* (Frankfurt a.M. 1999).

[22] Cf. Errington 1997. A comparative analysis of Sozomen and Socrates is to be found in T. Urbainczyk, Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen, *Historia* 46 (1997) 355–73. On Sozomen's activity as a lawyer in Constantinople while the *Codex Theodosianus* was being compiled, see J. Harries, Sozomen and Eusebius: The Lawyer as Church Historian in the Fifth Century, in C. Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (eds.), *The Inheritance of Historiography, 350–900* (Exeter 1986) 45–52; G.F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories. Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Evagrius* (Paris 1986) 199f.; H. Leppin, The Church

suggests that this is far from the truth. He distinguishes between the strictness of the laws and their actual application: Theodosius was simply using the laws as a means to instil fear. Referring to the law proclaimed by Theodosius after the Council "of all the heresies" in 383,[23] he comments that, although heavy penalties were laid down in the laws—exile and the stigma of public disgrace—he did not always have them carried out: the emperor did not really mean to persecute his subjects, just frighten them so that they would convert spontaneously to orthodoxy.[24]

I believe this to be the most plausible explanation of the discrepancy between repressive rhetoric and enforcement, and the repeated promulgation within a short space of time of measures whose force was practically identical. The point becomes explicit in a law proclaimed in 425,[25] which threatened with *proscriptio* all enemies of the *lex catholica*, the same treatment being meted out to heretics, schismatics and astrologers,[26] whether leaders or followers. The harshness of the measure was justified by pointing out that if they could not be led away from error by reason, then they should be by fear: *ut ab errore perfidiae, si ratione retrahi nequeunt, saltem terrore revocentur*. And in order to maximise this fear, it was expressly stated that those found guilty would be permanently deprived of any possibility of appeal, which meant an obvious reduction in their procedural rights.

Historians (I): Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoretus, in G. Marasco (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity, Fourth to Sixth Century* (Leyden 2003) 219–54.

[23] Socrates, *HE* 5.10.2 devotes more space to this than to the council of Constantinople in 381, cf. M. Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates. Untersuchungen zu Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode und Person* (diss. Heidelberg 1996) 309–17. On the meeting, see idem, Il sinodo di tutte le eresie a Costantinopoli (383), in AA.VV. 1997, 271–79.

[24] Sozomen, *HE* 7.12.12. The laws he refers to are *CTh* 16.5.11 (383 iul. 25); 12. (383 dec. 3) and 13 (384 ian. 21). See further the historical analysis in Escribano 2008.

[25] *CTh*. 16.5.63: *Idem A. et Caesaris Georgio proconsuli Africae. Omnes haereses omnesque perfidias, omnia schismata superstitionesque gentilium, omnes catholicae legi inimicos insectamur errores. Si quos vero…, haec quoque clementiae nostrae statuta poena comitetur et noverint sacrilegae superstitionis auctores participes conscios proscriptione plectendos, ut ab errore perfidiae, si ratione retrahi nequeunt, saltem terrore revocentur et universo supplicationum aditu in perpetuum denegato criminibus debita severitate plectantur. Et cetera. Dat. prid. non. aug. Aquileiae d. n. Theodosio a. XI et Valentiniano caes. conss.* (425 iul. 6 vel aug. 4).

[26] This is the interpretation of the phrase *superstitiones gentilium* convincingly proposed by Desanti 1995. Valens had previously defined the *mathematicus tractatus* as an error, with clear reference to error in the theological sense (*CTh*. 9.16.8, 370 or 373 dec. 12); cf. Desanti 1990, 269f.; F. Pergami, *La legislazione di Valentiniano e Valente (364–375)* (Milan 1993) 307 and 530.

The law to which this paper is devoted falls between the earlier Theodosian laws and this *constitutio* of 425, both chronologically and in *CTh*. It was essentially the work of the eunuch Eutropius, the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* of Arcadius, who was the dominant figure in the Eastern court after the fall of Rufinus.[27] Addressed to the praetorian prefect of the East, Eutychianus,[28] its purpose was made clear in the very first sentence: to cut the Eunomians off from all human contact and thus deprive them of their social influence. This had been Theodosius' aim since 381.[29]

Eunomius,[30] a pupil of Aetius the Syrian[31] and bishop of Cyzicus since 360, became the leader of the adherents of his master's ultrasubordinationist Christology after Aetius' death in 366. This was one of the most radical views in the context of fourth-century doctrinal controversies, claiming that the Son was in his essence incommensurable with the Father. His theological opponents, who included the most eminent representatives of Nicenism in the East, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus,[32] used the adjective *anomoios* to characterize this doctrine.[33]

---

[27] Philostorgius, *HE* 11.5; cf. n. 8 above.

[28] *PLRE* 1, s.v. *Flavius Eutychianus* 5.

[29] *CTh*. 16.5.6 (381 ian. 10). Theodosius was indeed the first to refer to the followers of Eunomius as Eunomians. For a detailed analysis of his penal repression of the heresy, see M.V. Escribano, Intolerancia y exilio. Las leyes teodosianas contra los eunomianos, *Klio* 89 (2006) 184–208.

[30] On his origins (he worked as a tachygrapher and teacher, and had his first contact with the Arian controversy in Constantinople and Antioch, before moving to Alexandria), career and thought, see Vaggione 1987 and 2000. On the history of the Anomoian/Anomean controversy, see E. Cavalcanti, Studi Eunomiani, *OCA* 202 (1976) 1–147; Kopecek 1979; Hanson 1988, 594–636; also P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley 1994) 93–132.

[31] On the career and thought of Aetius and the formation of the neo-Arian ecclesiastical party, see Kopecek 1979, 1: 61–298, esp. 227–297, where he analyses Aetius' *Syntagmation* (published in 359) as well as the use he made of the terms ἀγέννητος (ingenerate) and ἀγένητος(uncreated).

[32] On the redefinition of Nicenism by the Cappadocian theologians in dispute with the Homoousians, but above all with neo-Arianism, see Hanson 1988, 676–737; also J. Bernardi, *La prédication des Pères cappadociens: Le prédicateur et son auditoire* (Paris 1968); R. Van Dam, Emperors, Bishops and Friends in Late Antique Cappadocia, *JThS* 37 (1986) 53–76; R. Pouchet, *Basile le Grand et son univers d'amis d'après sa correspondence: Une stratégie de communion* (Rome 1992); R. Van Dam, *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia* (University Park 2003).

[33] Aetius managed to write the *Syntagmation* without ever using the terms ἀνόμοιον or ἑτερούσιον. His preferred locution was τὸ ἐν οὐσίᾳ ἀσύγκριτον, that which is in its essence incommensurable. See L.R. Wickham, Aetius and the Doctrine of Divine Ingeneracy, *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972) 259–63; idem, The Syntagmation of Aetius the Anomean, *JThS* 19 (1968) 532–69 and Kopecek 1979, 1: 210. Philostorgius, an admirer

However, the danger the 'neo-Arians' posed to society[34] arose not so much from their Christology as from Eunomius' skill in capturing minds, due to his mastery of the art of eristic argument[35] and his remarkable dialectic and persuasive skills.[36] His method of direct confrontation and his theological arguments fascinated his audiences and involved the lower classes in public debate, thereby upsetting the tacit rules of the dialectical *agon*, which reserved such disputes to the elite. Indeed, according to Gregory of Nazianzus in his *Theological Discourses*, particularly in *Oratio* 31, the neo-Arians were one of the most dynamic groups in Constantinople both before and after the arrival of Theodosius in November 380.[37] They not only controlled the agora in Constantinople, however: they were organised as a separate church, with active bishops in all the cities of the East[38] and were involved in diligent missionary activity.[39] Eunomius and his followers were thus perceived to be threatening the social order.[40]

---

of Aetius and his thought, and well-versed in the subject, states that although he was accused of teaching ἀνόμοιον, it was not ἀνόμοιος but ἑτερούσιος that was the key word in his doctrine (*HE* 4.12; 5.11–2.), cf. Theodoret, *HE* 2.23. See further Hanson 1988, 598–601f.; Vaggione 1987, 174f.

[34] The name "neo-Arians" was coined by Albertz 1909, and adopted by e.g. Kopecek 1979 and Hanson 1988. M. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome 1975) 229ff. calls them Anomoians/Anomoeans. Lim 1995, 111 n. 11 calls them Anomoeans for the period prior to 381 and Eunomians afterwards.

[35] Socrates, *HE* 2.35; Sozomen, *HE* 6.26.

[36] J. de Ghellink, Quelques appréciations de la dialectique d'Aristote durant les conflits trinitaires du IV[e] siècle, *RHE* 26 (1930) 5–42.

[37] Greg. Naz., *Or.* 31.30. In *Or.* 27, he attacks the neo-Arian passion for talking about God to produce verbose debate among the crowd in the agora, and even in the private women's quarters. This had caused a culture of debate to overtake Constantinople, cf. F.W. Norris, Gregory Nazianzen's Opponents in Oration 31, in R.C. Gregg, (ed.), *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments. Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies.* Patristic Monograph Series 11 (Cambridge MA 1985) 321–26. Sozomen, *HE* 7.6.3 indirectly confirms the point when he describes the efforts of the Empress Flacilla, driven by pro-Nicene zeal, to prevent Theodosius from meeting Eunomius, for fear of the latter's powers of debate.

[38] Protected by Julian, the neo-Arians held their first council in Constantinople c. 361, which culminated in the consecration of Aetius as bishop, cf. Kopecek 1979, 2: 414–22.

[39] As pointed out by Greg. Naz. in *Or.* 27, where he says that neo-Arians brought up theological issues everywhere, be it in markets, banquets or festivals in Constantinople. Their weapons were not simply dialectical syllogisms; they also made use of an effective repertory of texts taken from the Scriptures (*Or.* 30).

[40] See R. Lim, Religious Disputation and Social Disorder in Late Antiquity, *Historia* 44 (1995) 205–31.

It is this social notoriety, rather than the sheer number of his adherents, that explains why Eunomius had already suffered four periods of exile before 379,[41] and also why, from 381, Theodosius singled his followers out in his campaign to stamp out dissenters from Nicenism. The historian Socrates, who claims with some implausibility that Theodosius' attitude to heretics was generally conciliatory, emphasises that Eunomians were excepted from this policy of tolerance (Socrates, *HE* 5.20.4f.). Besides demonising them from that point onwards in the terms I have already noted,[42] Theodosius tried to drive them away from their habitual preaching locations, hinder their organisation[43] and commit the public authorities and the *ciues* to persecuting them through the promulgation of successive laws. These measures prohibited their meetings in cities, the countryside and *uillae*, as well as the holding of religious ceremonies and the ordination of priests. In 383 a further measure directed that properties where illicit assemblies were held were to be confiscated; Eunomians were to be repatriated to their places of origin, with a clause that restricted their freedom of movement; furthermore, Theodosius introduced the procedure of *inquisitio*, encouraged denunciation, and threatened to inflict the same punishments on any provincial governors and decurions who might have been lax in complying with the laws.[44]

---

[41] Mainly because his theology enjoyed minority acceptance in the see and never received Christian imperial patronage, in spite of his repeated attempts to gain entry to court circles. Without the necessary ecclesiastical and political support, he was forced to compete with successive majority theologies. For a detailed analysis, see M.V. Escribano, Intolerancia religiosa y marginación geográfica en el s. IV d. C.: los exilios de Eunomio de Cízico, *Studia Historica, Historia Antigua* 21 (2003) 177–207; Vaggione 1987, 148–200. His efforts to win influence among women of the upper classes and eunuchs were part of a strategy aimed at winning a mass-following.

[42] Note the language of *CTh.* 16.5.6:… *Fotinianae labis contaminatio, Arriani sacrilegii uenenum, Eunomianae perfidiae crimen… et nefanda monstruosis nominibus auctorum prodigia sectarum…*

[43] The Eunomians were not invited to the Great Council held May–June 381 in Constantinople. At the end of the Council sessions, the Emperor proclaimed an ordinance aimed exclusively against the Eunomians or followers of the dogma of Aetius: they were stripped of the right to build churches both in cities and in the countryside, and all their buildings, including the land on which they stood, the places where their doctrine was taught and the homes of their priests, were to be confiscated (*CTh.* 16.5.8, 381 iul. 19). This express assault on the Eunomians shows that the Council as well as the Emperor regarded them as ultra-dissidents.

[44] *CTh.* 16.5.11 (383 iul. 25). We may also cite *CTh.* 16.5.12: *Idem AAA. Postumiano praefecto praetorio. Vitiorum institutio deo atque hominibus exosa, eunomiana scilicet, arriana, macedoniana, apollinariana ceterarumque sectarum, quas verae religionis venerabili cultu catholicae observantiae fides sincera condemnat, neque publicis neque*

Despite the harshness of the laws and their penalties, the Eunomians evidently carried on meeting, both in private houses in Constantinople and in the suburbs of the city, thus ignoring the regulations in place. According to Socrates and Sozomen,[45] Eunomius would read his writings and teach his doctrine during these assemblies, thereby increasing the number of his followers,[46] among whom were palace eunuchs.

The situation changed in 388—that is, ten years before the proclamation of Eutropius' law. In that year, the Eunomians, from being a dynamic missionary organisation, became a political threat because of their successful infiltration of the ranks of the palace eunuchs, and their participation in the unrest in Constantinople during the absence of Theodosius, who had gone to Italy to confront Magnus Maximus in the West.[47] The outcome of a war between Augusti being always uncertain, Arians and Eunomians saw a chance to put an end to Nicene supremacy while the emperor was absent, spreading rumours that Theodosius had been defeated and killed. There immediately followed disturbances in Constantinople, during which the house of the Nicene bishop Nectarius, the visible head of imperial Nicenism, was attacked and burnt down.[48] The affair was not only a direct attack on

---

privatis aditionibus intra urbium adque agrorum ac villarum loca aut colligendarum congregationum aut constituendarum ecclesiarum copiam praesumat, nec celebritatem perfidiae suae vel sollemnitatem dirae communionis exerceat, neque ullas creandorum sacerdotum usurpet adque habeat ordinationes. Eaedem quoque domus, seu in urbibus seu in quibuscumque locis paschae turbae professorum ac ministrorum talium colligentur, fisci nostri dominio iurique subdantur, ita ut ii, qui vel doctrinam vel mysteria conventionum talium exercere consuerunt, perquisiti ab omnibus urbibus ac locis propositae legis vigore constricti expellantur a coetibus et ad proprias, unde oriundi sunt, terras redire iubeantur, ne quis eorum aut commeandi ad quaelibet alia loca aut evagandi ad urbes habeat potestatem. Quod si neglegentius ea, quae serenitas nostra constituit, impleantur, officia provincialium iudicum et principales urbium, in quibus coitio vetitae congregationis reperta monstrabitur, sententiae damnationique subdantur. Dat. III non. dec. Constantinopoli Merobaude II et Saturnino conss. (383 dec. 3). Note also *CTh.* 16.5.13 (384 ian. 21).

[45] Socrates, *HE* 5.20; Sozomen, *HE* 7.17. Synesius, *Ep.* 4, also points out that the Eunomians were welcome in the houses and estates of members of the elite.

[46] It was then, in fact, that Philostorgius, at the age of twenty, saw his hero Eunomius in Constantinople for the first time (*HE* 10.6).

[47] D. Vera, I rapporti tra Magno Massimo, Teodosio e Valentiniano II nel 383–384, *Athenaeum* 53 (1975) 267–301; H.R. Baldus, Theodosius der Grosse und die Revolte des Magnus Maximus, *Chiron* 14 (1984) 175–92; Leppin 2003, 106–33.

[48] Socrates, *HE* 5.13; Sozomen, *HE* 7.14. It is possible that the disturbances were also connected with the death of the Arian bishop Demophilus (Socrates, *HE* 5.12.6–8; Sozomen, *HE* 7.14.4). It may have been during confrontations between the followers of Marinus and Dorotheus, the two Arian candidates for Demophilus' seat, that

the orthodox regime established by Theodosius, whose fragility was thus exposed, but an insidious invasion of the palace and the patrimonial bureaucracy, some of whose staff were implicated. From Stobi, before going to war, Theodosius proclaimed a law prohibiting the discussion of religion in public, on pain of *summum supplicium*.[49] After defeating Maximus, the emperor decided to act directly against the Eunomians, whom he now considered a threat to his political position, precisely because of their influence in the palace. The activity of the Eunomians was seen as bordering on *crimen maiestatis*. While he was still in Milan (May 389), Theodosius deprived the Eunomian eunuchs of their right to make wills and receive legacies, thus rendering their property after their death *caduca fisci* (*CTh.* 16.5.17 [389]). We know of a second measure through the neo-Arian historian, Philostorgius of Borissus (*HE* 10.6). After expelling these eunuchs from the palace, Theodosius ordered Eunomius to be arrested—at the time he was in the city of Chalcedon—and to be deported to Halmyris, near Tomi in Moesia, on the shores of the Black Sea. However, a barbarian raiding-party surged across the river while it was covered by ice and captured the city before Eunomius could reach it. Probably in 390, therefore, it was decided to send him to Cappadocia, his originary province.[50] The city selected was Caesarea, the see of one of his fiercest recent opponents, the Nicene champion Basil: it was clearly intended not only to prevent him from proselytising but to make life as difficult for him as possible. Finally, because of the harassment he was suffering from the Caesareans, Eunomius was allowed to retire to one of his estates at Dacora.[51]

However, this rustication failed in its object: the estate became a meeting point for the Eunomians and a centre from which they

---

Nectarius' house burnt down. So Vaggione 1987, 353 n. 245, who thinks that the rumour of Theodosius' defeat may have sparked off the situation.

[49] *CTh.* 16.4.2 (388 iun. 16). The compilers of the Theodosian *constitutio* did not include it under the heading *De haereticis* (*CTh.* 16.5), but under *De his qui super religione contendunt* (*CTh.* 16.4). Errington 1997, 418 n. 108, feels it had a more than merely religious scope. On June 14th, two days earlier, while he was in Stobi, he had forbidden all sects from holding any type of public or secret meeting, or religious service (addressed to the prefect of Illyricum, Trifolio: *CTh.* 16.5.15, 388 iun. 14). To this end, he ordered the prefect to ensure that the guilty be arrested, put on trial and suffer the penalty required by God and the laws; cf. Escribano 2005.

[50] I follow the chronology of Vaggione 1987, 356. McLynn 1997, 305 dates the move from Moesia to Cappadocia in 386.

[51] Philostorgius, *HE* 10.6; Sozomen, *HE* 7.17.

disseminated their teachings. Thanks to his streams of visitors, Eunomius kept control of the community and repaired his contacts in the palace, thus flouting the repressive legislation (Sozomen, *HE* 7.17.4–6). This is most clearly borne out by a law issued by Rufinus, the praetorian prefect of the young Arcadius following the death of Theodosius, four days before he himself was assassinated in November 395.[52] In this law, Rufinus instructed the *magister officiorum* to investigate the *scrinia*, the *agentes in rebus* and the *palatini*, identify the heretics and have them expelled, not merely from the palace but beyond the city walls.[53]

Eutropius, Rufinus' successor as monitor of Arcadius' policies, was equally determined not to tolerate dissidents from Nicenism, or those who disagreed with his policy (which amounted to the same thing). In two successive laws, dated April 21st and 22nd 396, he ordered the new praetorian prefect, Caesarius, to hunt down the *auctores*, *doctores* and *clerici* of the Eunomians with a view to expelling them from the cities, and secluding them from human intercourse.[54] Caesarius moved with a will: Eunomius was taken from Dacora to Tyana and placed

---

[52] See K. Fittschen, Der *Praefectus praetorio* Flavius Rufinus. Ein hoher Reichsbeamter als Gestalt der Kirchengeschichte zur Zeit der Theodosianischen Wende, *ZAC* 5 (2001) 86–103.

[53] *CTh*. 16.5.29: *Idem aa. Marcello magistro officiorum. Sublimitatem tuam investigare praecipimus, an aliqui haereticorum vel in scriniis vel inter agentes in rebus vel inter palatinos cum legum nostrarum iniuria audeant militare, quibus exemplo divi patris nostri omnis et a nobis negata est militandi facultas. Quoscumque autem deprehenderis culpae huius adfines, cum ipsis, quibus et in legum nostrarum et in religionum excidium coniventiam praestiterunt, non solum militia eximi, verum etiam extra moenia urbis huiusce iubebis arceri. Dat. VIII kal. decemb. Constantinopoli Olybrio et Probino conss.* (395 nov. 24). In order to demonstrate his fidelity to the Theodosian policy, Arcadius had previously re-affirmed the ban on the Eunomians from making wills (*CTh*. 16.5.25, 395), which Theodosius had revoked in 394 (*CTh*. 16.5.23, 394 iun. 20); but reversed his decision a few months later (*CTh*. 16.5.27 395 iun. 24). *CTh*. 16.5.61 (423 aug. 8) re-affirms the exclusion of Eunomians from the imperial militia, except for the *cohortalini*, the emperor's guard.

[54] *CTh*. 16.5.31: *Idem AA. Caesario praefecto praetorio. Auctores doctoresque Eunomianorum facinoris investigati clericique maxime, quorum furor tantum suasit errorem, e civitatibus pellantur extorres. Dat. XI kal. mai. Constantinopoli Arcadio IIII et Honorio III aa. conss.* (396 apr. 21 vel 22); *CTh*. 16.5.32: *Idem AA. Caesario praefecto praetorio. Ne Eunomianorum tanta dementia perseveret, sublimis magnificentia tua omni studio auctores doctoresque eunomianorum investigare festinet clericique eorum maxime, quorum furor tantum suasit errorem, de civitatibus pellantur extorres et humanis coetibus segregentur. Dat. X kal. mai. Constantinopoli Arcadio IIII et Honorio III aa. conss.* (396 apr. 21 vel 22). In both laws the word *furor* appears—in the first law, together with *dementia*—as a label for the heretics' position; on the vocabulary, see Escribano 2005.

in the custody of a community of monks, whose solitary, isolated life was the best way of silencing someone who had made words his most deadly weapon.[55] He must have died soon afterwards (during the winter of 396/7)[56] and, according to Philostorgius, to whom we owe this information on his final exile, Eutropius was envious of his glory and would not consent to his being buried with his master—Aetius' tomb was probably in Constantinople—in spite of the fact that many people requested that it be done. However, despite the eunuch's attempt to prolong Eunomius' exile beyond his death by relegating his body to somewhere remote and inaccessible, he failed to prevent his tomb from becoming a centre of pilgrimage and veneration. It was then that Eutropius determined to silence Eunomius once and for all, and, as Philostorgius tells us, resolved to issue an edict ordering his writings to be burned.[57]

This background allows us to put *CTh*. 16.5.34 into its historical context. The Eunomians were considered a political threat because of their infiltration of the *sacrum cubiculum* and the palatine bureaucracy of the *magister officiorum*.[58] All previous legislative fulmination had failed to scare them; they had succeeded in continuing to recruit new

---

[55] Vaggione 1987, 359 observes that in Tyana he was effectively a 'cave dweller', kept out of sight, thus anticipating the name 'troglodytes' that his followers were to receive later because of their separation from the human community.

[56] Kopecek 1979, 2: 528 n. 7 prefers to follow the chronology proposed by M. Albertz, *Untersuchungen über die Schriften des Eunomius* (diss. Wittenberg 1908). He maintains that Eunomius died in Dacora around 394 (cf. Sozomen, *HE* 7.17.1). However he overlooks the fact that Philostorgius' final reference to Eunomius appears in 11.5.

[57] Philostorgius, *HE* 11.5; cf. L. Cracco Ruggini, Les morts qui voyagent: le repatriement, l'exil, la glorification, in F. Hinard, *La mort au quotidien dans le monde romain* (Paris 1995) 117–34, esp. 124f. writes: "Eunomius…ensuite exilé par Theodose à Halmyris et plus tard dans les environs de Césarée de Cappadoce, mort là-bas vers 395, fut transporté de la campagne de Dakora jusqu' à la ville de Tyane sur ordre d'Eutrope…et du préfet de Constantinople Césaire, afin de le separer de son maître même dans la sépulture (si l'on croit l'Histoire Ecclésiastique arienne de Philostorge) et donc éviter l'enracinement d'un culte que la présence des deux célèbres 'martyrs' ariens défunts aurait sans doute fortifié, au coeur d'une petite communaute villageoise telle que Dakora". However there is no evidence to show that Aetius was buried in Dacora. In fact, Philostorgius relates four separate details: the transfer of Eunomius from his estate in Dacora to the monastic community in Tyana (spring 396); his death there; Eutropius' refusal to allow him to be buried next to his master Aetius, whose tomb was probably accessible in Constantinople (winter of 396/397); and the order to destroy his writings (March 398).

[58] M. Clauss, *Der* magister officiorum *in der Spätantike (4–6 Jhdt.). Das Amt und sein Einfluss auf die kaiserliche Politik* (Munich 1980).

adherents and threatening social order. Eutropius therefore decided in 398 to break them by equating Eunomianism with sorcery, which meant the death-penalty. (There is a faint possibility that John Chrysostom, who had arrived in Constantinople shortly before the law was proclaimed, was behind this step: he was a professed enemy of magic practices,[59] had first-hand knowledge of the consequences arising from the charge of *maleficium*, debated intensively with the Eunomians of Antioch,[60] and directed his first homily in Constantinople against them.[61] Moreover, *maleficium* does not occur in any of the anti-Eunomian laws after 398. However, there is no positive evidence to suggest that he was the intellectual inspiration behind the most stringent clauses of the law. Anyway, given that Socrates dates John's arrival in Constantinople to 26th February 398, he can hardly have had a hand in framing a law promulgated on 4th March).[62]

2. *The Provisions of Eutropius' Law*

Unlike most laws of the period, the content of *CTh.* 16.5.34 is, apart from a brief statement of purpose, exclusively penal. The statement of purpose also serves as a preamble alluding to the laws of 396 (see n. 54). This allusion—and the emphasis in *civitatum uniuersarum ac urbium*—serves to reiterate these earlier measures while at the same time stating the purpose of the new penal stipulations set out in the body of the law. These clauses banned meetings of Eunomians led by clergy, on private estates as well as in town *domus*, on the grounds these were opportunities for the leaders of the sect to disseminate their teachings and reinforce group cohesion.

The law foresees deportation for anyone who summons a congregation or takes part in a Eunomian meeting on a rural property. But it also sanctions indirect support: a manager and/or owner of the estate (who might tacitly have condoned the meeting by failing to intervene)

---

[59] John Chrys., *Cat.* 3.6; *Hom.* 2 *in Matth*; *Hom* 10 *in epist.* 1 *ad Timoth.*; *Hom.* 4, *in epist.* 1 *ad Cor.* See the references collected in Marasco 1997, 228–33.

[60] John Chrys., *Hom.* 1–9 *C. Anomaeos*; cf. Kopecek 1979, 2: 530–39.

[61] John Chrys., *Hom.* 11–12 *C. Anomaeos*.

[62] See n. 5 above. The first author to suggest a link between Chrysostom and *CTh.* 16.5.34 was C. Baronius, *Annales ecclesiastici* (Venice and Lucca 1738–40 [orig. ed. Ingolstadt 1594]) 6: 281, anno 398 §LXXVIII, cf. John Chrys., *Hom.* 46 *in Matth.* Vaggione 1987, 361 n. 294 is rightly sceptical.

were to be punished, the former with the *animadversio ultima* (the death penalty), the latter with the loss of his property—a two-tier penalty depending on legal/social status—which was a way of encouraging denunciation. The co-operation of the population was needed to unmask heretics, which involved encouraging delators and threatening possible accessories after the fact.[63] To prevent Eunomians transferring their meetings to private *domus* in the city, the second clause prescribed *ademptio bonis* (compulsory sale of possessions) and *animadversio ultima* for those attending, together with the confiscation of the *domus* if its owners had failed to report the meeting.[64]

In themselves, these clauses were part of the established methods for dealing with the Eunomians and other heretical sects. Only the *animadversio ultima* is new. Its appearance is due to the final stipulation and the penal clause that goes with it:

> *Codices sane eorum scelerum omnium doctrinam ac materiam continentes summa sagacitate mox quaeri ac prodi exerta auctoritate mandamus sub aspectibus iudicantum incendio mox cremandos. Ex quibus si qui forte aliquid qualibet occasione vel fraude occultasse nec prodidisse convincitur, sciat se velut noxiorum codicum et maleficii crimine conscriptorum retentatorem capite esse plectendum.*[65]

Each of these two provisions is without precedent in previous laws against the Eunomians and other heretical groups, presenting Eunomian meetings as wicked assemblies wrapped in the secrecy typical of magic rites. Unlike the passives of the previous clauses, here we find a performative verb in the indicative (*mandamus*), reinforced by the modal ablative *exerta auctoritate*. Eunomian writings are to be hunted

---

[63] *CTh.* 16.5.34: *Qui si forte in rure degentes aut populum congregare aut aliquos probabuntur inire conventus, perpetuo deportentur, procuratore possessionis ultima animadversione punito, domino possessione privando, in qua his consciis ac tacentibus infausti damnatique conventus probabuntur agitati.*

[64] *CTh.* 16.5.34: *Si vero in qualibet post publicatam sollemniter iussionem urbe deprehensi aut aliquam celebrandae superstitionis gratia ingressi domum probabuntur, et ipsi ademptis bonis ultima animadversione plectantur et domus, in qua ea sorte, qua dictum est, ingressi nec statim a domino dominave domus expulsi ac proditi fuerint, fisco sine dilatione societur.*

[65] "We order in the exercise of authority that the codices that contain the doctrine and subject matter of all their crimes be searched for thoroughly and handed over for them to be burnt immediately under the supervision of the judges. In the event that anyone is convicted for having hidden and not surrendered any of these works for whatever reason, or with criminal intent, he should know that he shall be put to death for possessing harmful codices classed as criminal *maleficium*."

out with a will (*summa sagacitate*), or voluntarily surrendered, and put to the flames under the direct supervision of the judges. The justification is slipped into the final sentence about the death penalty: because such writings are tantamount to magic (*maleficium*), which is a crime.

Maleficium, in fourth-century legal parlance, fundamentally denoted malign magic, in other words, a specialised ritual directed against the well-being, physical or mental, of one or more victims.[66] The pre-398 *constitutiones* of *CTh*. 9.16, *de maleficis et mathematicis et ceteris similibus*,[67] understand *artes magicae* as the use of spoken *sortilegia*—recited from *dira carmina*—and material *sortilegia*—the preparation of philtres, potions, *venenum*, *medicamenta*[68]—or casting spells, curses, performing exorcisms or making predictions based on numerology or observation of the stars.[69] The night was of course held to be typical time to evoke the forces of evil or the dead, to cast spells or offer horrid sacrifices to enable the practitioner to make ominous predictions.[70] The potential risk here to the emperor's person explains the close link between the crimes of *maiestas*[71] and *maleficium* in some laws and the severity of the punishment.[72]

---

[66] See R. Taubenschlag, Maleficium, *RE* 14 (1928) 870–875; Rives 2003.

[67] *CTh*. 9.16.9 (371 mai. 29): *cum maleficiorum causis*; 9.16.10 (371 dec. 6): *maleficiorum insimulatione adque inuidia*; 9.38.4 (368 iun. 6): *maleficiorum scelus*; cf. Jerome, *Chron*. S.s. 371: *maleficos*.

[68] *CTh*. 9.38.6 (381 iul. 21):…*qui noxiis quaesita graminibus et diris inmurmurata secretis mentis et corporis venena*.… For muttering in magical contexts, cf. L. Baldini Moscado, Murmur nella terminologia magica, *Studi Ital. Filol. Class*. 44 (1976) 254–62.

[69] On the connections between magic and astrology, see e.g. Eusebius, *Vit. Const*. 2.4.11; cf. F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge MA 1997) 50–57, 205f.; Fögen 1993, 89–182. On other forms of magic, see J.B. Clerc, *Theurgica legibus prohibita*. À propos de l'interdiction de la théurgie (Augustin, La cité de Dieu 10.9.1; Code Théodosien 9.16.4), *REAug* 42 (1996) 57–64.

[70] *CTh*. 9.16.7 (364 sept. 9): *nocturnis temporibus, aut nefarias preces aut magicos apparatus aut sacrificia funesta*.

[71] See L. Solidoro, La disciplina del *crimen maiestatis* tra tardo antico e medioevo, in F. Lucrezi and G. Mancini (eds.), *Crimina e delicta nel tardo antico* (Milan 2003) 123–200.

[72] On the penal repression of magic in IV^{p}, see Maurice 1927; F. Martroye, La répression de la magie et le culte des gentils au IV^{e} siècle, *RHD* 9 (1930) 669–701; E. Massoneau, Le crime de magie et le droit romain (Paris 1933); C. Pharr, The Interdiction of Magic in Roman Law, *TAPhA* 63 (1932) 269–95; Grodzynski 1974; C. Castello, Cenni sulla repressione del reato di magia dagli inizi del principato fino a Costanzo II, *AARC* 8 (1990) 665–93; Desanti 1990; S. Montero, *Política y adivinación en el Bajo Imperio Romano: emperadores y harúspices (193–408 d.C.)* (Brussels 1991);

Ever since the time of Diocletian, the civil and procedural rights of those found guilty of *maleficium* had been drastically curtailed. In *CTh.* 9, *de indulgentiis criminum*, the *scelus maleficiorum* was one of those excluded from measures of clemency and invariably punished with death.[73] In the order of priority stipulated in a law of 384, it is the third most serious offence—alongside *veneficium*—after *crimen maiestatis* and *homicidium* and above child-rape, adultery, desecration of tombs, kidnapping and counterfeiting coin.[74] Furthermore, it was difficult to exculpate oneself from the charge, even if it were false, as denunciation here, notwithstanding the cautious overall regulations,[75] was not only permitted[76] but actually compulsory.[77] Once convicted, a person had no right of appeal.[78] This rule applied even to high-ranking individuals, whose *praescriptio fori* was curtailed[79] and usual exemption from torture rescinded.[80]

That being the case, accusing someone of sorcery was a very serious matter. Accounts by Ammianus Marcellinus, Libanius and Eunapius exemplify the frequent political instrumentalisation of such accusations to ruin political careers, eliminate rivals or clear the way for

---

C.R. Phillips, *Nullum crimen sine lege*: Socio-religious Sanctions on Magic, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 260–76.

[73] *CTh.* 9.38.3 (367 mai. 5); 9.38.4 (368 iun. 6); cf. W. Waldstein, *Untersuchungen zum römischen Begnadigungsrecht. Abolitio, indulgentia, uenia* (Innsbruck 1964).

[74] *CTh.* 9.38.7 (384 mart. 22):…*primum crimen et maxime maiestatis, deinde homicidii veneficiique ac maleficiorum, stupri atque adulterii parique immanitate sacrilegii sepulchrique violatio, raptus monetaque adulterata figuratio*; see also 9.38.8 (385 febr. 25).

[75] See Y. Rivière, *Les delateurs sous l'empire romain* (Rome and Paris 2002) 259ff.

[76] *CTh.* 9.16.1 (319 febr. 1).

[77] *CTh.* 9.6.2 (376 mart. 15); 9.6.3 (397 nov. 8). The crimes of magic and poisoning were on a par with those of *maiestas*, Amm. Marc. 28.1.11; cf *CTh.* 9.35.1 (369 iul 8). See further J. Gaudemet, La répression de la délation au Bas Empire, *Miscellanea in onore di E. Manni* (Rome 1979) 1067–88; G. Crifò, Profili del diritto criminale romano tardoantico, in A. Saggioro (ed.), *Diritto romano e identità cristiana. Definizione storico-religiose e confronti interdisciplinari* (Rome 2005) 81–94.

[78] Since the time of Constantine: *CTh.* 11.6.1 (314 mai. 26); cf. Grodzynski 1974, 273f.

[79] *Praescriptio fori* is a term used in the late-Roman period to denote the right of privileged defendants (e.g. *palatini*, senators, soldiers) to be tried before special tribunals, cf. U. Vincenti, *Praescriptio fori* e senatori nel tardo impero romano d'Occidente, *Index* 19 (1991) 433–40. It could also be applied to certain classes of offence.

[80] Grodzynski 1984; Y. Thomas, Les procedures de la majesté. La torture et l'enquête depuis les Julio-Claudiens, in *Mélanges à la mémoire d' A. Magdelein* (Paris 1999) 477–99.

personal ambitions[81]—for example Sopatrus under Constantine[82] or Theodorus under Valens.[83] Even in proceedings to annul a marriage, a charge of sorcery could be effective: it had been considered valid grounds for a *iustum repudium* since 331, as has been shown by Antonella Di Mauro Todini in her work on the *medicamentarius*.[84] In short, in the context of the late fourth-century penal system, and given the restricted defence options open to the accused, a legal provision such as we find in Eutropius' law multiplied opportunities for delators to ply their trade.[85]

As is well known, the practice of magic in fourth-century Christian circles, even within the Church administration, was common.[86] This is borne out in the canons of the councils of Elvira (c. 306), Ancyra (314), Constantinople (360) and Laodicea[87] and was a topic of concern to John Chrysostom, Jerome and Augustine.[88] Everyone, perhaps particularly in the imperial palace, was confident that magic worked.[89]

---

[81] For the Antioch trials, see n. 3 above.

[82] Eunapius, *VS* 6.1–12; Zos. 2.40.3; cf. A. Baldini, Il filosofo Sopatro e la versione pagana della conversione di Costantino, in L. Criscuolo et al. (eds.), *Simblos. Scritti di Storia Antica* (Bologna 1995) 265–86.

[83] See p. 105f. above. Besides Funke 1967, see Wiebe 1995; N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire. Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley 2002) 211–63; also Liebs 1997, 146–58; 210–13.

[84] A. Di Mauro Todini, *Medicamentarius*, una denominazione insolita. Brevi considerazioni a proposito di *CTh.* 3.16.1, *AARC* 7 (1988) 343–82. For its impact on subsequent legislation, see O. Vannucchi Forzieri, La legislazione imperiale del IV–V secolo in tema di divorzio, *SDHI* 48 (1982) 289–31; J.E. Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity. The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation* (Oxford 1995).

[85] L. Mer, *L'accusation dans le procédure pénale du Bas-Empire romain*, Thèse fac. droit, Univ. Rennes 1953; cf. G. Crifò, Procedimento accusatorio criminale nel basso Impero, *Index* 2 (1973) 389–94.

[86] E.g. *PGrMag* P1–24; O3, 5. Meyer and Smith 1999 is a selection of relevant Christian documents from Coptic Egypt. For sorcery among the clergy of Syria, cf. E. Petersen, Die geheimen Praktiken eines syrischen Bischofs, in idem, *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis* (Vienna 1959) 333ff.

[87] The date is debated, and varies between 343 and 381. Bishops condemned both protective and malign magic: G. Marasco, La condanna della magia nei concili occidentali del IV secolo d.C., in AA.VV., *I Concili della cristianità ocidentale, secoli III–V. XXX Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Roma 3–5 maggio 2001*. Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum 78 (Rome 2002) 79–88; cf. Dickie 2001, 257–62.

[88] See Marasco 1997, 227 n. 12.

[89] Besides Ammianus Marcellinus' account of how magic was rooted in the upper classes (Funke 1967, 145–75), we also have a *constitutio* of Constantius II denouncing the practice of magic, which he assumes even for the emperor's *comitatus*: *CTh.* 9.16.6: *Idem A. ad Taurum praefectum praetorio. Etsi excepta tormentis sunt corpora honoribus praeditorum, praeter illa videlicet crimina, quae legibus demonstrantur, etsi omnes magi, in quacumque sint parte terrarum, humani generis inimici credendi sunt,*

One only has to think of Marcellus Empiricus, *magister officiorum* of Theodosius I in 394–5 and author of a *Liber de medicamentis*, which includes magical-medical recipes that he presents as Christian;[90] or of Libanius, an alleged expert in the magic arts at the court of Honorius and Constantius III, who in 421 promised to rid them of the barbarian menace without the need for troops. Only the intervention of Galla Placidia, who threatened to repudiate her marriage to Constantius if Libanius were permitted to become involved, prevented the latter from casting his spells.[91]

Moreover accusations of magical practice against bishops played a role in several religious disputes of this period.[92] Athanasius, the champion of Nicenism in the East, was accused of magical practice on no fewer than four occasions by his theological and political opponents.[93] Nor was the law of 398 the first time that heretical writings had been burned as magical: Paulinus, the bishop of Adana, and signatory of the council of Nicea, was arrested on suspicion of sorcery and expelled from the Church; his books—supposedly on magic—were burnt by Macedonius, the bishop of Mopsuestia. Blame rubbed off on Ossius of Cordoba in 343 for having had close contact with Paulinus during his stay in the East.[94] The fact that he had supported the condemnation of

---

tamen quoniam qui in comitatu nostro sunt ipsam pulsant propemodum maiestatem, si quis magus vel magicis contaminibus adsuetus, qui maleficus vulgi consuetudine nuncupatur, aut haruspex aut hariolus aut certe augur vel etiam mathematicus aut narrandis somniis occultans artem aliquam divinandi aut certe aliquid horum simile exercens in comitatu meo vel Caesaris fuerit deprehensus, praesidio dignitatis cruciatus et tormenta non fugiat. si convictus ad proprium facinus detegentibus repugnaverit pernegando, sit eculeo deditus ungulisque sulcantibus latera perferat poenas proprio dignas facinore. Dat III non. iul. arimini datiano et cereale conss. (358 iul. 5). See J. Wortley, Some Light on Magic and Magicians in Late Antiquity, *GRBS* 42 (2001) 289–307.

[90] C. Opsomer and R. Halleux, Marcellus ou le mythe empirique, in P. Mudry and J. Pigeaud (eds.), *Les écoles médicaux antiques* (Geneva 1991) 159–78.

[91] Olympiodorus, frg. 36B1 (Photius), tr. R.C. Blockley, The Fragmentary Classicing Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus (Liverpool 1981) 201. See V.A. Sirago, *Galla Placidia e la trasformazione politica dell'Occidente* (Louvain 1961) 203f.; W. Lütkenhaus, *Constantius III. Studien zu seiner Tätigkeit und Stellung im Westreich 411–421* (Bonn 1998) 160f.

[92] See S. Acerbi, Acusaciones de magia contra obispos: el caso de Sofronio de Tella, in R. Teja (ed.), *Profecía, magia y adivinación en las religiones antiguas* (Aguilar de Campo 2001) 131–42. Accusations of magical practice were a frequently-used means of disposing of competitors and enemies during the Principate (Liebs 1997, 146–58).

[93] G. Marasco, Pagani e cristiani di fronte alle arti magiche nel IV secolo d.C.: il caso di Atanasio, *Quaderni Catanesi de Cultura Classica e Medievale* 3 (1995) 111–24.

[94] Hilarius, *Frag.Hist.* A 4.1.27 (*CSEL* 65, 66):*…quod convixerit in Oriente cum sceleratis ac perditis. Turpiter namque Paulino quondam episcopo Daciae individuus*

magic at the council of Elvira counted for nothing. As recently as 385, the Hispanic bishop Priscillian had been decapitated at Trèves on a charge of *maleficium*.[95] In short, as A.A. Barb and Peter Brown noted forty years ago,[96] there was plenty of magic about in the fourth century, and not merely protective or beneficial magic. Its practice was not confined to the lower populace, any more than it had been in previous centuries, when magic rites were even used as a para-legal method of obtaining or restoring justice without recourse to the law.[97]

But the Eunomians did not cast spells, they did not meet at night to offer horrid sacrifices, and they had no contact with the Manichaeans, who had been linked with *maleficium* since the time of Diocletian,[98] or with similar sects such as the Encratites, Hydroparastates and the Saccophores, for whom Theodosius had decreed the *summum supplicium* in 382.[99] It was therefore well nigh impossible to accuse them directly

---

amicus fuit, homini, qui primo maleficus fuerit accusatus et de ecclesia pulsus usque in hodiernum diem in apostasia permanens cum concubinis publice et meretrices fornicetur, cuius maleficiorum libros Machedonius episcopus atque confessor a Mobso combussit. For the correction of 'Dacia' to 'Adana', see H. Chadwick, Ossius of Cordova and the Presidency of the Council of Antioch (325), *JThS* (1958) 292–304 at 299f.; T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge and London 1993) 74 disagrees.

[95] Sulpicius Severus., *Chron*. 2.50.8: *convictumque maleficii nec diffitentem obscenis se studuisse doctrinis, nocturnos etiam turpium feminarum egisse conuentus nudumque orare solitum*. See E. Massoneau, *La magie dans l'antiquité romaine* (Paris 1934) 242–61; K. Girardet, Trier 385. Der Prozess gegen die Priszillianer, *Chiron* 4 (1974) 587–603; M.V. Escribano, *Haeretici iure damnati*: el proceso de Tréveris contra los priscilianistas (385), in AA.VV., *Cristianesimo e specificità regionali nel Mediterraneo latino (sec. IV–VI). XXII Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Roma 6–8 maggio 1993*. Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum 46 (Rome 1994) 393–416.

[96] A.A. Barb, The Survival of Magic Arts, in A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 1963) 100–25; Brown 1970; more recently Dickie 2001, 251–321.

[97] On 'prayers for justice' see H.S. Versnel, Les imprécations et le droit, *RHD* 65 (1987) 5–22; idem, Beyond Cursing: The Appeal for Justice in Judicial Prayers, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 60–106; and his paper in the present volume (p. 275); a summary of his ideas in S. Kernais, Les ongles et le chaudron. Pratiques judiciaires et mentalités magiques en Gaule romaine, *RHD* 83 (2005) 155–181.

[98] *Mos. et Rom. Coll*. 15.3.5, cf. E.H. Kaden, Die Edikte gegen die Manichäer von Diokletian bis Justinian, *Festschrift Hans Lewald* (Basle 1953) 55–68; E. Volterra, La costituzione di Diocletiano e Maximiano contro i Manichaei, in AA.VV., *La Persia e il mondo greco-romano* (Rome 1966) 27–50; Brown 1969, 92f., 97f. = 1972, 95f., 106f.

[99] *CTh*. 16.5.9 (382 mart. 31), cf. P. Beskow, The Theodosian Laws against Manichaeism, in P. Bryder (ed.), *Manichaean Studies: Proceedings of 1st International Conference on Manichaeism, Aug. 5–9th 1987, Dept. of History of Religion, Lund University* (Lund 1988) 1–11.

of sorcery. However they had one weak point: the central role played, after Eunomius' death, by his writings. It was here that Eutropius saw his chance.

Socrates, Sozomen and the neo-Arian Philostorgius relate that at their meetings the Eunomians would read texts by their founder.[100] Our knowledge of the basic texts comes from the rebuttals of his writings by Cappadocian theologians, whose attacks on him show how far Eunomius influenced the shaping of trinitarian doctrine in the fourth century (Albertz 1909, 208). For example, his *Apologia*, delivered in 359 or early 360[101] at the council of Constantinople, was refuted by Basil soon afterwards (*Adversus Eunomium*).[102] In response, Eunomius wrote a second apology (*Apologia Apologiae*, 378/380), whose content can be reconstructed through the reply by Gregory of Nyssa (*Contra Eunomium*). Gregory also refuted the *Expositio fidei* that Eunomius presented before the "synod of all heresies" in 383 (*Refutatio confessionis Eunomii*).[103] Besides these, there were sermons, letters and commentaries, such as the one he wrote on Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*,[104] and perhaps the *Syntagmation* of Aetius. The content of these writings was Christological and pneumatological: his doctrines of *agennesia* and *heterousia* had nothing to do with magic. Nevertheless, Eunomius' skill in the use of the syllogism lent some plausibility to Gregory of Nyssa's malicious and far from innocent accusation that he had transformed

[100] Socrates, *HE* 5.20; Sozomen, *HE* 7.17; Philostorgius, *HE* 10.6.

[101] L.R. Wickham, The Date of the Apology of Eunomius: a Reconsideration, *JThS* 20 (1969) 231–40, dates it to January 360, while Kopecek 1979, 2: 299–346, where he examines its content in detail, argues for late 359. See also J.A. Röder, *Gregor von Nyssa. Contra Eunomium I, 1–146. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und kommentiert* (Frankfurt and Berlin 1993) 40–56.

[102] Kopecek 1979, 2: 364ff. dates it to 360 or 361; Hanson 1988, 686 to 364; T. Böhm, Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium I–III* and Ps.-Basil, *Adversus Eunomium* IV–V, in M.F. Wiles and E.J. Yarnold (eds.), *Cappadocian Writers. Other Greek Writers*, Studia Patristica 37 (Leuven 2001) 20–26, seem to opt for 364/365; see also P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea, Contra Eunomium*: the Main Preoccupations, *Prudentia Supplementary Number* (1988) 77–94. For the current state of the discussion, cf. V.H. Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea. Sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner* (Göttingen 1996) 43ff.

[103] Hanson 1988, 676–737. See also M.F. Wiles, Eunomius: Hair-Splitting Dialectian or Defender of the Accessibility of Salvation, in R. Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy. Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge 1989) 157–73.

[104] Mentioned by Socrates, *HE* 4.7.7.

θεολογία into τεχνολογία[105]—given that τέχνη smacked at least faintly of magical practice.[106]

But there was something that the heretical texts and books on magic had in common, namely the format, the *codex*. In my view this is the crux of Eutropius' law. *Codices* and their evil nature are mentioned twice: the first occasion, *codices… scelerum omnium doctrinam ac materiam continentes*, represents them as the medium of wicked doctrines; the second, a sort of *expolitio*, specifies their criminal content: *noxiorum codicum et maleficii crimine conscribtorum (retentatorem)*. The first part of this expression is identical to one used by Ammianus to refer to books of magic.[107] Eutropius' drafters expanded the phrase, which was evidently current in the sense 'grimoire', by adding the idea of criminal intent: *et maleficii crimine conscriptorum*, which means literally "composed by the crime of magic", i.e. whose very composition is itself punishable under the laws against *maleficium*.[108]

In the fourth century, the term *codex* meant a book consisting of a set of papyrus (*codex chartaceus*) or parchment (*codex membraneus*) leaves folded down the centre and gathered into quaternions or quinternions, sewn along the spine and protected by wooden endpieces, sometimes covered in leather.[109] The format made it not only easy to

---

[105] This formula was used by Theodoretus of Cyrus c. 453 to summarise Eunomius' theology in the appreciation of his contemporaries: Theod. Cyr., *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* 4.3. Basil of Caesarea, *Ep*. 90, divided the activities of the Christian community into θεολογεῖν and τεχνολογεῖν, attributing the latter to heretics. But it was Gregory of Nyssa who most contributed to dubbing his theology a τεχνολογία (*Contra Eunom*. 1.155; 1.282; 3.1.9; 3.5.6; 3.10.50). See E. Vandenbusschen, La part de la dialectique dans la théologie d'Eunomius le technologue, *RHE* 40 (1944–45) 47–72; Lim 1995, 109–48.

[106] See Vaggione 1987, 93 n. 102. According to Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 18.18 (*PG* 35 col. 1005), heretics ensnared their followers by means of documents which were passed round in secret.

[107] Amm. 28.1.26: *codicem noxiarum artium… descripsisse* (the case of Lollianus, c. 368).

[108] I considered the possibility that *conscribtorum* might be a noun referring to other types of texts such as *libelli* or *chartae*, but that would complicate the interpretation and put strain on the syntax. It is clearly an adjectival past-participle parallel to (or glossing) *noxiorum*.

[109] This is the definition given by J. Van Haelst, Les origines du codex, in A. Blanchard (ed.), *Les débuts du codex* (Turnhout 1989) 13–35. For a drawing of the gathering- and binding-process, see G. Cavallo, s.v. Codex, *DNP* 3 (1997) 50–3, figs. 1–2. See also C.H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London 1983); A. Guzmán, Codex, in *Estudios de Derecho Romano en honor de Alvaro d'Ors* (Pamplona 1987) 2: 591–635; A.K. Bowman, The Vindolanda Writing Tablets and the Development of the Roman Book Form, *ZPE* 18 (1975) 237–52.

read—only one hand was needed—but also to write on both sides of a leaf, so that copying, transportation and distribution all became easier. With regard both to manufacture and ease of storage in private libraries, it had all the advantages of the modern book over against the roll (*volumen*). Moreover, because the materials involved were expensive, parchment *codices* at any rate were valuable objects, indeed luxury items. This is borne out by the anecdote of John Chrysostom with which I began this paper; and confirmed by Jerome.[110] Since the second century, the codex had been the Christians' medium of choice for their sacred writings,[111] accompanying them on their journeys, and used not merely for reading but also as talismans. The *codices* referred to in Eutropius' law were in fact magical in two senses, with respect to their (heretical) content but also as (talismanic) objects. This is why they were condemned to the flames, the idea being that in destroying the objects the fire should purge the stain of heretical pollution.

3. *The Pauline* Sententiae *as a model*

The law's focus on the Eunomian *codices* was quite deliberate: it was calculated to cause fear. Roman legislation, as well as being casuistic, had always had recourse to legal precedent (Humfress 2000). I believe that the inspiration behind this law was just such a precedent, namely the penal regulations in the Pauline *Sententiae* against the possession of *libri magicae artis*. This work consists of commentaries ascribed to the jurisconsult Iulius Paulus, an eminent contemporary of Ulpian. The text edited and reconstructed by Krüger[112] from various sources is not an original or genuine work by Paulus, but was compiled anonymously in the late III^{p}.[113] There is nevertheless no reason to doubt that

[110] Book-binding was an ancient skill: Jerome, *Ep*. 18.22 refers to luxury bindings of liturgical books. On ancient end-pieces, see J.M. Robinson, *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Leyden 1984) 71–86.

[111] T.C. Skeat, The Origin of the Christian Codex, *ZPE* 102 (1994) 263–68.

[112] P. Krüger in idem et al. (eds.), *Collectio librorum iuris anteiustiniani in usum scholarum* (Berlin 1878^{1}, 1884^{2}, 1890^{3}, 1899^{4} etc.) 2: 13–161; the most accessible text is however that of J. Baviera in *FIRA*^{2} 3: 319–417; on the *Sententiae* as we have them, see Liebs 1993, 121–210; idem, 1995; idem, Die pseudopaulinischen Sentenzen. Versuch einer neuen Palingenesie, Ausführung, *ZRG* 113 (1996) 112–241, suggesting an alternative reconstruction.

[113] See Liebs 1993, 29–43; 1995; Rives 2003, 331 n. 52, advises caution over Liebs' thesis that the author was an African.

the basic content is authentically Pauline.[114] The importance of section 5.23 (*ad legem Corneliam de sicariis et veneficis*) to the issue of Roman legal procedure in relation to magic has long been recognised.[115] The compiler first lists the practices that constitute the crime, with their matching penalties: preparation of potions or philtres for abortion or amatory purposes (§14); performing *sacra impia nocturnave ut quem obcantarent defigerent obligarent*, "with the intention of casting a spell on someone, or cursing or 'catching' him" (§15); human sacrifice (for divinatory purposes or) to conjure a deity with the blood (*exve eius sanguine litaverint*)[116] or the pollution thereby of a holy place (§16).[117] §17 distinguishes for penal purposes between accomplices and principals: *magicae artis conscii* are to suffer *summum supplicium* in the amphitheatre (*bestiis obici*) or by crucifixion; principals (*ipsi… magi*) are to be burnt alive (*vivi exuruntur*).

The most important regulation for our purposes is §18, which extends the crime of magic beyond practice to mere knowledge:

> Let no one be permitted to have magic books; those who are discovered in possession of books of this kind shall have their properties confiscated, the books shall be burnt in public, and the offenders shall be deported to an island; if they are *humiliores*, they shall suffer the death penalty.[118]

There follows a brief phrase: *Non tantum huius artis professio, sed etiam scientia prohibita est*, "not only the practice but also knowledge of the magic arts are forbidden". Paul Krüger took this to be a comment, and placed it in square brackets, but it has a parallel in

---

[114] Fögen 1993, 75 argues however that the text's interest in intentions and beliefs, together with Constantine's express approval of it (see below), strongly indicates that it is not simply a compilation of genuinely Pauline interpretations but breathes the spirit of late-Roman law-giving.

[115] So rightly Rives 2003, 328; cf. E. Levy, Paulus und der Sentenzenverfasser, *SZ* 50 (1930) 272–294 (= *Gesammelte Schriften* 1 [Cologne 1963] 99–114); Liebs 1993. Oddly enough Dickie 2001 fails even to mention it.

[116] *Litare* properly means to obtain favourable omens from a sacrifice, but came to mean 'propitiate' or 'conjure' a deity esp. of the underworld, e.g. Lucan, *BC* 7.171; [Seneca], *Herc. Oet*. 757, 981.

[117] A final clause (§19) stipulates that if a patient dies as a result of the administration of a medicinal drug intended to cure him, the person responsible is to be punished with exile (*honestior*) or death (*humilior*).

[118] *Sent*. 5.23.18: *Libros magicae artis apud neminem habere licet: et penes quoscumque reperti sint, bonis ademptis, ambustis his publice, in insulam deportantur, humiliores capiti puniuntur. Non tantum huius artis professio, sed etiam scientia prohibita est.*

the citation from Ulpian's *lib. VII de officio procos*. on astrologers and fortune-tellers preserved in *Mos. et Rom. legum Coll.* 15.2.2,[119] as well as in Paul's own opinions with regard to divination,[120] which argues for its authenticity.

Two arguments support the theory that the Pauline *Sententiae* formed the basis of the final provisions of the law of 398 against the Eunomians: the thematic, semantic and penal similarities between the two texts; and the status of the Pauline *Sententiae* in the fourth century. On the first point, the parallelism between *libri magicae artis* (*Sent.* 5.23.18) and *noxii codices et maleficii crimine conscripti* (*CTh.* 16.5.34*)* is clear.[121] Similar language is employed for searching for the illicit texts: in *Sent.* 5.23.18 we find *reperti sint*, meaning "discovered after careful search"; its equivalent in *CTh.* 16.5.34 is the phrase *summa sagacitate mox quaeri ac prodi*. The expressions *ambustis his publice* (*Sent.* 5.23.18) and *sub aspectibus iudicantum incendio mox cremandos* (*CTh.* 16.5.34) can also be considered as parallel. Moreover both texts make a distinction between (mere) knowledge and the praxis of magic: *non tantum huius artis professio, sed etiam scientia prohibita est* (*Sent.*

---

[119] *Mos. et Rom. Coll.* 15.2.2: *Sed fuit quaesitum, utrum scientia huiusmodi hominum puniatur an exercitio et professio.* Ulpian (or rather pseudo-Ulpian) points out that earlier writers condemned only *professio*, i.e actual practice with clients; but "some later authors" considered mere proficiency to be criminal. On this compilation of legal opinions, see G. Barone-Adesi, *L'età della lex Dei* (Naples 1992); F. Lucrezi, Sulla data du redazione della Collatio alla luce di due costituzioni costantiniane, *AARC* 14 (2003) 599–613.

[120] *Sent.* 5.21.4, where he recommends that not only divination, but also possession of handbooks and familiarity with them should be punishable: *Non tantum divinatione quis, sed ipsa scientia eiusque libris melius fecerit abstinere*—a rather mild formulation. Fögen again argues that these formulations must date from the early fourth century: "Wer auch immer es war, der die einschlägigen Kapitel der Pauli sententiae schrieb, er teilte bereits aus vollem Herzen und ohne Zweifel anzumelden die Überzeugungen der Kaiser des 4. Jahrhunderts, daß Gesetz und Recht für die Gedanken der Menschen Sorge tragen dürfen und müssen" (1993, 78f.).

[121] *Libri magici* are mentioned in connection with *mala medicamenta* and *venena* already in a passage of Ulpian (*Dig.* 10.2.4), but otherwise it is quite different, being concerned to distinguish accidental poisoning in a medical context from malign magical substances. By the third century the term *liber* evidently included the roll as well as the *codex: Dig.* 32.52 *pr.* (Ulpian, *lib. XXIV ad Sabinum*): *librorum appellatione continentur omnia volumina, sive in charta sive in membrana sint sive in quamvis alia materia: sed et si in phylira aut in tilia (ut nonnulli conficiunt) aut in quo alio corio; idem erit dicendum. Quod si in codicibus sint membranei vel chartaceis vel etiam eboreis ves alterius materiae vel in ceratis codicillis, an debeantur videamus…; Sent.* 3.6.87: *libris legatis tam chartae uolumina uel membranae et phylirae continentur: codices quoque debentur: librorum enim appellatione non uolumina chartarum, sed scripturae modus qui certo fine concluditur aestimatur.*

5.23.18) against: *codices sane eorum scelerum omnium doctrinam ac materiam continentes* (*CTh*. 16.5.34), which we can gloss by "codices that contain the teaching and practical resources for its application (*materiam*)". Finally, the penalties are similar, in either case ranging from confiscation of property and *deportatio* to the death penalty. In the latter case, the expressions *capite puniuntur* (*Sent.* 5.23.18) and *capite esse plectendum* (*CTh*. 16.5.34) are virtually identical.

As far as the second point is concerned, there two juridical grounds to suggest that the Pauline *Sententiae* could have been used as legal precedent for Eutropius' law. Firstly, Constantine expressly affirmed the legal validity of the *Libri sententiarum*. Among other measures aimed at regularising procedure in the courts, *CTh*. 1.4.2, addressed to the praetorian prefect Maximus in 327 or 328, confirms the authority previously enjoyed by Paulus' writings, and specifically endorsing the use of the *Sententiae* in the courts. The emperor affirms that they could be invoked in a trial because of their *plenissima luce, perfectissima elocutione e iustissima iuris ratione*.[122] Secondly, the law of Valentinian III (*CTh*. 1.4.3 [426]),[123] which Gustav Hugo called the "law of citations",[124] not only states that the *scripta uniuersa* of the five *iurisprudentes*, Papinian, Paul, Gaius, Ulpian and Modestinus may be cited as sources of law during the *recitatio* and that their opinions, insofar as they might resolve the issue, are binding on the judge, but specifically emphasises (against repeatedly expressed doubts) the validity of the Pauline *Sententiae* at trial: *Pauli quoque sententias semper valere praecipimus*.[125] Both passages indicate that the Pauline *Sententiae* were accepted as authoritative in 398, and must have been available in the archives of the administration for use by legal draftsmen. *A fortiori*,

---

[122] *CTh*. 1.4.2 (327 sept. 27): *Uniuersa, quae scriptura Pauli continentur, recepta auctoritate firmanda sunt et omni veneratione celebranda. Ideoque sententiarum libros plenissima luce et perfectissima elocutione et iustissima iuris ratione succinctos in iudiciis prolatos ualere minime dubitatur*; cf. Fögen 1993, 75; De Robertis 1998; Fernández Cano 2000, 140ff.

[123] What is preserved in *CTh.* 1.4.3 (426 nov. 7) is a fragment of a larger *constitutio*; see the reconstruction by G. Bassanelli Sommariva, La lege di Valentiniano III del 7 de novembre de 426, *Labeo* 29 (1983) 280–88. This measure regulated the use that was to be made in court of the 'citations' of jurists; in other words, who could be cited and how much weight the citations carried.

[124] G. Hugo, *Historia del derecho Romano*. Tr. from French by D.M. Casado Tello (Madrid 1850) 435 [orig. ed. *Ius civile anteiustinianum* (Berlin 1815)].

[125] See M. Massei, La citazione della giurisprudenza classica nella legislazione imperiale, in G.G. Archi, *Scritti di diritto romano in onore di Contardo Ferrini* (Milan 1946) 403–425; De Robertis 1998; Fernández Cano 2000, 100ff.

they must have been available for use as models for the drafting of *CTh*. 16.5.34.

Determined to frighten the Eunomians and break up their organisation, Eutropius thus threatened to condemn them for sorcery. To this end, inspired by Paul's comment with regard to *libri magicae artis*, he put their heretical writings on a par with magical books. As I have noted, this was not the first time that heretics had been accused of *maleficium* (cf. Priscillian), or the first time that heretical books were to be burnt.[126] But (heretical) theological writings are actually equated with, or identified as, magical texts for the first time in *CTh*. 16.5.34.

The fact that the law was to be formally published—publicly exhibited so that everyone was aware of it (*sollemniter*)—which is quite uncommon, at least in the case of Theodosius' *constitutiones*, strengthens the argument that it was primarily intended to intimidate.[127] This impression is strengthened when we consider the evidence for its actual implementation. Some effort does seem to have been made to destroy Eunomius' writings: none of them now survives, and we know them only through the rebuttal of them by his opponents. However, this is hardly likely to mean that no copies survived. In other cases in which a similar measure was taken—for example, the burning of Porphyry's *Adversus christianos* writings ordered by Constantine (Socrates, *HE* 1.9.30) or, further back in time, the order to destroy the works of Ti. Labienus in 12 CE (Dio 56.27.1) or Cremutius Cordus' *History* in the reign of Tiberius—the orders were not strictly obeyed and thus their works survived: as Tacitus commented, the sentence itself stimulated clandestine circulation.[128] In the case of Porphyry, too, the order was disobeyed, as is shown by the *constitutio* of Theodosius II, as late as

[126] I have already mentioned the case of Paulinus of Adana (n. 94). Book-burning had a long tradition at Rome: Augustus, Tiberius, Septimius Severus, Diocletian and Constantine himself had all consigned books to the pyre, as symbolic substitutes for their authors: F.H. Cramer, Book-burning and Censorship in Ancient Rome: a Chapter from the History of Freedom of Speech, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6 (1945) 157–96.

[127] *CTh*. 16.5.34: *post publicatam sollemniter iussionem.* On the publication of laws see J.F. Matthews, *Laying down the Law. A Study of the Theodosian Code* (Oxford 2000) 185–99; idem, Eternity in Perishable Materials: Law-Making and Literate Communication in the Roman Empire, in T.W. Hillard, R.A. Kearsley, C.E.V. Nixon, and A.M. Nobbs (eds.), *Ancient History in a Modern University* (Grand Rapids, MI 1998) 2: 253–65.

[128] Tacitus, *Ann*. 4.35.5: (Cremutius Cordus) *Egressus dein senatu, uitam abstinentia finiuit. Libros per aediles cremandos censuere patres; sed manserunt, occultati et editi.*

448, which repeats the order to burn these writings, and threatens the same fate to anyone who hides them.[129] On the other hand, there is no evidence that anybody was ever accused of sorcery for possessing Eunomian codices. Furthermore, the appearance of further anti-Eunomian laws with similar content, of which we know seven up to the year 428,[130] not one of which mentions sorcery, suggests that they kept up their organisation, their activities and their social influence. In fact, the law of 423 prohibiting Eunomians once again from serving in the imperial militia actually omits the *cohortalini*, the members of the imperial guard (*CTh*. 16.5.61).

In the broader perspective of the legal persecution of heresy, *CTh*. 16.5.34 represents the first explicit association between magic and heresy in a piece of legislation, but by no means the last.[131] Eutropius' law was evidently the precedent used in the law issued by Honorius in 409 against the *mathematici*. Here, astrologers, whose activity, as I have pointed out, was considered virtually identical to sorcery, were represented as having fallen away from *catholica religio*—which of course was an *error*—and their *codices* were to be burnt in front of the assembled bishops.[132] The close collaboration between civil and ecclesiastical law is revealed by the fact that, whereas in Eutropius' law heretical writings are to be burnt before the judges, here astrologers' codices

---

[129] *CI* 1.1.3: *Imp. Theodosius et Valentinianus AA. Hormisdae pp. Sancimus, ut quaecumque Porphyrius insania sua compulsus siue alius quilibet contra religiosum Christianorum cultum conscripserit, apud quemcumque inuenta fuerint, igni tradantur. Omnia enim scripta, quae deum ad iracundiam prouocant animasque offendunt, ne ad auditum quidem hominum uenire uolumus…* See the full text of the law in P.R. Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church. A Collection of Legal Documents to AD 535* (London 1966) 2: 741–44.

[130] *CTh*. 16.5.36 (399 iul. 6); *CTh*. 16.5.49 (410 mart. 1); *CTh*. 16.5.58 (415 nov. 6); *CTh*. 16.5.60 (423 iun. 8); *CTh*. 16.5.61 (423 aug. 8); *CTh*. 16.5.65 (428 mai. 30); *CTh*. 16.6.7 (413 mart. 29). Vaggione 2000, 361 states that in subsequent decades the Eunomians experienced a certain amount of prosperity.

[131] The legal category of Manichaean heretic had not yet been established at the time of Diocletian's rescript against the Manichaeans in ?302, cf. Brown 1969, 97f. = 1972, 106f. (who dates it to 297) and n.98 above.

[132] *CTh*. 9.16.12 (409 mai. 15): *De maleficis et mathematicis et ceteris similibus*: *Imp. Honor(ius) et Theod(osius) AA. Caeciliano p(raefecto) p(raetorio). Mathematicos nisi parati sint codicibus erroris proprii sub oculis episcoporum incendio concrematis catholicae religionis cultui fidem tradere numquam ad errorem praeteritum redituri, non solum urbe Roma, sed etiam omnibus ciuitatibus pelli decernimus. Quod si hoc non fecerint et contra clementiae nostrae salubre constitutum in ciuitatibus fuerint deprehensi uel secreta erroris sui et professionis insinuauerint, deportationis poenam excipiant.* Valens had defined *mathematici tractatus* as an *error*, clearly using the word in the theological sense (*CTh*. 9.16.8, 370 or 373 dec. 12); see Desanti 1990, 269ff.

are to be burnt in the presence of the bishops.[133] Finally, another law, included under the heading *de haereticis* and dating to 425, lists Manichaeans, heretics, schismatics and astrologers together as enemies of the Catholics.[134]

By putting magic on par with heresy, the legislators in a sense completed what had been begun by the heresiologists. Ever since the time of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus in the third quarter of the second century, heresy was considered to have begun with Simon, the Samarian magus who, according to the Acts of the Apostles, had tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit (*Acts* 8. 9–25).[135] In the Christian reconstruction of the genealogy of error, Simon was the original from whom all heretics descended; conversely, the genealogy of orthodox truth goes back to Peter through apostolic succession.[136]

All these themes, Simon Magus as the father of heresy, the identification of magic with heresy, the burning of heretical writings and magical codices, as well as the search for legal precedent, recur in a law decreed by Theodosius II in 435, which forms the final *constitutio* of the chapter *de haereticis*. The aim of this measure was to stigmatise the followers of Nestorius, who had been archbishop of Constantinople until his removal at the Council of Ephesus in 431, in one of the frequent changes of direction that were typical of the Arian dispute.[137] It

---

[133] Desanti 1995, 687–96; cf. E. Volterra, Appunti intorno all'intervento del vescovo nei processi contro gli eretici, *BIDR* 1 (1934) 450–461.

[134] *CTh.* 16.5.62: *Imp. Theodosius, a. et Valentinianus Caesaris ad Faustum praefectum Urbi. Manichaeos haereticos schismaticos sive mathematicos omnemque sectam catholicis inimicam ab ipso aspectu urbis Romae exterminari praecipimus, ut nec praesentiae criminosorum contagione foedetur. Circa hos autem maxime exercenda commonitio est, qui pravis suasionibus a venerabilis papae sese communione suspendunt, quorum schismate plebs etiam reliqua vitiatur. His conventione praemissa viginti dierum condonavimus indutias, intra quos nisi adcommunionis redierint unitatem, expulsi usque ad centesimum lapidem solitudine quam eligunt macerentur. Dat. XVI kal. aug. Aquileiae Theodosio a. XI et Valentiniano caes. conss.* (425 iul. 17 [aug. 6]).

[135] S. Haar, *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 119 (Berlin 2003) 71–117.

[136] See H. Inglebert, L'histoire des hérésies chez les hérésiologues, in B. Pouderon and Y.M. Duval, *L'historiographie de l'église des premiers siècles* (Paris 2001) 105–25; cf. Humfress 2000, 141.

[137] *CTh.* 16.5.66: *Idem AA. Leontio praefecto Urbi. Damnato portentuosae superstitionis auctore Nestorio nota congrui nominis eius inuratur gregalibus, ne christianorum appellatione abutantur: sed quemadmodum arriani lege divae memoriae Constantini ob similitudinem impietatis porfyriani a Porfyrio nuncupantur, sic ubique participes nefariae sectae Nestorii simoniani vocentur, ut, cuius scelus sunt in deserendo deo imitati, eius vocabulum iure videantur esse sortiti. Nec vero impios libros nefandi et sacrilegi Nestorii adversus venerabilem orthodoxorum sectam decretaque sanctissimi coetus*

decreed that Nestorians were to be called Simonians for having copied Simon's crime by deserting God (equation of magic and heresy), ordered a thorough search for Nestorius' writings and directed them to be burned in public (heretical writings treated like formularies). The precedent invoked is the Constantinian rescript ordering the Arians to call themselves Porphyrians, after Porphyry, whose anti-Christian writings he had condemned to the pyre. The same ruling ordered the writings of Arius to be collected and burned, and decreed the death penalty for anyone who was found in possession of them (Socrates, *HE* 1.9.30). Theodosius II's measure is an example of the authority by this time of the myth of Constantine as founder of the Christian Empire.[138] Finally, *maleficium* and heretical codices also featured prominently in Consentius' *Ep*. 11 to Augustine in 418–9.[139]

4. *Conclusion*

CTh. 16.5.34 presents the first explicit association in a legal text between magic and heresy. The historical and legal contexts of the law, its ineffectual enforcement and its influence on subsequent legislation argue in favour of three conclusions: (1) promoted by Eutropius, the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* at the eastern court, the law was the harshest of a series of measures aimed at the Eunomians in that, for the first time in a *constitutio*, it aimed at charging possessors of heretical books with *maleficium*; (2) the law was conceived as a means of intimidating the Eunomians once their infiltration of the corridors of power came to be perceived as a political threat, after other measures had been unsuccessfully tried against them; (3) in drawing up the text of the law, particularly its final penal clause, the *scrinia* of Arcadius availed

---

antistitum Ephesi habiti scriptos habere aut legere aut describere quisquam audeat: quos diligenti studio requiri ac publice conburi decernimus. Ita ut nemo in religionis disputatione alio quam supra dicto nomine faciat mentionem aut quibusdam eorum habendi concilii gratia in aedibus aut villa aut suburbano suo aut alio quolibet loco conventiculum clam aut aperte praebeat, quos omni conventus celebrandi licentia privari statuimus, scientibus universis violatorem huius legis publicatione bonorum esse coercendum. Dat. III non. aug. Constantinopoli d. n. Theodosio a. XV et qui fuerit nuntiatus conss. (435 aug. 3).

[138] See n. 123 above. G. Bonamente and F. Fusco (eds.), *Costantino il Grande, dall'antichità all'umanesimo*. 2 vols. (Macerata 1993); S.N.C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (eds.), *Constantine: History, Historiography, and Legend* (New York 1998).

[139] J. Divjak and J.P. Weiss, Consentius, un écrivain espagnol témoin de son temps, *Mots chiffrés et déchiffrés, Mélanges offerts à Étienne Brunet* (Paris 1998) 707–32.

themselves of the Pauline *Sententiae*, particularly the jurist's comment in which he specified the possession of *libri magicae artis* as being grounds for the charge of sorcery (*Sent.* 5.23.18).

Bibliography

AA.VV. 1997. *Vescovi e pastori in epoca teodosiana. XXV Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Roma 8–11 maggio 1996*. Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum 58 (Rome).

Albertz, M. 1909. Zur Geschichte der jung-arianischen Kirchengemeinschaft, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 82, 205–278.

Brown, P.R.L. 1969. The Diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire, *JRS* 49, 91–103. Repr. in Brown 1972, 94–118.

——. 1970. Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: From Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages, in M. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London 1970) 17–45 = Brown 1972, 119–46.

——. 1972. *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London).

De Robertis, F.M. 1998. Un precedente costantiniano alla cosidetta lege delle citazioni del 426 di Teodosio II e Valentiniano III, *SDHI* 64, 245–52.

Desanti, L. 1990. *Sileat omnibus perpetuo diuinandi curiositas* (Milan).

——. 1995. Astrologi: eretici o pagani? Un problema esegetico, *AARC* 10, 687–696.

Dickie, M.W. 2001. *Magic and Magicians in the Graeco-Roman World* (London and New York).

Errington, R.M. 1997. Christian Accounts of the Religious Legislation of Theodosius I, *Klio* 79, 398–443.

Escribano, M.V. 2005. *De his qui super religione contendunt:* la *constitutio* 16.4.2 (388) del *Codex Theodosianus*, *Antiquité Tardive* 13, 265–79.

——. 2006. Disidencia doctrinal y marginación geográfica en el s. IV d.C.: los exilios de Eunomio de Cízico, *Athenaeum* 94, 197–227.

——. 2008. La construction de l'image de l'hérétique dans le Code Théodosien XVI, in J.N. Guinot and F. Richard (eds.), *Empire chrétien et Église aux IV^e^ et V^e^ siècles: Intégration ou concordat? Le témoignage du Code Théodosien*. Colloque International Lyon, 6–8 octobre 2005 (Lyon) 389–412.

Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D. (eds.) 1991. *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford).

Fernández Cano, A.C. 2000. *La llamada ley de citas en su contexto histórico* (Madrid).

Fögen, M.-Th. 1993. *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager: Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der Spätantike* (Frankfurt a.M.).

Funke, H. 1967. Majestäts-und Magieprozesse bei Ammianus Marcellinus, *JbAC* 10, 145–75.

Grodzynski, D. 1974. Par la bouche de l'empereur. Rome IV^e^ siècle, in J.P. Vernant et al., *Divination et rationalité* (Paris 1974) 267–94.

——. 1984. Tortures mortelles et catégories sociales. Les *Summa Supplicia* dans le droit romain aux III^e^ et IV^e^ siècles, in AA.VV., *Du châtiment dans la cité. Supplices corporels et peine de mort dans le monde antique*. CEFR 79 (Rome and Paris) 361–403.

Hanson, R.P.C. 1988. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: the Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh).

Honoré, T. 1995. Eutropius' Lawyer (396–399) and other Quaestors of Arcadius (394–408), *ZRG* 112, 172–94.

Humfress, C. 2000. Roman Law, Forensic Argument and the Formation of Christian Orthodoxy, III–VIth Centuries, in S. Elm, E. Rebillard and A. Romano (eds.), *Orthodoxie, Christianisme, Histoire* (Paris and Rome) 125–47.

Kelly, J.N.D. 1995. *Golden Mouth: the Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London).
Kopecek, T.A. 1979. *A History of Neo-Arianism*. 2 vols. (Cambridge MA).
Leppin, H. 2003. *Theodosius der Große: auf dem Weg zum christlichen Imperium* (Darmstadt).
Liebs, D. 1993. *Römische Jurisprudenz in Africa, mit Studien zu den pseudopaulinischen Sentenzen* (Berlin).
——. 1995. Die pseudopaulinischen Sentenzen. Versuch einer neuen Palingenesie, *ZRG* 112, 151–71.
——. 1997. Strafprozesse wegen Zauberei: Magie und politisches Kalkül in der römischen Geschichte, in V. Martha and J. von Ungern-Sternberg (eds.), *Grosse Prozesse der römischen Antike* (Munich) 146–213.
Lim, R. 1995. *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley).
Marasco, G. 1997. I vescovi e il problema della magia in epoca teodosiana, in AA.VV. 1997, 225–47.
——. 2002 La condanna della magia nei concili occidentali del IV secolo d.C., in *I Concili della cristianità occidentale, secoli III–V. XXX Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana* (Rome) 79–88.
Maurice, J. 1927. La terreur de la magie au IV^{e} siècle, *RHD* 6, 108–120.
McLynn, N. 1997. The Voice of Conscience: Gregory Nazianzen in Retirement, in AA.VV. 1997, 298–308.
Meyer, M. and Smith, R. (eds., tr.) 1999. *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (New York).
Rives, J.B. 2003. Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime, *Classical Antiquity* 22, 313–39.
Tiersch, C. 2002. *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel (398–404)* (Tübingen).
Vaggione, R.P. 1987. *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford).
——. 2000. *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford).
Wiebe, F.J. 1995. *Kaiser Valens und die heidnische Opposition*. Antiquitas 44 (Bonn).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE *DEFIXIONES* FROM THE SANCTUARY OF ISIS AND MATER MAGNA IN MAINZ[1]

Jürgen Blänsdorf

1. *Introduction*

In 1999 two blocks of shops were pulled down in the centre of the city of Mainz on a site that in Roman times was not far from the major road that led from the camp of *leg. XIV Gemina* to the bridge over the Rhine (Text-fig. 1).[2] At a depth of about 5m, the level of the Roman settlement, some structural remains and a paved area of considerable dimensions were found, which turned out to belong not to houses or workshops, as expected, but to two juxtaposed temples dedicated to Isis Panthea and Mater Magna dating from the early Flavian period, or even late in the reign of Nero.[3] The founders, who are named on two virtually identical inscriptions, were Claudia Icmas, an imperial freedwoman, and Vitulus, an imperial slave (Icmas is named first in view of her higher social rank).[4] Another inscription was dedicated to Mater Magna by one of the treasurers (*arcarius*) of the imperial procurator in Mainz under Vespasian.[5] The foundation can thus be dated fairly closely to the decade 71–80 CE. In view of the dedicants' status, it is virtually certain that the Palatine office had given its consent beforehand. The brick-stamps indicate that soldiers of *leg. XIV Gemina* provided the bricks. Nevertheless, there is virtually no evidence that

[1] I would like particularly to thank Pierre-Yves Lambert (Sorbonne, Paris), to whom I owe a great debt for his help in deciphering several difficult passages in these texts. Epigraphic abbreviations as in *Guide*[3].

[2] The bridge was constructed in timber in the twenties of I[P], in stone c. 90 CE.

[3] See Witteyer 2004; 2005.

[4] The text reads: *Pro salute Aug(ustorum) et S P Q R et exercitus Matri Magnae / Isidi Pantheae/Claudia Aug(usti) l(iberta) Icmas et Vitulus Caes(aris servus) sacer(dote) Cla(udio) Attico lib(erto)* (= *AE* 2004: 1015).

[5] *[Primi]genius [[…]] [imp. Ve]spasiani Aug. [procur]atoris a[r]carius [Matri] Deum ex im[p]erio [eius] posuit.* See G. Alföldy and G. Rupprecht, *Das Heiligtum für Isis und Mater Magna*. Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Rheinland-Pfalz, Archäologische Denkmalpflege Amt Mainz (Mainz 2004) 15 = *AE* 2004: 1014.

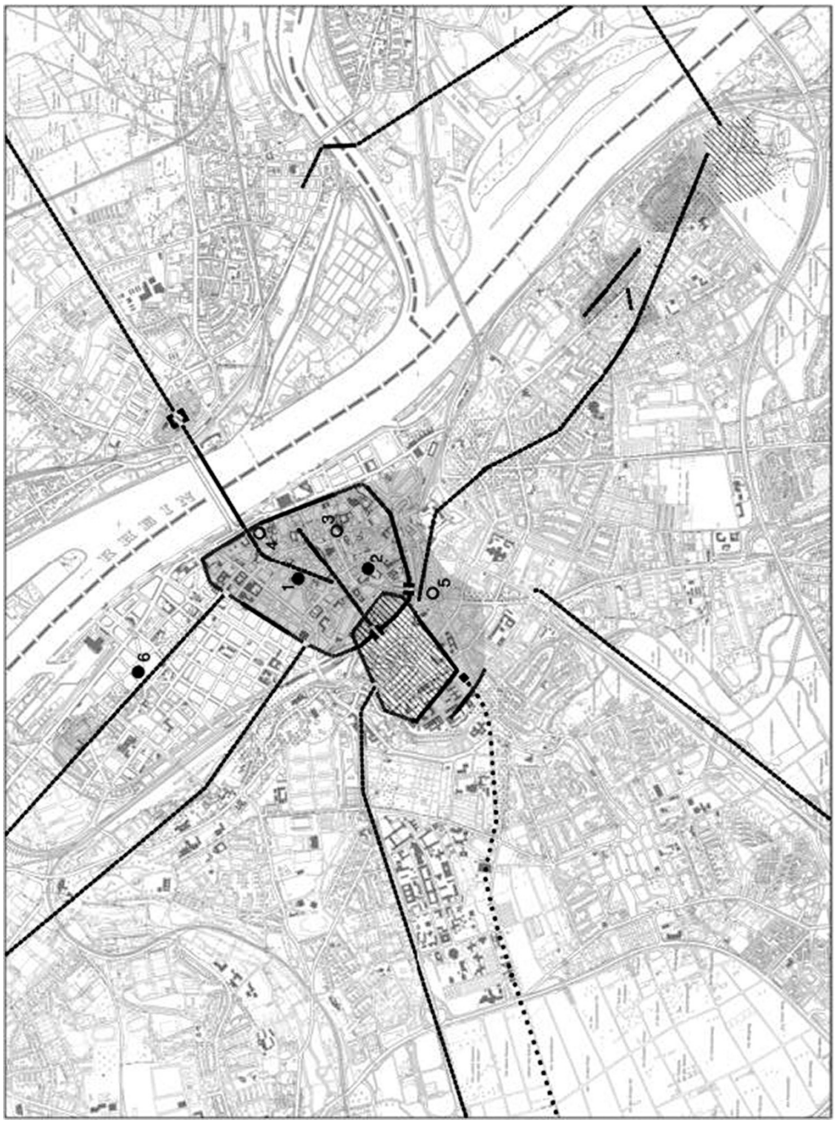

Fig. 1. Plan of Roman Mainz. No. 1 marks the site of the Lotharpassage.

soldiers were interested in the cult, although two are named, or wrote their own names, on one of the tablets presented here (no. 1).

Before discussing the tablets, I should provide some basic information about the sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna (Text-fig. 2). It comprises several cult-rooms and—as usual in mystery-cults—rooms for meetings and banquets, also a well and a latrine. Roughly one hundred sacrificial pits for burning offerings, and fifteen large round sacrificial areas with stone revetments, were found at various points on the site. All contained the remains of offerings (about 8 tons of spoil were recovered). These deposits were extremely well preserved because they had been covered c. 130 CE by several layers of tiles bearing late-Flavian and Trajanic/Hadrianic stamps. All the finds can thus be dated to the relatively brief period c. 70–130 CE.

The sanctuary is of very considerable importance for the social and religious history of Germania Superior, and indeed the north-western provinces of the Roman Empire. Actual remains of temples either of Isis or of Mater Magna in this area are extremely rare, and this is the very first joint sanctuary of these goddesses ever found anywhere in the Empire.[6] These two mystery cults had been deliberately restricted in the Late Republic and early Principate.[7] Few priests of either goddess are recorded at Rome.[8] It was therefore commonly assumed that up to the mid-I^{P} they were of little importance even in the capital, to say nothing of the north-western provinces. The first sign of a shift in attitude was the installation of the Dendrophoria as an official festival of the Roman state by Claudius, who also allowed Roman citizens to hold the office of priest.[9]

The turning point in the case of Isis seems to have come under Caligula, when, between 36 and 39 CE, a public sanctuary was built

---

[6] B.H. Stolte, Die religiösen Verhältnisse in Niedergermanien, *ANRW* II.18.1 (1986) 345–408; R. Turcan, Les cultes orientales en Gaule Narbonnaise et dans la vallée du Rhône, *ANRW* II.18.1 (1986) 456–518; R. Turcan, Attis Platonicus, in Lane 1996, 387–403.

[7] The temple of Mater Magna on the Palatine was however rebuilt by Augustus after the fire of 3 CE: Augustus, *RG* 4.8; Ovid, *Fasti* 4.347f.; cf. Valerius Maximus 1.8.11.

[8] J. Rüpke, *Fasti sacerdotum. Die Mitglieder der Priesterschaften und das sakrale Funktionspersonal römischer, griechischer, orientalischer und jüdisch-christlicher Kulte in der Stadt Rom von 300 v. Chr. bis 499 n. Chr.* PAwB 12.1–3 (Stuttgart 2005); rev. ed. as *Fasti sacerdotum. A Prosopography of Pagan, Jewish and Christian Religious Officials in the City of Rome, 300 BC to AD 499*. Tr. D.M.B. Richardson (Oxford 2008).

[9] Joh. Lydus, *De mens.* 4.59.

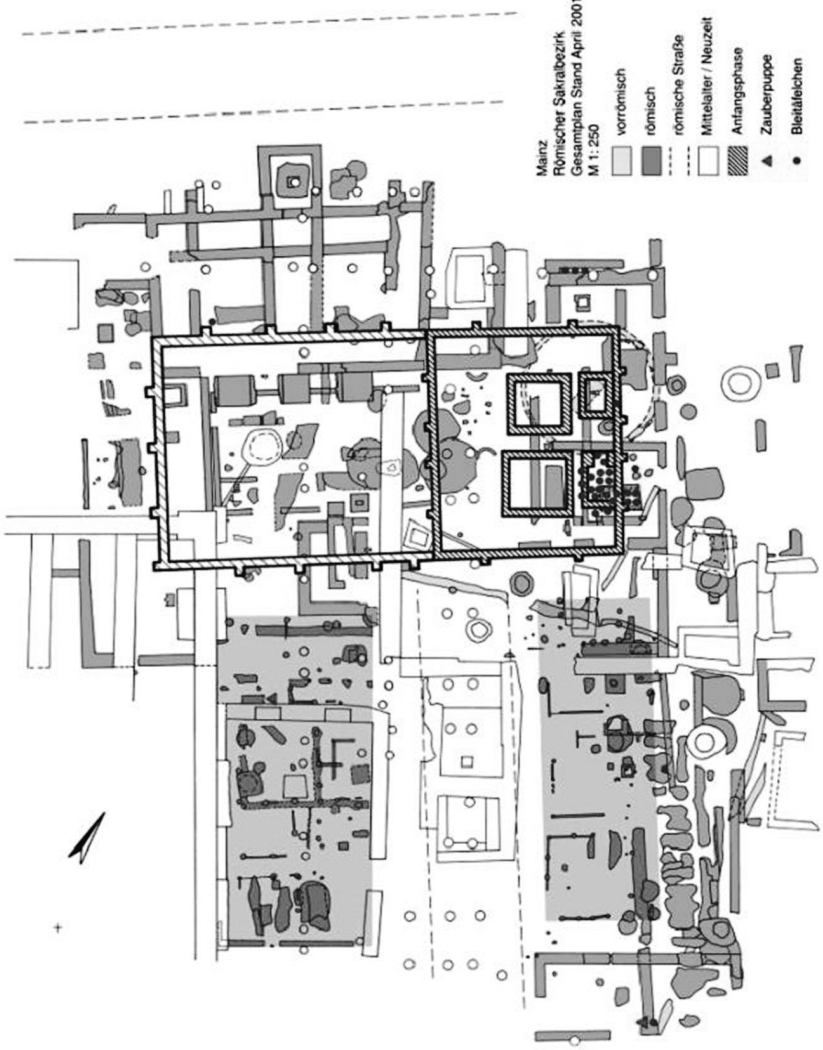

Fig. 2. Ground-plan of the area sacred to Isis and Mater Magna. The find-spots of the tablets are marked •, and of the poppets ▲.

on the Campus Martius. In 69 CE Vespasian was informed by the oracle of Serapis in Alexandria, whose cult was associated with that of Isis, that he would become emperor.[10] In the same year, Domitian, his younger son, had escaped from the partisans of Vitellius in Rome by hiding among the priests of Isis, himself reportedly dressed in the appropriate clothes (Suetonius, *Dom*. 1.2). Vespasian and Titus passed the night before celebrating their triumph over the Jews in the Campus Martius temple in 71 (Josephus, *BJ* 7.123).[11] These events may have led to the reconstruction of the temple of Isis on the Capitol in the same year. The temple of Isis at Mainz was constructed shortly after these events.

There is, however, no ancient tradition that provides any information about why this temple was located in the same sacred area as that of Mater Magna. We might speculate that it was due to the similarity between the two cults, both being mother-goddesses of eastern origin. Indeed, from the late Flavian period onwards, when their cult increased in popularity all over the Empire, we sometimes find citizens holding priesthoods in both cults at the same time.[12] But this does not tell us why these goddesses were worshipped by an increasing number of Roman citizens not only in Italy but in the north-western provinces.

The joint sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna at Mainz and the lead tablets found there are important in this context for three reasons. First, they show that the cult of these goddesses began in the north-western provinces at least a half-century earlier than had previously been thought. Second, for the first time we find Mater Magna invoked in curse-texts.[13] Another surprise was to find Attis likewise invoked

---

[10] Tacitus, *Hist*. 4.81; Suetonius, *Vesp*. 7.1f.

[11] Cf. *CIL* VI 346 = *RICIS* 501/0116: *Isidi sacr(um). Crescens Caesaris Vespasiani ex viso posuit*, probably from the Iseum Campense, Rome.

[12] E.g. *CIL* XIV 429 = *RICIS* 503/1123 with pl. XCV: *DMS L. Valerius L. fil. Fyrmus sacerdos Isidis Ost(i)ens(is) et M(atris) d(eum) Tra(n)stiber(inae) fecit sibi* (Ostia, second half I^{P}). Ceionius Rufius Volusianus, author of a dedication to Mater Magna and Attis: *[Matri deum magna Idaeae et Attidi Menotyranno dis magnis e]t[ ]tu[t]atoribus suis* (*CIL* VI 512 = *ILS* 4154 = *RICIS* 501/0212, 390 CE), was the son of an Isis-priestess, Caecina Lolliana.

[13] A phrase in Petronius, *Sat*. 117.3: *nam nummos in praesentem usum deum matrem pro fide sua reddituram*, seems to mean that she could be invoked to bring back stolen money, but there is no reference here to a curse. Chr. Dunant, Sus aux voleurs, *MusHelv* 35 (1978) 241–244 published a tablet found in Asia with an invocation to μήτηρ θεῶν, but in that region we cannot be sure it was Cybele. In general on the cult of the Mater Magna, esp. in the NW provinces, see Schwertheim 1974; K. Schillinger,

to right alleged wrongs. Neither *DTAud* nor, nearly a century later, Ogden 1999, 44–46 lists Cybele/Mater Magna or Attis among the gods invoked in such contexts. Just a handful of Attis statuettes and other objects, and a dedication from Mainz *de[o A]tti*, suggested that he might have been worshipped at all in Roman Germany. By coincidence, however, two other curse-tablets invoking Attis have been found very recently, one at Groß-Gerau, a small town near Mainz, published by M. Scholz and A. Kropp in 2004,[14] the other far away at Salacia (Setúbal) in Portugal, (re-)published in the same year by Francisco Marco Simón.[15] On the other hand, why is Isis never invoked in the new tablets? It may just be that the relevant pits have not yet been found: the general plan of the excavation shows that most of the lead tablets were found in just one area of the joint sanctuary. Another possible explanation is that she was not considered an appropriate deity in this context; but another recently-published text from Baelo Claudia in Baetica shows that she sometimes was.[16]

2. *The Curse-tablets*

It may be useful to provide some preliminary information about the tablets. All but two were rolled up, folded, or both. Size and shape vary widely, ranging from 2.5 × 4.5 cm up to 12 × 26 cm. Fourteen contain fairly lengthy texts, the longest being of forty-six lines. The writing too is quite varied: some are in majuscule, the majority in Old Roman Cursive (ORC). In general, the hands are comparable to those dated around the middle of the first century CE; none is later than early II^{p}.[17] There are no signs of the standardisation that would indicate professional skill as a scribe. It is consistent with this that, apart

---

Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung des Magna Mater-Kultes im Westen des römischen Kaiserreiches, Diss. Konstanz 1979; M.J. Vermaseren, *Cybele and Attis. The Myth and the Cult* (London 1977); G. Thomas, Magna Mater and Attis, *ANRW* II.17.3 (1984) 1500–1535; *CCCA* 6; Lane 1996.

[14] See Scholz and Kropp 2004; Scholz 2004 = *AE* 2004: 1006a, b. I later refer to this text as Groß-Gerau 1, since another interesting text from the same town has recently turned up (Blänsdorf 2007). The complete text of Groß-Gerau 1will be found at 3.1.2.1 in Henk Versnel's contribution to this volume, p. 300f.

[15] See Roger Tomlin's contribution to this volume, text no. 4 (p. 260) ll. 3–6.

[16] *Isis Muromem (= Myrionyma), tibi conmendo furtu(m) meu(m)…*: *AE* 1988: 727, Claudia Baelo = Tomlin no. 3, p. 258 below; cf. the Appendix to this article, no. 2, comm. on l. 15.

[17] Cf. R. Seider, *Paläographie der lateinischen Papyri, 1* (Stuttgart 1972).

from some standard formulae of invocation and curse, most of the texts employ personal, indeed idiosyncratic, language and expressions. Moreover the typical features of learned or professionally-composed curse tablets, which only begin to appear during the second century, are entirely absent.

The main question I wish to discuss in this contribution is the relation between magic and religion.[18] H.S. Versnel has shown that we should draw a relatively sharp distinction between Audollent's types 1 (judiciary), 3 (personal relations) and 4 (circus/amphitheatre), and texts concerned with theft, loss, cheating and so on.[19] He draws a clear contrast between binding-curses proper (*defixiones*), which are pre-emptive strikes against the target; and prayers for justice, which appeal to a god after the event to aid the principal. This distinction between two genres of curse-text allows us to focus on hitherto neglected features, and to make relatively sophisticated judgements about the many intermediate cases.

One of the most interesting and important new texts from Mainz, no. 2 in the Appendix to this paper (inv. no. 201, B 36), helps to frame an answer to the question of the relation between religion and magic. It starts with a solemn prayer to Attis, the companion (πάρεδρος) of Mater Magna, worshipped on the Palatine at Rome since Augustan times, and also in the Metroon at Ostia.[20] In our text, Attis is given three predicates: *bone, sancte, tyranne* (l. 1), the latter term being repeated as Latin *domine* (l. 4). The paraclesis *advenias* does not, as

[18] Cf. Blänsdorf 2005a, b, c. On the general history of ancient magic and related topics, note F. Marco Simón, La magia como sistema de alteridad en la Roma augústea y julio-claudia, *MHNH* 1 (2001) 105–132; Ogden 1999, 1–90; the two excellent studies on the mental history of magic by R.L. Gordon, Aelian's Peony: the Location of Magic in Graeco-Roman Tradition, *Comparative Criticism* 9 (1987) 59–95; idem, 1999; D. Engster, *Konkurrenz oder Nebeneinander. Mysterienkulte in der hohen römischen Kaiserzeit*, Quellen und Forschungen zur antiken Welt 36 (Munich 2003); J. Tremel, *Magica agonistica. Fluchtafeln im antiken Sport.* Nikephoros Beihefte 1, Hildesheim 2004; A. Chaniotis, 'Under the Watchful Eyes of the Gods.' Divine Justice in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor, in S. Colvin (ed.), *The Greco-Roman East* (Cambridge 2004) 1–43.

[19] Versnel 1991, 60–106, and especially his contribution to this volume (pp. 275–354), where he refines the category of prayers for justice and assembles a good deal of new evidence.

[20] Cf. A. Hepding, *Attis, seine Mythen und sein Kult*, RGVV 1 (Gießen 1903); M. Floriani Squarciapino, *I culti orientali ad Ostia*. EPRO 3 (Leyden 1962); P. Lambrechts, *Attis: Van Herdersknaap tot God*, Verh. Acad. Wetensch., Letteren en Schone Kunsten von België, Kl. d. Lett. 24 (1962) nr. 46 (Brussels 1962).

in a normal prayer, mean 'be present to me now', but refers to the writer's intended victim: *advenias Liberali iratus*. The proem of the curse itself consists of a solemn invocation of all matters sacred to the god (ll. 3–6). It starts with a formal tricolon consisting of a general term: *per omnia te rogo*, and invocations of 'your' Castor and Pollux, and the *cistae penetrales*. The allusion to the Dioscuri seems to justify elevating Attis to the rank of Jupiter (in Groß-Gerau 1, he is even called *deum maxsime Atthis* and referred to as a member of the divine *duodecatheum*). I think this is much more than calling him simply 'the greatest of the gods', a formula found in several later invocations of various gods.[21]

The third power invoked, the *cistae penetrales*, is not a person but the sacred boxes kept in the sanctuary that contained what were supposed to be Attis' severed genitals.[22] As Attis had no sanctuary of his own, the sanctuary of Mater Magna must be meant; we know from several inscriptions dating from the later Principate that there were *cistae mysticae* in her sanctuary, a reference to the development of mysteries in the cult.

The inscription from Salacia (Setúbal) I have already mentioned shows that Attis could be invoked in a curse because he was a chthonic divinity. But at Mainz and Groß-Gerau, the chthonic aspect is never mentioned, nor can it have been intended,[23] because here Attis is appealed to as the highest god. Many curse-texts from elsewhere in the Latin-speaking west are addressed to a chthonic or a local god unknown elsewhere to punish or even kill a personal enemy or rival. The Mainz tablets however invoke the Roman Mater Magna, who had been a member of the Roman pantheon since 204 BCE, and they use the forms and expressions of official religious prayers.

Ll. 6–10 of the inner face of our rolled-up plaque and ll. 11–14 of the outer contain the curse itself: the author urges Attis to give or grant Liberalis "a bad mind and a bad end" (*des ei malam mentem, malum exitum*), i.e. to drive him mad and ensure him a horrible, painful death—"as long as he lives" (*quandius vita vixerit*). This formula is known from two other Roman *defixiones*, though here it is used

[21] A different position in Versnel, p. 301 n. 91 below.
[22] Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 2.19 with Σ.
[23] Apart from the euphemism in no. 16 line 4 below.

with a certain lack of logic.[24] The paradox implied by the idea of life-long death is picked up in the idea that he may watch every part of him dying—except his eyes (*praeter oculos*), the *defigens* hastily adds, remembering that he would need them to watch his own death. The criminal's subjective awareness of his suffering was indeed considered by Caligula to be highly desirable.[25] Then the *defigens* expresses the hope that Liberalis may not be able to redeem himself, either with money or anything else, nor yet by appealing to the clemency of Attis or any other god. The only prospect before him is to be a bad, a shameful, a horrible death (*exitum malum*). Variants of this quasi-legal formula are found in several other Mainz tablets; analogous phrases are known from Britain and elsewhere. To affirm the curse, the *defigens* returns to the formula of the solemn supplication, which we find also in some other prayers for justice: *Hoc praesta, rogo te per maiestatem tuam.*

In some ways the text belongs to the category of curse-texts for which Eric Turner coined the name 'prayer (or plea) for justice' since adopted by Versnel too,[26] for example in its appeal to a high god, its tone, and its consistent use of the prayer-mode. Nevertheless other important defining features of the category are missing, such as the reason for the curse, and the transfer of the object, and the responsibility for its recovery, to the god.

The text's elegant rhetorical structure, consisting of a series of tricola and dicola, can be made clear by slightly re-arranging the lay-out of the lines:

Bone sancte Atthis tyranne *adsi(s), advenias* Liberali iratus.
Per omnia te rogo, domine,
per tuum Castorem, Pollucem,
per cistas penetrales,
des ei *malam* mentem, *malum* exitum, quandius vita vixerit,
et omni corpore videat se emori
praeter oculos,
neque se possit redimere
nulla pecunia *nulla*que re
neque abs te *neque* ab ullo deo

[24] If the author had not added *malum exitum*, the phrase *quandius vita vixererit* would be perfectly appropriate after *des ei malam mentem*.

[25] Cf. Suetonius, *Calig.* 30, 1: *non temere in quemquam nisi crebris et minutis ictibus animadverti passus est, perpetuo notoque iam praecepto: ita feri, ut se mori sentiat.*

[26] E.G. Turner, A Curse Tablet from Nottinghamshire, *JRS* 53 (1963) 122–124; Versnel 1991, 68–75.

nisi ut exitum malum.
Hoc praesta, rogo te per maiestatem tuam.

A text of this kind was evidently composed by a person of some education and sophistication.[27]

3. *Inversion*

My second topic is the reversed world of magic. A straightforward example is offered by the obverse of a lead tablet from Cologne (Appendix, no. 3): *Vaeraca (or: Uxeraca), sic res tua<s>: perverse agas, comodo hoc perverse scriptu(m) est*.[28] The text itself is written out backwards (i.e. from right to left). This inversion of the normal direction of writing serves explicitly to model the intended fate of the target: such reversal was believed to have an unmediated effect on the target.[29] The writing itself exerts magical power. The specifically oral coding of earlier ritual curses—the magical *murmur* is proverbial—is no longer essential.[30] As Stanley Tambiah has remarked, the construction of telling, persuasive analogies is world-wide one of the most important magical resources.[31]

Among the Mainz tablets, no. 4 in the Appendix to this paper (inv. no. 182, 16) is especially interesting in this connection. Although it is written from right to left (i.e. reversed), the individual letters are so easy to read that the inversion cannot have been intended as some kind of secret writing, but only as a symbol of reversed order. The tablet solemnly gives or bestows upon the addressee (*dono tibi*)—i.e. Mater Magna, in whose temple the text was deposited—two people, a

---

[27] On the use of rhetoric in the curse tablets cf. H.S. Versnel, Die Poetik der Zaubersprüche, in: T. Schabert and R. Brague (eds.), *Die Macht des Wortes* (Munich 1996) 233–297; Marina Sáez 1999.

[28] On the death of M. Riedel, this tablet was deciphered by myself, with the help of A. Kropp and M. Scholz; note also the remarks of Faraone and Kropp below, on their no. 2 (p. 383).

[29] Tomlin 1998, 84–94.

[30] Cf. Apuleius, *Met*. 1.3: *istud mendacium tam uerum est, quam siqui uelit dicere magico susurramine amnes agil[l]es reuerti.*

[31] S. J. Tambiah, Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View, in: R. Horton and R. Finnegan (eds.), *Modes of Thought. Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-western Societies* (London 1973) 199–229 at 199: "Magical acts, usually compounded of verbal utterance and object-manipulation, constitute 'performative' acts by which a property is imperatively transferred to a recipient object or person on an analogical basis". The examples he discusses contain many examples of telling analogies.

woman named Avita and a man named Gratus. In relation to human-beings, such 'gifts' are of course really curses. The *defigens* may have been a child of a previous marriage now suffering at the hands of his stepmother and her son. So Mater Magna, the great goddess, is now invoked to settle problems of family life.

As regards the genre of this text, although a god is invoked (at least in the phrase *dono tibi*), in my view the text does not belong to the group of the prayers for justice, because it contains neither a plea for revenge nor a justification for the curse. On the other hand, we cannot classify it as a standard *defixio* either, since the binding formula is missing. The point can be generalised: many of these texts are too short and too unclearly formulated to allow us to classify them as belonging to the one genre or the other. But all of them were deposited in the same sanctuary and probably accompanied by the same cultic rites.

In the most decorative of the Mainz tablets, no. 5 here, the formal layout, which is unique among these texts, itself serves as a magical resource. As such, this is common enough: many Greek and Latin *defixiones* employ textual manipulation as a magical device. But almost invariably they do so by creating a border of *charakteres* or formulae around the main text-block, such as *DTAud* 218 and 227 (Carthage). Our tablet however contains no *charakteres*, only intelligible text. Instead of starting writing at the top left of the lead tablet, the writer turned the tablet round 180° and started writing the curse as it were on the last line, beginning quite conventionally from the left margin (see Plate 1). He then carried on writing continuously all round the outer edge, thus creating a verbal 'box' with the words *Prima Aemilia Nar|cissi agat, quidquid co|nabitur, quidquid aget,| omnia illi inversum sit*, "Prima Aemilia (wife/lover/daughter) of Narcissus: (whatever) she may do, whatever she essays, whatever she may do, let all be reversed for her". Inside this box he then wrote the remainder of the curse.[32]

The curse can thus be classified as a true *defixio* because of the binding formulas and persuasive analogy; there is no explicit invocation of the deity, and no reason or justification for the curse is given. So

[32] Here the writer wishes that Aemilia Prima may 'rise and live' as a madwoman, and repeats his initial hope that she be destroyed utterly. The third part consists again of an analogy, this time defined as an *adynaton*: "Just as this letter" (which is called *carta*, despite its being written on lead) "shall never flourish or bloom, so she shall never flourish or bloom again". This is one of the more imaginative analogies to be found among the Mainz tablets.

it looks more like a 'pre-emptive strike' than a revenge for a crime already committed. The analysis corresponds exactly to the characteristics listed by Versnel 1991.[33]

Despite being in Vulgar Latin, the curse against Aemilia Prima is beautifully written and easily legible.[34] Some others however are so cryptic that we must conclude that the writer intended the tablet to be read only by the deity. Text no. 6 (inv. no. 167, 41) may be taken as an illustration of the more difficult Mainz texts. My first impression was that it might belong to the class of cryptic tablets discussed by Roger Tomlin (Tomlin 2004, 25–27). I even asked P.-Y. Lambert whether it might not be Celtic, a language that was perhaps spoken in this area, given that it had only fairly recently been Romanised. But then I managed to read *quodsi* written from right to left in l. 5, which proved that it was a regular Latin document; and afterwards some other words: *uoto me condemnes, cum eos deuouet* and *deuoue(t) meos* (?). The phrase *sanum animosum* appears to be a wish that a healthy person should die. So we can be sure it is a defixio but an interpretation is hardly possible even in those parts which can be deciphered.

4. *Relation to the Divinity*

My third topic is the relation between the *defigens* and the god he appeals to for help. In the model prayers for justice such as those from Cnidus (*DTAud*. 1–13 = *IKnidos* nos. 147–59), we find fixed formulas: the invocation always appears at the outset and is frequently repeated. In the Mainz tablets, by contrast, the invocation is not necessarily at the beginning, and may later be varied; the other topoi likewise may occur at any point and have no stereotyped form. Text no. 7 (inv. no. 1, 29), which contains all the clichés of the Mainz curse-tablets, is however fairly similar to the Cnidus type since it begins by invoking the goddess and gives a reason for the curse. It starts as a prayer,

[33] Let me take the opportunity here of alerting the reader to the useful comments on this and several other of my texts by Christopher Faraone and Amina Kropp later in this volume (pp. 381–98).

[34] Note that, unlike R. Tomlin in *Tab.Sulis*, I do not feel it necessary to place the term Vulgar in inverted commas: everyone knows that it is simply the term for the ordinary spoken Latin of the middle and late Empire.

with a polite request (*rogo te*) and a solemn epiklesis (*domina Mater magna*), and then states both the *defigens*' aim and her justification for resorting to a curse, which is vengeance for the theft of the fortune of Florus, her husband, which has been stolen by a man named Ulattius Severus. From this we may conclude that the author of the *defixio* was a widow who, as a woman, had no right to a court-hearing to regain the goods or property, and so had to look for divine help. Severus might have been her guardian who had control of her fortune and so was easily able to embezzle it.

As in the previous cases, it is the writing of the tablet itself that is to effect the curse, not in this case by script-reversal but by the hostility with which she writes (*auerse scribo*), which is in itself to affect Severus and everything he does or tries to do: *quidquid agit*.[35] Then in l.9 we find the magic analogy of salt and water as a symbol of the uselessness of everything the culprit shall do. This formula is not simply a comparison but a persuasive analogy to a natural process, which was supposed to confer magical efficacy upon the curse. The whole text is rounded off by a repetition of the solemn request for revenge. Its rich content, concise expression and careful, almost, artistic, lay-out distinguish this tablet from most others found at Rome and in the provinces of the Empire. It certainly belongs to Versnel's category of prayer for justice, because the petitioner humbly addresses the goddess for help and asks for revenge. But the persuasive analogy adds a certain touch of magic.

By contrast, in Text no. 8 obverse (Plate 2) it is not the god but the target who is named first. The name *Tiberius Claudius Adiutor* is written out in full in the nominative case; thereafter he is referred to by the pronouns *eum* (l. 2), *(h)unc* (l. 5) and *illum* (l. 11). The petitioner asks Mater Magna to receive him as a victim (*hu(n)c (h)ostiam*, not *hanc*!) into the *megaron*. This act of 'receiving', which in other tablets is expressed by means of the verbs *mando* or *dono*, connotes the surrender of the victim to the god, and is in fact the curse that aims to produce the target's death. The act is to be accomplished in a *megaron*.[36] This

[35] *Quidquid aginat* is a formula that occurs in another of the Mainz tablets. Hitherto, the verb *aginare* was only known from Petronius' *Satyrica*. Heraeus already guessed it was a Vulgar Latin word.

[36] Either to add emphasis, or by a slip, the phrase "in your *megaron*" is repeated.

Greek term denotes either the temple or, less frequently, pits dug for sacrifices to the chthonic gods, which seems more appropriate to our context. This interpretation is confirmed by the Salacia (Setúbal) tablet, where *Megarus* seems to be the god who is supposed to receive the victim just as he once did in the case of Attis.[37]—Another magic analogy follows intended to disrupt the target's life: whatever act he may undertake is to dissolve like salt in water.—On the reverse (Plate 3), a different hand continues the curse, referring to the target only by the pronoun *illum*. Here his physical capacities are cursed. *Defixiones* containing detailed lists of body-parts are not uncommon; by contrast this text mentions only limbs and marrow. The lack of a full list is here compensated by verbal magic: the expression *deuotum defictum menbra medullas* is composed of two pairs of alliterations, a stylistic device well known from Latin and Oscan prayers of the archaic period (Marina Sáez 1999). The curse ends with another appeal to the gods, in this case naming Attis first, and then Mater Magna, presumably for the sake of symmetry.

It is not easy to decide whether this text is a classic *defixio* or a prayer for justice. The first part seems to be based on the topoi of the prayer for justice: the petitioner solemnly addresses two gods and bids them accept the target of the curse as his offering. But no justification is offered for the curse, and there is no demand for justice, which is an essential ingredient of prayers. Moreover, the wish that everything the victim does may go wrong is expressed in the form of a persuasive analogy, which is not a feature of religious language but of magic. The second part of the text is introduced by *deuotum defictum*, in the usual manner of *defixiones* proper; and ends up by invoking the gods once again. We thus have a text written on the same occasion by two authors, addressed to the same gods and directed against the same target, which contains some expressions typical of prayers for justice but also formulae typical of binding curses. It is worth noting that both authors write in Vulgar Latin but both know the solemn formulae of Roman prayers und use them for magic aims.

---

[37] *AE* 2001: 1135, cf. Tomlin p. 260 no. 4 below. Text no. 7 asks Attis and Mater Magna to "credit the sacrifice to his account" (*acceptum (h)abiatis*), a metaphor from commerce. This is the only Mainz tablet to mention the offering required for every ritual act. In the Salacia (Setúbal) tablet, the offering is specified as a quadruped.

The language of text no. 9 (inv. no. 28, 27) is even more careful and recalls that of legal documents as well as prayers for justice. As usual with theft-curses directed against an unknown culprit, it begins with a general clause (*Quisquis*…) and specifies the crime. The case is that of a stolen purse containing money and golden rings, and the thief is urged to give them back by 24th January at the latest (one of three such deadlines at Mainz). The apodosis, beginning at the end of l. 3, states the consequences in case the culprit fails to do so, using the proper term in Roman law, *dolus malus*. However, this request is then confirmed by means of a magic analogy: he is to be reversed just as the writing is reversed: when the act of writing is given a special force, we certainly can call this magic. Then the writer asks all gods and goddesses to treat the thief as an enemy; this appeal to *dii deaeque* is unique in the Mainz texts, and does not fit the context of a sanctuary of two goddesses very well.

The appeal to the gods in a case of theft is certainly typical of prayers for justice, but legal language here predominates over religious.—The curse also applies to everybody who touches the stolen objects. The following analogy is not well preserved: the comparison is between something liquid (and) the melting of lead (a reference to the ritual practised behind the temple of Mater Magna, as is clear from other tablets), and the destiny of the victim. L. 8 offers something about innocence and a goddess, but the last line, which is incomplete, does not make clear whether it is the thief who may win back his innocence by returning the valuables, or (less probably) whether it is his victim, i.e. the author of the defixio, who is innocent.[38]

5. *The Ritual Procedures*

The fourth topic I want to discuss is the ritual performed to effect the curse. In written curse-texts, the appeal to a god was not always compulsory. It was likewise not always necessary to provide a justification for the curse, because the petitioner's intention was made clear by the magic ritual itself. Thus in the case of texts containing only the name of the cursed person, we cannot tell whether we have to do with a

[38] The word occurs in two British curse-tablets, but there too unfortunately lacks context.

pre-emptive strike directed against a rival or a wish to obtain revenge for an injury.

Tablet no. 10 (inv. no. 103, 2) lists only the name of Trutmo Florus, defined by reference to his father, Clitmo, not his mother, as is often the case in the lead tablets found in other places.[39] Father and son probably bear German names, the son also a Roman cognomen; the writer of the curse no doubt belonged to the same ethnic group. If so, we might explain the brevity of the text by the fact that newly-Romanised foreigners were not very familiar with the details of *defixio*-formulae. But the writer symbolised his intention by roughly moulding a human figure in clay and piercing it with eight needles.[40] The erect phallus may indicate that the *defixio* was an erotic one. More important, however, is the fact that the poppet was broken at the waist and carefully deposited in such a manner that one half was supine, the other prone. So we may conclude that the intention of the ritual was to kill the target-person.

The binding ritual could also be performed on the lead plaque itself, as an analogue of the desire to harm the victim. Thus a large iron nail was driven straight through the lead of tablet no. 11 (inv. no. 109, 5), so destroying much of the written text (Plate 4). The aim here was certainly not to announce the curse in public but to symbolise it. Little of the obverse can now be read, except for the name *Fortunatus* (?), written left to right. On the reverse, written right to left, we can easily read four nouns: mind, memory, heart, thoughts. The rest of the sentence warns everybody who does or did something to his father: this suggests that the text belongs to Audollent's genre of *tabulae iudiciariae*, and was intended to prevent an enemy from speaking at court away by blocking his mental abilities. The tablet and its text are clearly to be classified among the *defixiones* proper. It is reinforced by another example of two alliterative pairs comparable to those common in archaic Roman prayers: *mentem memoriam cor cogitatum*. Language and ritual had to be combined in order to intensify the effect of magic.

Our next example, no. 12 (inv. no. 182, 14 B), envisages the end of the ritual act of cursing. As in most of the other texts, it is the demand for help that comes first, not the name of the god appealed to. On the

[39] In the Mainz tablets, there is no case of maternal lineage.
[40] Cf. J. Trumpf, Fluchtafel und Rachepuppe, *MDAI(A)* 73 (1958) 94–102.

obverse the writer appeals to two gods whose names are not mentioned, though we may infer that they are Mater Magna and Attis, in whose sanctuary the tablet was deposited (Plate 5). They are to effect the return of the goods that had been entrusted to P. Cutius and Piperio. The crime must therefore have been embezzlement. By using the term *religione*, the author emphasises that his request is in accordance with the rules of a religious prayer. Like the demand for the restitution of his property, this fits the genre of the prayer for justice. But the text on the reverse is different. At the beginning, two other persons are added to the curse, Placida and her daughter Sacra (both names are to be found on several other Roman inscriptions). But the magic analogy that follows is probably directed at all four of them: "May their limbs melt as this piece of lead melts, in order that they may die". From this we may conclude that at the end of the ritual the lead plaque was thrown into the sacrificial fire. This item is not otherwise attested on *defixiones*, but references to it recur on two other Mainz tablets no. 13 (inv. no. 182, 14 A) and no. 14 (inv. no. 182, 9) that were found together. Such an act is much more than a persuasive analogy: the ritual act is itself to produce the desired effect. Though introduced by an expressly religious formula, this is certainly pure magic.

Moreover, among the finds there are some tablets, such as no. 16, where we find the molten lead clinging to the lower edge of the tablet, others, such as no. 15 (inv. no. 182, 28), which are partly molten, and then again many lumps of melted lead. Obviously the *defigentes* intended the tablets to be destroyed completely by fire and the texts written upon them to be read exclusively by the gods. They must have been aware that magic was forbidden in Roman law.[41] Some of the lead plaques, however, were protected against the fire by the cold ashes at the bottom of the sacrificial enclosure.

[41] See the *lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* ap. Paul, *Sententiae* 5.23.17f.: *Magicae artis conscios summo supplicio affici placuit, id est bestiis obici aut cruci suffigi. ipsi autem magi vivi exuruntur.* 18. *libros magicae artis apud se neminem habere licet: et penes quoscumque reperti sint, bonis ademptis, ambustis his publice, in insulam deportantur, humiliores capite puniuntur. non tantum huius artis professio, sed etiam scientia prohibita est*; also *Digest* 48, 8, 13: *Ex senatus consulto eius legis poena damnari iubetur, qui mala sacrificia fecerit habuerit.* See Versnel 1991, 62; J.B. Clerc, *Homines magici. Étude sur la sorcellerie et la magie dans la société romaine impériale* (Bern 1995) 172–192; Gordon 1999, 253–66; Ogden 1999, 83–85; Marco Simón 2001, 112–18.

6. *The Major Texts*

After this review of the different aspects and stages of the Mainz *defixiones*, I now propose to deal with some of the major texts. Let us begin with tablet no. 16 (inv. no. 182, 18), which is rich in invocatory details and cruel wishes.

As we have already noted, curse-texts directed against unknown persons are introduced by a general clause (*quisquis*…). In the present case, the crime is fraud or cheating (*dolus malus* is again the proper term in Roman law). In ll. 1 and 5 we read that it was some matter of bribery; this suggests it might be a *tabula iudiciaria*. R. Gordon suggested to me that the first two lines must have contained a general animadversion against such wrongdoers. The petitioner appeals to Mater Magna because she pursues her enemies or wrongdoers over land and sea, places dry and wet, and even in the netherworld, where her dead lover Attis is.[42] At first sight, such a topos seems comparable to the so-called aretalogies of hymnal prayers; but at Mainz, we find no reference to the divine qualities of Mater Magna (or Cybele) as the mother of gods and men, mistress of animals and protectress of the state. The same applies generally to all the invocations of Mater Magna and Attis at Mainz: they are never invoked on account of their 'public' qualities; here, in a private cult, they are nothing but helpful divine forces.

The magical analogy which follows refers to the self-castration of the *galli*, who are mentioned twice, and the priests of Bellona, "who spill their hot blood, which is cold when it touches the ground". This expression, which sounds as poetic as it is cruel, is quite unparalleled. The comparison with the rites of the goddess' followers is not as untoward as it may seem. For the *galli* were not the official priests of Cybele; they were despised by Roman law and culture; as tablet no. 18 (inv. no. 31, 2, below) expressly tells us, they were regarded as outside the limits of human society. I have been unable to identify the third group of ecstatic men who wound themselves, the *magali*, who are listed after the *galli* and the *bellonarii*.

The other topoi of this text occur elsewhere: the impossibility of redeeming oneself by offering sacrifices or paying money (l. 8), the paralysis of one's mental faculties (l. 11), the death of the victim in

[42] See the commentary below for the significance of the enigmatic *per benedictum tuum*.

public (l. 14, but only on another of the Mainz tablets),[43] finally, the limbs dissolved like salt in water (l. 14, also a Mainz cliché, here applied not only to everything the target does but to his physical body). The end of the text ist marked by the request that the criminal may come tomorrow to the temple of Mater Magna and confess his guilt; the appeal the god legitimates the redescription of the crime as sacrilege (*nefas*). The god is to accomplish the curse and ensure the victim a horrible death, so that the *defigens* in turn may fulfil the votive he has promised. This religious turn is to be compared with Groß-Gerau 1 (*AE* 2004: 1006b), where what Priscilla has done is represented as a sacrilege the gods have to avenge (*vindicate numen vestrum magnum a Priscilla quae detegit sacra*).[44]

In this markedly religious text the characteristics of a prayer for justice predominate, nevertheless some features of the magical *defixio* are clearly present.

The curse pronounced on both sides of tablet no. 17 (inv. no. 72, 3) is even more cruel, because the two authors demand that three women should die in public. As in tablet no. 8 above, the two sides of this tablet, containing 26 and 20 lines respectively, were clearly written by two people. The letters of the inner face show an elegant majuscule cursive script of 5 mm height; the outer one letters up to 10 mm height, but soft strokes and few curves, and extremely long strokes covering even the next one, two or even three lines. The mannerism of this script is unparalleled! It seems evident that the writers performed the appropriate ritual at the same time, both of them invoked Mater Magna and used the same topoi with some slight variants of wording; the second inscription simply continues the last sentence of the obverse by means of the conjunction *nec* and adds the formula that the curse shall be unredeemable.

The first part of the text, written in the inner side of the tablet, starts with a formal invocation of Mater Magna and her divine power. The first of the three women named on this side is Gemella, who is accused of having stolen some brooches or ornamental pins (*fib(u)las*). The writer wishes Gemella may cut herself and not heal. The punishment envisaged is a bleeding wound like that of the self-castrated *galli*, the frenzied followers of Mater Magna, an analogy repeated in two others

[43] For further discussion ot this topic cf. the commentary on no. 17 ll. 15–17.
[44] See n. 14 above.

Mainz tablets. Gemella likewise has placed herself beyond the bounds of social life; her life and health are to be damaged like something deposited in the sanctuary—possibly the pine-tree mentioned in no. 18 l. 7. As in tablet no. 2 above, she is not to be able to redeem herself by paying a ransom. In this section Gemella herself is addressed to as if she were present—a symptom of the author's rising emotions. Finally, as a climax, we find the wish that the people may watch the victim being executed in public. Amina Kropp, who has compiled an electronic data-bank of all Latin curse tablets, told me that this formula has not been found on other Latin texts. There seem to be some parallels in Greek curse-texts, but in the Cnidus texts the culprit is ordered to climb up to the sanctuary of Demeter and confess his guilt publicly.[45] Henk Versnel has suggested to me the Greek expressions ὄχλου πολλοῦ περιστάντος and δημοῦ παρεστῶτος might be parallels. But the context in these cases is quite different. One is an Epidaurian miracle inscription that recounts the miracle of Amphimnastos, a fishmonger who had tried to cheat Asklepios of the promised 10% of his bargain, but when he was on the market of Tegea, a thunderbolt hit the fish and burnt them. Amidst the market-crowd Amphimnastos confessed his guilt, prayed to the god, and at once the fish were alive again.[46] The other inscription, likewise on marble and dating from III^{p}, is from Rome and describes another miracle of Aesculapius: a blind man was ordered by the god to come into his temple and pray to the god and was healed at once. So the crowd was happy to see the virtues flourishing under the reign of Antoninus.[47] Both texts are miracle accounts, the interaction is exclusively between man and god, there is no petitioner writing a curse, the crowd is needed to testify to the miracle. In the Mainz curse text, however, the author of the lead tablet wishes for a public execution like that of condemned delinquents in the circus; the crowd is to be present to humiliate the target of the curse. The formulae here are thus quite different from those of the miracles.

The second section of the obverse text is directed against two women, Verecunda and Paterna, who are handed over to *Mater deum*

---

[45] *DTAud* 4: ἀνα[βαῖ] παρὰ Δάματρα…ἐξαγορεύων; see my commentary on Text 17, ll. 15f.

[46] *IG* IV.1² 123 ll. 22–8 = L.R. LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions. Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Atlanta 1995) 120f.

[47] *IGUR* 1 no. 148.

Magna, who is invoked with her full name, because they have swindled the author out of (some of his) property and money (*et res meas viresque fraudarunt*). The writer demands the women may not even redeem themselves by "sacrifices bearing wool". It was Pierre-Yves Lambert who made me realise this simply means "sheep" (cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* 8.155).

The second part of the alternative clause *nec*… follows on the reverse, which is written in a significantly different hand. This writer repeats the formula of the unredeemability of the curse by means of lead (i.e. *defixiones*), gold or silver, adding "from your divinity", and wishing that dogs, worms and other prodigious beings (*alia portenta*) might devour them. This wish can be explained by some parallels from Herodotus, the Bible and the history of pagan persecutors of Christian martyrs: wicked men are killed by worms eating their entrails. In Groß Gerau 2, the writer requests that the target be eaten up by worms and cancer (Blänsdorf 2007). The final wish that the people should look at their death is repeated with slight variations from the obverse side. In the remainder of the text, the letters become ever fainter and the lines begin to scramble. There is a reproach for having done something with two things which were held in common, and a series of words ending with *-as* two of which can already be understood: there is an allusion to the sacred golden boxes hidden in the sanctuary.

Let me add a conjecture about the personality and the character of the two writers of this tablet. Since their three victims are women and the extravagant punishment envisaged for the theft of some items of jewellery is death, the writers might be women themselves, and the extravagant handwriting of the reverse face of the tablet leads to the same assumption. Following again the line of Versnel's classification of curse genres, we find here again distinct characteristics of a prayer for justice: the humble address to the deity, the justification for the curse, the idea that it shall be unredeemable, and the cruelty of the punishment, but also a magic analogy.

The most unusual and sophisticated curse of all is to be found in a text inscribed on a tablet of an unusual oblong form, cursing a person named Quintus (no. 18 = inv. no. 31, 2; Plate 6). The grounds given for the curse are quite unusual, as Amina Kropp realised: Quintus has turned against himself and his plans and those of life (the grammar of the sentence is not quite correct). In this case, the *defigens* claims that his victim's moral dissolution justifies his desire to destroy him. The curse itself is expressed in four magical analogies: 1. Just as the *galli*,

the ecstatic followers of Mater Magna, castrated themselves, and the similarly ecstatic followers of Bellona, who was likewise worshipped in Mainz, inflicted wounds on themselves, so should Quintus lose his social credit, his reputation, his ability to manage his business affairs. *Fides, fama, facul(i)tas* are an alliterative tricolon, a well-known rhetorical device. 2. Just as the *galli* and the *bellonarii* cannot be classed as human, so he should not be either. 3. The third analogy, which does not really fit, names Quintus' crime, i.e. fraud: just as he committed fraud, so is Mater Magna to deceive him. 4. The fourth comparison is again a magic analogy which alludes to a ritual in the shrine: just as the tree brought into the temple during the *dendrophoria* will wither, so are his *fides, fama, fortuna, facul(i)tas* to wither. Just as the alliterative tricolon has become a tetracolon, so, at the level of the whole text, the whole series of analogies forms a tetracolon. The curse is summed up by the wish for revenge and the death of the culprit within a year. For a long time we did not know which god is invoked for help, but P.-Y. Lambert finally saw that near the end of the text (l. 8) Attis is named in a very curious spelling of the vocative case of his name and title: *Attihi d(o)mine.*

As concerns the genre of the text, the characteristics of a binding curse prevail: the binding term is *depono* (l. 1), there are four persuasive analogies which certainly belong to the world of magic, but on the other hand there is a justification of the curse, an address to a helpful god and the wish for revenge. I would not call this a borderline case of the prayer for justice, but a perfect blending of binding curse and prayer for justice, i.e. of magic and religion.

This text exhibits considerable education; the language is classical Latin. The petitioner uses legal terms and constructions (*dolus malus, -ve*), and stylistic devices of Roman rhetoric, a rare instrument of magic, but no traditional magic formulas. So this text certainly does not follow the established clichés of curse texts. The clear implication is that it was conceived by the complainant himself.

The rhetorical structure of the text can be shown by re-arranging it in terms of the syntactic cola. The dicola, tricola and tetracola are indicated by numbers, letters, and italics:

Quintum in hac tabula depono
(1) auersum se (2) suisque rationibus (3) uitaeque male consummantem.
(A) ita uti (1) galli (2) Bellonariue (1a) absciderunt (2a) concideruntue se,
sic illi abscissa sit (1) fides (2) fama (3) faculitas.
(B) nec illi in numero hominum sunt, neque ille sit.

(C) quomodi et ille mihi fraudem fecit, sic illi, sancta Mater Magna, et relegas cuncta.
(D) ita uti arbor siccabit se in sancto,
sic et illi siccet (1) fama (2) fides (3) fortuna (4) faculitas.
tibi commendo, Att{i}hi d(o)mine, ut me uindices ab eo, ut intra annum uertente[m]…exitum.

7. *Conclusions*

1. The new texts provide interesting insights into the religious and social life of a new settlement on the borders of the Roman Empire. They display as great a variety of contents as they do of forms and handwriting. All the texts are curses prompted by fraud, theft of money or jewels, embezzlement, rivalry or jealousy.

2. The normal patterns of imprecation are used,[48] but not according to set formulas with fixed clichés and complicated wording, but in individual variations combining words of common language with quite unusual phrases. The authors of the Mainz tablets display a lively imagination, especially in the field of magical analogies.

3. On the other hand, bare lists of names of cursed persons are not found at Mainz, nor are elaborate magical incantations and images, of the type known from North Africa, Athens, Rome and elsewhere, which only professional sorcerers could produce. Even the manner in which the gods are invoked, both the formula itself and its location in the text, is variable. The invocation is expressed in a plain language which did not have to be learnt by heart or copied from magic books, as in texts of eastern origin. Instead of those fixed formulas, the authors used the style of Roman prayers, allusions to Roman legal terminology, and stylistic elements of artificial or popular rhetoric.

4. The conclusion must be that these texts, or at any rate most of them, were not written by professional sorcerers or their scribes, but by private individuals—men as well as women—who may perhaps have known some of the most important methods of ritual cursing, but who wrote (and surely uttered) their wishes themselves, in their own words, presumably in secret, for reasons of security. The reason for this linguistic variability is probably the early date of the Mainz inscriptions, which precedes by nearly a century the development of

[48] On the typology of curse tablets cf. Gager *CT*.

set formulas known from elaborate curse tablets in Latin. The writers seem to belong to the middle or even the upper classes. Persons of this standard of education were able to compose and write texts by themselves and did not need scribes. Only three of the thirty-four tablets are written in Vulgar Latin. Curses clearly directed against freedmen or slaves, presumably by their peers, are very short and written in rather unskilled hands.[49]

5. These appeals for divine help against injustice are addressed neither to the well-known Roman gods, nor to those of the underworld, nor to demons, but only to Mater Magna, who is invoked eight times on six tablets, and Attis, her companion, who is invoked six times on five tablets. Mater Magna is never otherwise invoked in such documents. However two roughly contemporary tablets invoking Attis, Groß-Gerau 1 and one from Salacia (Setúbal) in Portugal, have recently been published.

6. The question of the origins and means of transmission of the practice of cursing at Mainz is a vexed one. The hypothesis of a strong eastern influence advanced by some colleagues is based on the fact that on the whole the cults of Kybele/Cybele/Mater Magna, Attis (and Isis), as well as the writing of curses and the performance of the corresponding rituals are of eastern origin. Furthermore some individual topics and formulae are paralleled by eastern curse texts, though most of them are to be found in documents that are at least a century later than the Mainz tablets. Certainly we would expect a considerable number of Greek words in the texts, but there is only one, viz. *megaron*.

The first line of inquiry is the sources of the population of Moguntiacum. There was a detachment of Ituraeans that was briefly stationed in Mainz in I^{p} (second half). But not only is there no trace whatever of these men of oriental origin in the curse texts but the Roman army itself hardly appears, except in two texts, whose authors and targets are all Romans! There are two female names of semitic origin, but the relevant text consists merely of the names and a slave-status.[50] The I^{p} epigraphic evidence suggests that many of the inhabitants came from

[49] On the problem of writing in the Roman Empire, see briefly H. Wolff, Öffentliche und private Inschriften, in: *Die Römer zwischen Alpen und Nordmeer. Zivilisatorisches Erbe einer europäischen Militärmacht*. Katalog-Handbuch zur Landesausstellung des Freistaates Bayern, Rosenheim 2000 (Mainz 2000) 287–92.

[50] *Lamixa* (or *Lamida*) / *Zerita* // *Villi* / *ancillam*: Blänsdorf 2008, 54f. no. 4.

Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, where the cult of Mater Magna was well-established.[51]

This leads us to the second line of inquiry, the transmission of the cults. The cult of Mater Magna had been practised at Rome since the late III^{a}, and though the Roman Senate tried to restrain it because of its orgiastic character, the public and private veneration of the goddess was alive at all times in Rome and Italy, as is shown by the votives found in the temple of Mater Magna on the Palatine. Likewise Egyptian Isis in her Hellenistic transformation had been present at Rome since the late II^{a}, and Bellona, originally a Roman goddess of war, was gradually transformed into the oriental Mâ from the late Republican period. These oriental deities were thus well known to the inhabitants of Rome, and in a position to spread all over the Roman Empire.

The third argument against direct influence from the eastern Mediterranean relates to the content. None of the striking characteristics of the (mainly later) magical *defixiones*, the endless repetition of fixed formulae, the magic letters, words and drawings, and the catalogues of 'names', occur in the Mainz texts. There are no close verbal parallels to the Attic curse texts dating from IV–I^{a}. Despite their considerable number, the Cnidus tablets, which can be dated around I^{a}, show only few variations of format and expression. The nearest typological parallels to the Mainz texts are the Latin curse-tablets from the mid- and late I^{a} and the British texts of the late I^{p}–IV^{p}. Nevertheless there are very few precise parallels either in aims or language. It is the lack of standardisation, the resourcefulness of imagery, and the elaborate language and style that distinguishes most of the Mainz texts from both the eastern and the western traditions of written curses.

[51] E. Schwertheim, *Die Denkmäler orientalischer Gottheiten im römischen Deutschland*. EPROER 40 (Leyden 1974).

Appendix[52]

No. 1 (inv. no. 201, 27 C) = *DTM* no. 23.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2008, 58 no. 8.

Text:

Minicius
Campanus
Martianus
Armicus
Severum tes-
serarium
Cantar(um)
equitem.

Notes:
4. **Armicus**: the cognomen is otherwise unrecorded; there is no room for, say, the conjecture *armicustos*.
5f. **tesserarium**: cf. Vegetius, *Epit. rei mil.* 2.7, *tesserarii qui tesseram per contubernia militum nuntiant. tessera autem dicitur praeceptum ducis, quo vel ad aliquod opus vel ad bellum movetur exercitus*.
7. **Cantarus**: This cognomen is very rare: *CIL* III 4947/4948 = 11521/2; VI 32627.

No. 2 (inv. no. 201 B 36) = *DTM* no. 5.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2004a = *AE* 2004: 1026; idem 2005b, 16 no. 6.

Text:
Obverse:

Bone sancte Atthis Tyran-
ne, adsi(s), aduenias Libera-

[52] The notes are extracts translated from a fuller commentary to be published as *Mainzer Archäologische Schriften: Forschungen zum Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtum 1: Die Defixionum tabellae des Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtums (Defixionum Tabellae Moguntiacenses = DTM), in Zusammenarbeit mit Pierre-Yves Lambert und mit einem Beitrag von Marion Witteyer herausgegeben und kommentiert von Jürgen Blänsdorf* (Mainz 2009). In the diplomatic versions, where given, capitals represent Roman majuscule, lower case Old Roman Cursive; in the transcripts/restored texts, capitals indicate letters or words of which no sense can yet be made. My practice here differs from the solution adopted by R. Tomlin for *Tab.Sulis*. The proposed translations are deliberately literal.

li iratus. Per omnia te rogo,
domine, per tuum Castorem,
Pollucem, per cistas penetra-
les, des ei malam mentem,
malum exitum, quandius
uita uixerit, ut omni cor-
pore uideat se emori prae-
ter oculos

Reverse:

neque se possit redimere
nulla pecunia nullaque re
neq(ue) abs te neque ab ullo deo
nisi ut exitum malum.
Hoc praesta, rogo te per ma-
iestatem tuam.

Translation:
Good, holy Att(h)is, Lord, help (me), come to Liberalis in anger. I ask you by everything, Lord, by your Castor (and) Pollux, by the *cistae* in your sanctuary, give him a bad mind, a bad death, as long as he lives, so that he may see himself dying all over his body—except his eyes. And may he not be able to redeem himself by (paying) money or anything else, either from you or from any other god except (by dying) a bad death. Grant this, I ask you by your majesty.

Notes:
1. **bone**: cf. *bona santa pia nomen (nomen* is a master-word or open-sesame): *CIL* XIII 11340 no. I = R. Wünsch, *BJ* 119 (1910) no. 31, Trier amphitheatre.

sancte: cf. *Sancto Attidi sacrum, genio dendrofororum* (*CIL* VIII 7956; *Sa(nc)te Dite pater et Veracura et Cerbere auxilie, q(u)i tenes limina inferna sive {sive} superna*…: *AE* 1929: 228 = R. Egger, *Römische Antike und frühes Christentum* 1 (Klagenfurt 1962) 81–97, from Carnuntum, late II^{p}.

Atthis with *h*: cf. Groß-Gerau 1: *Deum maxsime Atthis tyranne totumque duodecatheum, commendo deabus*…(see n. 14 above); *CIL* II 3706 (Mago on Menorca): *M. Badius Honor[atus] et Cornelius Silv[anus] templum Matri Ma[gna et] Atthin(i) de s(ua) p(ecunia) [(f)ecerunt]*; *CIL* X 6074 (Caieta/Gaeta or Minturnae; lost): *Decimia C. f. Candida sacerdos M(atris) d(eum) Atthin d(ono) d(edit)*. As a cognomen,

e.g. *CIL* VI 20691: *Iuliae Stemmae. vixit ann(os) XXX. Iuli(us) Eutactianus Atthis Similis Laetus Evenus filii matri carissimae.*

3. **iratus**: cf. *DTAud* 1 A 19–22 = *IKnidos* no. 147 A: ἀναβαῖ Ἀντιγόνη πὰ Δάματρα πεπρημένα ἐξομολογουμένα, καὶ μὴ γένοιτο εὐειλάτου τυχεῖν Δάματρος; *AE* 1967: 42, Rome: *C. Opetreius C. l(ibertus) Hygin(us) Salvidena (mulieris) l(iberta) Lesbia. quicumque hoc violaverit, superiores inferios deos iratos habeat* (grave-curse); cf. *AE* 1929: 228 (see on l. 1: Carnuntum).

5. **cistas penetrales**: cf. Clement of Alex., *Protr.* 2. 19 and Σ (ap. Hepding 1903, 32); they contained the genitals of the castrated Attis, cf. the *cista mystica* of *archigallus* M. Modius Maximus from Ostia, Vermaseren 1977, fig. 65 = *CIL* XIV 385; Hist. Aug, *Heliog.* 7.1f.

6. **malam mentem**: see the commentaries on nos. 5 l. 5 and 16 l. 11. *malam* here means in effect a troubled, haunted conscience.

7. **malum exitum**: see the commentary on nos. 15 l. 3 and 17 l. 15.

quandius: obviously a false analogy to *quando* and *prius*, cf. *CIL* VI 6308: *Iucundus Tauri lecticarius quandius vixit, vir fuit et se et alios vindicavi(t), quandius vixit, honeste vixit. Callista et Philologus dant*; VI 30111: *quandius vixi, quaesivi nec cessavi perdere semper*; cf. *AE* 1977: 791 (Kiren Tsukuru/Bithynia and Pontus):…*quandiu vita fuit data, vixi bene.*

11. **neque se possit redimere**: cf. *RIB* 323 + add.: *Dom(i)na Nemesis, do tibi palleum et galliculas. qui tulit, non redimat ni v[i]ta sanguine suo*, with Tomlin's remarks in this volume, p. 253 n. 14; cf. *AE* 1959: 157 (Kelvedon/Essex), and *Tab.Sulis* 94 l. 7f. etc.

15f. **per maiestatem tuam**: cf. *CIL* II 462 = *DTAud* 122 ll. 1–6 (= Tomlin no. 1, p. 247 below): *dea Ataecina Turibrig(ensis) Proserpina, per tuam maiestatem*; *AE* 1988: 727, Claudia Baelo (= Tomlin no. 3, p. 258 below): *Isis Muromem (= Myrionyma), tibi conmendo furtu(m) meu(m). mi(hi) fac tu(t)o numini (et) ma(i)estati exsemplaria, ut tu evide(s)…*; *Tab.Sulis* 35 ll. 1–4: *deae Sul[i] Minervae rogo [s]anctissimam maiestatem tuam u[t] vindices.…*

No. 3 (Cologne) Retrograde

Ll. 2–3 are published in Blänsdorf 2008, 53 in the commentary to no. 2 there. It is also presented by Faraone and Kropp in their contribution to this volume, p. 383 no. 2.

Diplomatic version:

AVT SERCIS AC ARIIAV (or: AVT SERCIS ACAREXV)
COH ODOMOC SAGA ESREVREP
TSEVTPIRCSESREVREP

Text:
Vaeraca (or: Uxeraca), sic res tua:
perverse agas, comodo hoc
perverse scriptu(m) est.

Translation:
Vaeraca: this is the way your affairs are to go: may what(ever) you do be in disorder, just as this is written backwards.

Notes:
2f. **perverse agas**: cf. (?Φυλάκιον) καταδῶ. ὥσπερ ταῦτα ἀνέπαλιν, οὕτ[ω] ἐκείνει <ἀ>νέπαλιν καὶ ἔπη καὶ ἔργα τὰ πάντα γένοιτο (R. Münsterberg, Drei attische Fluchtafeln, *Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen aus Bosnien und Herzegowina* 10 (1907) 375–77 at 376f. no. 2a = *SGD* I n. 40, Dekeleia, V/IV[a]),[53] and the remarks of Faraone and Kropp below, p. 382 n. 5.

No. 4 (inv. no. 411, 4) = *DTM* no. 8 Retrograde
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2004b, 73f. no. 113 = *AE* 2004: 1025; idem 2005b, 15 no. 4; idem 2008, 55f. no. 6 (colour photo no. 2).
Diplomatic version:
ASREVON ATIVA
IBITONOD
MVTARGTE
IBITON[OD…
5 TNAM SEME[… *or*: TNAMIEMIT.

Text:
Avita(m) noverca(m) / dono tibi / et Gratum / [do]no tibi/….

Translation:
I give you Avita the stepmother; I also give you Gratus…

Notes:
1. **S** instead of *C* caused by the effort involved in writing backwards.
5. I can make no sense of these letters.

[53] Accepting Jordan's reading.

No. 5 (inv. no. 182, 16) = *DTM* no. 15.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2004b, 72–74 no. 112 = *AE* 2004: 1024; idem 2005b, 13 no. 2.
Transcript (see Plate 1):
(a) Border (from top right):

Prima Aemilia Nar|cissi agat, quidquid co|nabitur, quidquid aget,|[4] omnia illi inversum sit

(b) Central area:

12 //sic illa nuncquam
13 quicquam florescat//
5 amentita surgat, a-
mentita suas res agat.
Quidquid surget, om-
nia interversum sur-
gat. Prima Narcissi
10 aga(t) como haec carta
nuncquam florescet.

Text:
Ll. 12 and 13 were written after 11; in my view, the text is to be read as follows:[54]

Prima Aemilia Narcissi agat, quidquid conabitur, quidquid aget, omnia illi inversum sit. Amentita surgat, amentita suas res agat. Quidquid surget, omnia interversum surgat. Prima Narcissi aga(t): como haec carta nuncquam florescet, sic illa nuncquam quicquam florescat.

Translation:
(Whatever) Aemilia Prima, (the lover?) of Narcissus may do, whatever she attempts, whatever she does, let it all go wrong. May she get up (out of bed) out of her senses/mind, may she go about her work out of her senses/mind. Whatever she strives after, may her striving in all things be reversed. May this befall Prima, the lover of Narcissus: just as this letter never shall bloom, so she shall never bloom in any way.

Notes:
Vulgar Latin: *quidquid—omnia—surgat*; *aga* without final *-t; comodo; nuncquam*. *amentita* is a neologism.

[54] See Faraone and Kropp p. 383f. below for a different view.

5f. **quicquid . . . omnia**: cf. Plautus, *Rud.* 1136, 1139 f.; Petronius, *Sat.* 115.18.
11–13. **nuncquam florescet**: cf. *CIL* X 8249 = *DTAud* 190 l.3f. (Minturnae): *quodqu[o]d agat, quod (= ut) incida(n)t omnia in adversa . . .*; and esp. in Attic texts: e.g. πάντα ἐναντία εἶναι (*DTAtt* 64 l. 5); ὥσπερ ταῦτα ψυχρὰ καὶ ἐπαρίστερα οὕτως . . . [ἐπαρί]στερα γέν[οι]το . . . (67 l. 8f.); also 64 ll. 3–9; 97 ll. 9–12; 109 l. 4f. etc.

No. 6 (inv. no. 167, 41) = *DTM* no. 28.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2008, 67–69 no. 15. Badly corroded.
Diplomatic version: Retrograde
Interior:

[---]OSMAN[.]V[.]E
OCSORSETOINCOVRCEN
MEDNOCEMOTO [..]
ORECMIVNI[.]O[. . .]E[. .]
ISDOVQTNAITE . EAC
EVATNAEOOVSSI[.]EMES

Exterior:

OIPICEDTEOREFEPETT[.]I[.]OVIO
OVEDSOE[.]MVC[.]A**?**O[.]
[. .]TESMVTEFXETEV
MVSOMINAMV[.]NAS
SO[.]MEVOVEDISTAN
MO . GAEN[. .]EPAREVIE

Proposed transcription:
Interior:

E[.]U [.]NAMSO[---]
NEC RUOCNIOTESROSCO (= te rogo?)
[.v]oto me condem-
[. .]e[.]o[.] in vim CERO
CAE . ETIANT . quodsi
SEME[.]IS suo OEANTA UE

Exterior:

OIVO[.]I[.]TTEPE fero et decipio
[.]OA[.] cum [.]eos devo-
vet EXFETUM SET[. .]
sanum animosum
NAT si devove(t) m[e]os
eiverape[.]NEAG . OM.

Hesitant translation:
…nor…I ask you (?)…I bear (?)..fulfil my wish…they might fear (?). But if…by their…// I bring and cheat (?)..When he curses them to death…healthy and alive. But when he curses my…indeed…

Note:
2. **tes rosco**: probably *te rogo*.

No. 7 (inv. no. 1, 29) = *DTM* no. 3.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2005a, 672–4 no. 1 = *AE* 2005: 1122; idem 2005b, 21 no. 9; idem 2005c no. 1.

Text:
Obverse:

Rogo te, domina Mater
Magna, ut tu me uindices
de bonis Flori coniugis mei.
qui me fraudavit Ulattius
Seuerus, quemadmod<um>
hoc ego auerse scribo, sic illi

Reverse:

omnia, quidquid agit, quidquid
aginat, omnia illi auersa fiant.
ut sal et aqua illi eueniat.
quidquid mi abstulit de bonis
Flori coniugis mei, rogo te,
domina Mater Ma<g>na, ut tu
de eo me uindices.

Translation:
I entreat you, Mistress Mater Magna, to avenge me regarding the goods of Florus, my husband, of which Ulattius Severus has defrauded me. Just as I write this in a hostile way, so may everything, whatever he does, whatever he attempts, everything go awry for him. As salt (melts in) water, so may it happen to him. Whatever of the goods of Florus, my husband, he has taken away from me, I entreat you, Mistress Mater Magna, to avenge me for it.

Notes:
1. **rogo**: more frequent than *peto* in Silver Latin, cf. Petron, *Sat*. 20.1: *rogo, inquam, domina, si quid tristius paras, celerius confice.*

6. **auersus**: for the meaning 'hostile', cf. Verg., *Aen*. 2.170: *aversa deae mens*; 12.647: *superis aversa voluntas*; Prop. 4.1.73: *aversus Apollo*; Ovid, *Epist. Pont*. 1.2.6 f.: *vereor ne nomina lector / durus et aversa cetera mente legas*. In curse tablets it may be used to characterise the wrong-doer as well as the petitioner, e.g. the roughly contemporary curse-tablet from Schramberg-Waldmössingen, Kreis Rottweil: *fib(u)lam Gnatae qui involavit aut qui melior est animi conscios, ut illum aut illam aversum faciant di, sicut hoc est // aversum et qui res illaeus sustulit* (Nuber 1984); *AE* 1907: 99, Poetovio: *Paulina aversa sit a viris omnibus et deficsa sit, ne quid possit mali facere*; *AE* 1961: 181 = 1998: 999, Veldidena /Wilten:…*vobisque deligat // ut persicuatis et eum aversum a fortunis <s>uis avertatis et a suis proxsimis et ab eis, quos carissimos (h)abeat* ().[55] The word *auersus* is used to mean 'absentmindedness during a trial' in the *ager Santonum* texts, Aquitania (*DTAud* 111/112):…*quomodi nec mater huius catelli defendere potuit, sic nec advocati eorom e[os d]efendere {non} possint, sic il[lo]s [in]imicos (112) aversos ab hac l[i]te esse*, cf. Graf 1997, 123f.

3. **Florus**: frequent cognomen of Roman citizens and freedmen.

4f. **Ulattius**: a Celtic name derived from <**wlati* 'kingdom'; on several inscriptions of Gallia Cisalpina and Transalpina.

fraudavit: cf. *CIL* XIII 11340 no. V, Trier: *Si tu (H)ostillam q(ua)e e(t) Racatia/ {FRAV} q(u)i(a) mihi fraude(m) fe(cit) / deus nos te q(u)i audis*.

7. **quidquid—omnia**: see note on no. 5 l.5f.

8. **aginat**: hitherto this word was known in extant Latin literature only from Petron., *Sat*. 61.9: *egi aginavi*, i.e. in the same stock phrase. But cf. *CGL* 2.11.34: *aginat*—διαπράσσεται, στρέφει, μηχανᾶται; 41: *aginare*—στρατεύεσθαι; 42: *aginat*—στρατεύει; 4.13.19: *aginantes*—*explicantes*; 5.560.31: *aginatus*—*qui agit aliquid, id est negotiator*; Placidus ap. *CGL* 5.7.4: *aginatorem*—*negotiatorem*.

9. **aqua**: *Qui mihi VILBIAM involavit, sic liquat com[o](do) aqua* (*RIB* 154 = *Tab.Sulis* 4 l.1f.). There is no parallel for *sal et aqua*.

No. 8 (inv. no. 111, 53) = *DTM* no. 4.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2005a, 683–86 no. 4 = *AE* 2005: 1125; idem 2005b, 18 no. 7; 2005c no. 4.

[55] These texts are resp. nos. 8, 12 and 11 in Faraone and Kropp, below.

Text:
Obverse (see Plate 2):

TIBERIVS CLAVDIVS ADIVTOR:
IN MEGARO EVM ROGO TE, M<A>
T<E>R MAGNA, MEGARO TVO RE-
CIPIAS. ET ATTIS DOMINE, TE
PRECOR, VT HV(N)C (H)OSTIAM ACCEP-
TVM (H)ABIATIS, ET QUIT AGET AGI-
NAT, SAL ET AQUA ILLI FIAT. ITA TU
FACIAS, DOMNA, IT QVID COR EOCONORA
C(A?)EDAT

Reverse (see Plate 3):

Deuotum defictum
illum menbra,
medullas, AA (?).
nullum aliud sit,
Attis, Mater Magn<a>.

Translation:
Tiberius Claudius Adiutor—In the temple—I ask you, Mater Magna, to receive him in the temple. And Lord Attis, I ask you that you may credit him as a sacrifice to your account (i.e. enter him in your accounts under "Offerings"); and whatever he does or busies himself with, may it become salt and water for him. May you do, Mistress, what may cut his heart and liver—// Him cursed and 'caught'—in his limbs, strength—let there be nothing else—Attis, Mater Magn(a).

Notes:
2 and 3:. **megaro**: μέγαρον as a part of a building, cf. *CIL* XIV 18: *Isiaci magar(um) de suo restituerunt*; *CIL* XIV 19: *Voto suscepto Calventia Severina et Aurelia Severa nepos megarum ampliaverunt*. *PGrMag* LXX 13f. καὶ εἰ μέγαρον κατέβην Δακτύλων, "I descended into the megaron of the Dactyls", reveals its origin from a katabasis rite, cf. H.-D. Betz, Fragments from a *katabasis* Ritual in a Greek Magical Papyrus, *History of Religions* 19 (1979–80) 287–295 = *Gesammelte Aufsätze, 1* (Tübingen 1990) 147–55; cf. D.R. Jordan, A Love Charm with Verses, *ZPE* 72 (1988) 258. A μέγαρον might also be a pit for the offerings to the chthonic gods (*RE* s.v. Megaron 2). In the sanctuaries of Kybele in Priene and Aizanoi rectangular pits full of remains of offerings were found (Schwenn *RE* 11, 2263 f. s.v. Kybele). For other Greek words for

temples cf. Vidman 1969, 511: *dromus*, 531: *hydraeum*, 533a: *aetoma*; *CIL* V 4007: *pronaum*.
3–6. **recipias, acceptum abiatis** (= *habeatis*): cf. *AE* 2001: 1135, Salacia/Setúbal (as emended by Marco Simón 2004; see Tomlin no. 4, p. 260 below): *Domine Megare invicte, tu qui Attidis corpus accepisti, accipias corpus eius, qui meas sarcinas supstulit, qui me compilavit de domo Hispani; AE* 1993: 1008, Carmona: *Diis imferis vos rogo, utei recipiates nomen Luxsia A(uli) Antesti filia caput*… (with the remarks of F. Maltomini, Nota alla defixio di Carmona, *ZPE* 107 [1995] 297 f. and Marina Sáez 1999); *DTAud* 138 (Rome): *Danae ancilla no(u)icia Capitonis. hanc (h)ostiam acceptam habeas et consumas Danaene(m). habes Eutychiam, Soterichi uxorem; CIL* VIII 19525b with Jordan 1976: *demando tibi, ut a<c>ceptu<m> <h>abeas [S]ilvanu<m> q(uem) p(eperit) vulva, facta et custodias*; E. Gàbrici, *NSc* 7 (1941) 296–9 = *SGD* I no. 109, Lilybaeum: δέομαί σου κάτω Ἑρμῆ… δῶρον τ(οῦτ]ο πέμπω; see also Versnel 1991, 72–75.
6. **abiatis**: Vulgar Latin = *habeatis*.
6 f. **aget aginat**: see my comment on no. 7 l. 8.
8. **eoconora**: read by P.-Y. Lambert; Vulgar form of *iecinora* (oblique cases of *iecur/ iocur*/*iecor* occur in numerous Vulgar variants, e.g. *iecoris, iecuris, iecineris, iocinoris* etc., see *TLL* s.v.). The target's liver is also cursed in *RIB* 7 (Moorgate): *Tretia(m) Maria(m) defico et illeus*… *iocinera pulmones*…
10. **defictum**: Vulgar form of *defixum*, cf. *AE* 1930: 112 = *RIB* 6, *deficus* but also *defictus* (2 x); 1937: 66 = 1953: 134 = *RIB* 221, *deficta* (context obscure).

No. 9 (inv. no. 28, 27) = *DTM* no. 7.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2008, 66f. no. 14.

Text:

quisquis nobis sustulit sacc(u)lum, in quo pecunia erat,
et eam pecuniam et anulos aureos […], quod des[ti]na[.]-
tum est XI K(alendas) febr(uarias) q(uae) p(roximae) s(unt) c [..]
siue dolum [m?]alum adhib[et --- quo-]
mod[i] hoc grapphio auerso[.] quod minime uti solet, sic[---]
auersum, dii deae{e}que[..e]sse sin{e}at[i]s et [ho]minibus, siqui[---]
manu contig{u}it [.]idaequ[..], quomodi [.]tho[.] sucus defluit e[---]
hoc plumbum esse cum[---]geum desti[natum]ue esse uelit[---]
sicut innocentiam[---]est si in dea [---] UNN SREU.

Translation:
Whoever stole from us a purse containing money, and (keeps?) the money and the golden rings, (must return them) by the eleventh day before the Kalends of February next. If he fails to do so ('uses fraud')—just as (I write this) with a reversed stylus, which is not as it should be, so may you, o gods and goddesses, allow (him) to be reversed ...for men. If anybody holds (it? i.e. the money) back with his hand, it shall equally… just as this liquid/juice (?) flows down… this (piece of) lead is [melted?]… and wants it might be […] or terminated… like innocence (acc.)… is, if in the goddess….

Notes:
The reading is tentative; the translation, especially from l. 5, does not pretend to be much more than a series of guesses.
1. **quisquis**: i.e the unknown culprit, cf. e.g. *DTAud* 122 = Tomlin no. 1 [p. 247 below] (Emerita): *te rogo oro obsecro, uti vindices, quot mihi furti factum est, quisquis mihi imudavit, involavit, minusve fecit [e]a[s res]… cuius [nomen] ignoro*.
3. **XI K. febr. q. p. s.**: P.-Y. Lambert realised that *QPS* must be an abbrevation for *quae proximae sunt*, 'next following', cf. R. Seider, *Paläographie der lateinischen Papyri, 1* (Stuttgart 1972) 66, no. 25 b l. 15: *V Idus Mart(ias) Q P F (= quae proximae fuerunt)*. The deadline therefore was 22nd January next following. For this type of stipulation, cf. *DTAud* 250A l. 12 (Carthage): *intra dies septem*; and Groß-Gerau 1:… *per Matrem Deum intra dies c (?) cito vindicate numen vestrum magnum a Priscilla* (*AE* 2004: 1006b; see n. 13 above).
5. **dii deae(e)que**: Richard Gordon remarks (by e-mail) that whereas the theft of a purse is common, appeals to *dii deaeque* are rare in Latin curses. He compares: *Dionisia Denatiai ancilla rogat deibus, ego rogo bono bono deibus…* (*CIL* II.7, 250 = *AE* 1934: 23, Córdoba, probably I^{p}); since the text continues: *rogo oro bono einfereis bono Salpina rogo oro bonis inferis ut dioso quod fit deibus inferabus…*, the first group of gods may be contrasted with the chthonic deities (unless *di inferi* simply specifies them more closely); and: *hoc omnia vobis Dii interdico* (*AE* 1981: 621 l. 10, Montfo/Hérault, probably 50–60 CE). Add the demand: *ut illum aut illam aversum faciant di* in the curse from Schramberg-Waldmössingen (Nuber 1984), cited no. 7 l. 6 above.
6. **manu contig{u}it[.]**: Cf. *Tab.Sulis* 97: *Basilia donat in templum Martis anilum argenteum, si ser[u]us si liber medius fuerit* (Adams) *uel aliquid de hoc nouerit ut… configatur*, "Basilia gives <in> to the temple

of Mars (her) silver ring, that so long as (someone), whether slave or free, keeps silent or knows anything about it, he may be accursed…"; cf. Versnel 1991, 89; Ogden 1999, 46.
7. **innocentiam**: possibly a reference to the innocence the culprit may regain if he restores the stolen objects, cf. *Tab.Sulis* 100: *si puer si puella si vir si femina qui h[oc] invol[a]vit non* (?) *p[er]mittatu[….] nis(i) inn[o]centiam ulla[m?* (traces), "Whether boy or girl, whether man or woman, (the person) who has stolen it is not to be permitted (?)… unless any innocence…"; cf. R.S.O. Tomlin, Vinisius to Nigra: Evidence from Oxford of Christianity in Roman Britain, ZPE 100 (1994) 93–108.

No. 10 (inv. no. 103, 2) = *DTM* no. 21.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2005b, 13 no. 1 = *AE* 2005: 1128; idem 2008, 54 no. 3 with colour pl. no. 1.

Text:

Trutmo Florus | *Clitmonis* | *filius.*

Translation:

Trutmo Florus, son of Clitmo.

Note:
See my comments regarding the names on p. 156 above.

No. 11 (inv. no. 109, 5) = *DTM* no. 16 Retrograde
Previously published (both interior and exterior): Blänsdorf 2008, 64f. no. 13.[56]
Diplomatic version:
Interior (see Plate 4):

IROMEMMETNEM
ATIGOCROCMA
SIVQSIV[…]LIMVT
P NOCMVEMMERTAP
S ILLIETIVS

[56] [This publication gives the exterior text (omitted here) as: *Fo[r]tunam dolus / q[u]otti[die…]i sed / vir pa(tri?)…deo meo / i meo.u[sp]oliav[it] / IVNCNOA REIANTI*, translated as: "Fortuna die List täglich…aber ein Mann dem Vater…meinem Gott (??)…meinem geraubt hat…", which might conceivably mean "Deception fortune (acc.) daily…but (the/a) man to…fa(ther?)…to my?? god…has deprived…Eds.]

Text:

mentem memori-
am cor cogita-
tum il[…q]uisquis
patrem meum con . p
illi et ius.

Translation:
…mind, memory, heart, thinking…(acc.). Whoever (has defrauded?) my father…to him justice/right…(?)

Notes:
1f. **memoriam**: cf. *desumatur / ut facia(s) il(l)um sine / sensum sine memo/ria sine ritu sine / medul(l)a / sit vi mutuscus //]ento, demando tibi*…(*CIL* VIII 19525b with Jordan 1976).

No. 12 (inv. no. 182, 14 B) = *DTM* no. 11.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2005b, 14 no. 3; idem 2005c no. 6 = *AE* 2005: 1127; idem 2008, 61f. no. 11 (colour photo no. 4, obverse only). Found rolled up with the following no.

Text:
Obverse (see Plate 5):

Mando et rogo
religione, ut man-
data exagatis
Publium Cutium
et Piperionem et

Reverse:

Placida et Sacra,
filia eius: sic illorum
membra liquescan(t)
quat(?)modum hoc plum-
bum liquescet, ut eo-
ru(m) exsitum sit.

Translation:
I hand over (to you), and, observing all ritual form, ask that you require from Publius Cutius and Piperion the return of the goods entrusted to them. Also // Placida and Sacra, her daughter: may their limbs melt, just as this lead shall melt, so that it shall be their death.

Notes:
1. **mando et rogo**: cf. *AE* 1999: 954 a,b, the bilingual from Cuenca (I^a–I^p): ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐμῶν τοῖς κατὰ Ἅδην δίδωμι, παραδίδωμι Νεικίαν καὶ Τειμὴν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους οἷς δικαίως κατηρασάμην. *pro me pro meis devotos defixos inferis, Timen et Niciam et ceteros, quos merito devovi sup[ra pro] me, pro mei[s], Timen, Nician, Nicia[n]*, with the remarks of H. Versnel on his no. 3.1.1.1, p. 291f. below); and Wünsch 1898 no. 16 ll. 3–6 = *DTAud* 155 (Porta S. Sebastiano, Rome): ὑμῖν παραθ[ίθομ]ε τ[οῦτον τ]ὸν δυσσεβὴν καὶ ἄνομον [καὶ ἐ-] πικατάρατον Κάρδηλον.
2. **mandata**: embezzlement of a deposit. Such curses are not common in the Latin-speaking Empire, but note *AE* 2000: 795: *pequnia(m) quae a me accepit Heracla conservus meus* (accepting Tomlin's reading, p. 264 below = his no. 5, Saguntum 1); Uley 78a (unpublished, see Tomlin 1993); in the eastern Mediterranean, e.g. *DTAud.* 3 = *IKnidos* no. 149a5–7 = b3–5: τοὺς λαβόντας παραθή[καν] καὶ μὴ ἀποδιδόντας…; cf. *DTAud* 2 = *IKnidos* 148.5–13: ὅστις τὰ ὑπ' ἐμοῦ καταλιφθέντα ἱμάτια καὶ ἔνδυμα καὶ ἀνάκωλον, ἐμοῦ ἀπαιτήσας, οὐκ ἀπέδωκέ μοι, ἀνενένκαι αὐτὸς παρὰ Δάματρα… (cited by Versnel 1991, 72).
8. **membra**: see the commentary on no. 16 l. 15.

No. 13 (inv. no. 182, 14 A) = *DTM* no. 12.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2008, 62–64 no. 12, both faces (with colour photo 5, of interior).[57] Found rolled up with the previous no. and no doubt to be understood as a continuation ot it.

Text:
Exterior:

sic[..]s siccum QVANMI
qu[omo]di hoc liquescet
si[c col]lum membra
me[du]lla peculium
5 *d[e]l[i]ques[ca]nt //*

[57] [This publication gives the interior text (ll.6–12) as: *eoru(m) quamodum / gallorum angat se. / s[ic i]lla aga(t), ut de se / [pr]robant (?). tu dom(i)na es, fac, ut X mensibus /* (vac) *exitum illorum sit.* The translation offered is: "von ihnen. Wie (nach) Art der *galli* soll <sie> sich ängstigen. So soll es ihr ergehen, wie sie von sich beweisen (?). Du bist die Herrin, mache, dass innerhalb von zehn Monaten der Tod jener ist". Eds.]

Translation:
…so…dry…just as this is to melt, so may his neck, limbs, strength, savings melt away…

No. 14 (inv. no. 182, 9) = *DTM* no. 10.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2008, 59–61 no. 10 (both faces, with colour plate 3, obverse)
Reverse:

Text:

CO[.] L sibi settas facia[..]s
[..]ita me(n)ses duos, ut eo-
rum ixsitum audiam
[.]d[i]liquescant, quat{m}-
5 *modi diliquesc(u)nt.*

Translation:
…that you may make…for two months, that I may hear of their death…may they melt away just as…melt away (plur.)…

Notes:
3. **ixsitum** = *exitum*.
5. The sentence is incomplete.

No. 16 (inv. no. 182, 18) = *DTM* no. 2. Not yet fully deciphered
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2005a, 674–77 no. 2 = *AE* 2005: 1123; idem 2005b, 21f. no. 10; idem 2005c no. 2.

The tablet was first rolled up, then folded and later heavily damaged by fire; the lower part of the tablet bears clear traces of melting. About one third of ll. 1–5 and 12–16 are lost. The extent of the damage means that the conjectures must be speculative.

Text:

quisquis dolum malum adm[isit--], hac pecun[i]a[---nec]
ille melior et nos det[eri]ores sumus [----------]
Mater deum, tu persequeris per terras, per [maria, per locos]
ar(i)dos et umidos, per benedictum tuum et o[mnes -------qui]
5 *pecunia dolum malum adhibet, ut tu perse[quaris--- Quomodo]*
galli se secant et praecidunt uir[i]lia sua, sic il[le--] R S Q
intercidat MELORE pec[tus ? .....]BISIDIS [ne]que se admisisse
nec[…]

hostiis si[n]atis nequis t[…] neque SUT . TIS neque auro neque argento neque ille solui [re]fici redimi possit. Quomodo galli, bellonari, magal[i] sibi sanguin[em] feruentem fundunt, frigid[us ad terram venit, sic et[…]CIA, copia, cogitatum, mentes. [Quem-] admodum de eis gallo[r]u[m, ma]galorum, bellon[ariorum ---] spectat, qui de ea pecunia dolum malum [exhibet --------] exitum spectent, et a[d qu]em modum sal in [aqua liques-] cet, sic et illi membra m[ed]ullae extabescant. Cr[ucietur] et dicat se admisisse ne[fa]s. D[e]mando tibi rel[igione,] ut me uotis condamnes et ut laetus libens ea tibi referam, si de eo exitum malum feceris.

Translation:
Whoever has defrauded this money, [neither] is he the better (for it) nor we the worse. Mater Deum, you pursue (your enemies) across land and sea, arid and humid [places], by your blessed one (= dead Attis), and everybody who (5) commits malicious fraud concerning this money: you shall pursue him… [Just as] the *galli* lacerate themselves and sever their genitals, so may he cut… his breast (?)… And if he says he has not committed…, let him not redeem himself with offerings nor… nor be he able to free or restore or redeem himself with gold nor with silver. Just as the adherents of Mater Magna (10) and the priests of Bellona and the MAGALI spill their hot blood, which is cold (when) it touches the ground, so his…, his abilities, his thinking and wits… Just as… of the galli, the MAGALI and the priests of Bellona… (Just as) he watches the person who commits fraud concerning this money, so let (the people) watch his death and… Just as salt will <melt in water>, (15) so may his limbs and marrow melt, may he be tortured and may he confess that he has committed sacrilege. I solemnly entrust (this) to you, in order that you may fulfil my wishes and I gladly and willingly return my thanks to you, if you make him die a horrible death

Notes:
1. **dolum malum**: also in ll. 5 and 13 here; no. 9 l. 3; cf. *AE* 1981: 621 (Montfo): *sic decadat aetas, membra, uita, bos, grano (= granum), mer(x) eoru(m), qui mihi dolum malu(m) fecerunt*.
3. **persequeris**: in Gr. ἐπιζητέω, cf. Versnel 1991, 78f., 82ff.; examples in Latin are *AE* 1982: 448 (Corsica): *et si C. Statius tibi nocuit, ab eo vind[ica te ---] [---persequa?]ris eum… et si Pollio conscius est et illum*

persequaris, ni (= ne) annum ducat (cf. Versnel 1991, 82f.); *AE* 1975: 497 = Tomlin no. 2, p. 254 below (Italica): *dom(i)na Fons, font[i] ut tu persequaris tuas* (*duas* Tomlin) *res demando, quiscunque caligas meas telluit (= tulit) et solias. tibi, dea, demando, ut tu illas, ad(cep)tor si quis (puer sive) puel(l)a, si mulier sive [ho]mo involavit, [tu] illos persequaris.*

4. **per benedictum tuum**: after four locative terms of divine omnipotence, *per benedictum tuum* is a surprise. If *benedictum* (n.) is taken as "praise" or "blessing", it does not make any sense in this context. But in pagan (as well as Christian) inscriptions *benedictus* can be used as an epithet of a loved (deceased) person. I cite only those inscriptions in which *benedictus* is an epithet and not part of the name: *CIL* VI 12464: *Dis Man(ibus) Artemisia Caesaris vixit ann(os) XXX. Horea filia matri bene merenti fec(it). Tito co(n)iugi patri parenti benedicto bene merenti, Clodia Donata Flavia Procula Clo(diae) Don(atae) matri bene merenti fecit*; VI 20513 *D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) Iuliae Heuresi sanctissim(ae). volente fato vixit annis LXXXII. hic super ossua cineresq(ue) tuos benedicta quiescis. fecit Pomponia Trophime bene merenti*; VI 24634: *D(is) M(anibus) C(aius) Pomponius Philadespotus fecit sibi et Pomponiae Euhodiae benedictae coniugi carissimae, quae vixit mecum annis XXXX sine quaerella, et in hoc sepulchro ne quis ponatur nisi fili(i) mei et Pomponiae Hygiae filiae bened(ictae)*; VI 25408: *D(is) M(anibus) Restituti animulae bonae et benedictae. sit tibi terra levis*; VI 25569: *Rufin(a)e filiae benedict(a)e*; VI 29642: *Dulcis aput Manes Zoe benedicta moraris. tu secura iaces, nobis reliquisti querelas. pr(a)ecesti hospitium dulce parare tuis*; X 8418 (Velitrae): *Cl(audiae) Poll(a)e co(n)iu/gi benedict(a)e, qu(a)e mecum vixit sine macula annis XIIII mens(ibus) VII diebus VII Sotericus Aug(usti) n(ostri) b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecit)*. I conclude that *benedictus tuus*[58] must refer to Attis, the dead lover of Mater Magna, whose death was mourned during the March festival of Mater Magna. Thus Attis' chthonic aspect, which is here just hinted at in an enigmatic and euphemistic way (compare the Salacia text, *AE* 2001: 1135),[59] actually fits the series of locative definitions of the power of Mater Magna quite well.

---

[58] *tuum* denotes a close personal relation, cf. the invocation of Attis in no. 2 l. 4: *per tuum Castorem.*

[59] *Domine Megare invicte, tu qui Attidis corpus accepisti, accipias corpus eius, qui meas sarcinas supstulit*… (see n. 15 above).

6. **praecidunt**: a more or less technical term, cf. *absciderunt concideruntve* in no. 18 l. 3f. The closest parallel is Julius Obsequens 44a: *Servus Seruilii Caepionis Matri Idaeae se praecidit et trans mare exportatus, ne umquam Romae reuerteretur*; cf. Petronius, *Sat*. 108.10: *tunc fortissimus Giton ad uirilia sua admouit nouaculam infestam minatus se abscissurum tot miseriarum causam.*

10. **bellonarii**: the word *bellonarius* was hitherto only known from a handful of citations in ancient scholia and lexicographers: Ps.-Acro, Σ Horat. *Sat*. 2, 3; Σ Juvenal. 6.105; 'Notae Tironianae' 81.77 s.v. *bellonarius*; cf. Commodian, *Instr.* 1.17.6: *vidistis saepe Duellonarios quali fragore luxorias ineunt.*

magali/magili: evidently the name of an otherwise unknown priesthood, presumably of Mater Magna or Mâ-Bellona.

14. **exitum spectent**: cf. l. 18, and nos. 2 l. 7, 15 l. 3 (with comm.) above; 17 l. 16 (with comm.), 18 l. 9 below.

15. **illi membra medullae extabescant**: cf. *ut male contabescat usque dum morie[t]ur* (*AE* 1982: 448, Corsica, cited at l. 3).

No. 17 (inv. no. 72, 3) = *DTM* no. 1.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2005a, 677–80 no. 3 = *AE* 2005: 1124; idem 2005b, 19–21 no. 8; idem 2005c no. 3.

Text:
Obverse:

Mater Magna, te rogo,
p[e]r [t]ua sacra et numen tuum:
Gemella fiblas meas qualis
sustulit, sic et illam REQVIS (rogo ?)
adsecet, ut nusquam sana si[t].
Quomodo galli se secarunt,
sic ea [velit] nec se secet sic, uti
planctum ha[be]at quomodo
et sacrorum deposierunt
in sancto, sic et tuam vitam
valetudinem, Gemella.
Neque hostis neque au-
ro neque argento redi-
imere possis a Matre
deum, nisi ut exitum
tuum populus spectet.

Verecundam et Pater-
nam: sic illam tibi com-
mendo, Mater deum
Magna, rem illorum
in AECRVMO DEO UIS qua-
le rogo co(n)summent[.],
quomodo et res meas vire-
sque fraudarunt, nec se
possint redimere
nec hosteis lanatis

Reverse:

nec plum{i}bis
nec auro nec ar-
gento redimere
a numine tuo,
nisi ut illas uorent
canes,
vermes adque
alia portenta,
exitum quarum
populus spectet,
tamquam quae {C} FORRO
L auderes comme…ES
duas
TAMAQVANIVCAVERSSO
scriptis istas
AE RIS . ADRICIS . S. LON
a . illas, si illas cistas
caecas, aureas, sacras
E[--]I[-]LO[--]AS
O {OV}[-]EIS mancas A.

Translation:

Mater Magna, I ask you by your sanctuary and your divine force. Gemella who stole my bracelets (I ask you) may she (acc.)…[5]…so that no part of her be healthy. Just as the *galli* have cut themselves, so (may) she want to do. And may she not cut herself so, that she may lament herself. As they have deposited the holy things [10] in the sanctuary, so also your life and health, Gemella. Neither by offerings nor by gold nor by silver may you be able to redeem yourself from the Mater [15]

Deum, except that the people may watch your death.—Verecunda and Paterna: for thus I give her to you, Mater Deum [20] Magna, their property…I ask they may be destroyed just as they have defrauded me of my property and resources; nor may they [25] be able to buy themselves free either by offering sheep // or by lead (tablets); neither by gold nor silver may they buy themselves free [30] from your divine power, until dogs devour them, worms and other horrible things; [35] may the people watch their death just as…two…[40]…with writings…them (acc.), if [someone takes?] those hidden golden holy boxes [45]…holy ones (acc. plur. fem).

Notes:
See my fairly full discussion, p. 159 above.
3. **fiblas** = *fibulas*, cf. *fiblam gnatae qui involavit* (Nuber 1984, from Schramberg-Waldmössingen), cited in the commentary to no. 7 l.6.
8. **planctum**: the ritual lament.
15–17: **ut exitum tuum populus spectet**: The analogy means the public execution of criminals; in Greek tablets we only find the confession of the crime to the god, e.g. *DTAud* 4 = *I.Knidos* 150 ll. 1–3: : [Ἀνα]τίθημι Δάματρι καὶ Κούραι τὸν κατ᾽ ἐμο[ῦ ε]ἴπ[α]ντα ὅτι ἐγὼ τῶι ἐμῶι ἀνδ[ρὶ] φάρμακα ποιῶ: ἀνα[βαῖ] παρὰ Δάματρα πεπρημένος μετὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ [ἰδίων] πάντων ἐξαγορεύων; cf. ἐξομολ<ογ>ουμ[ένα] in *DTAud* 1 = *I.Knidos* 147 l. 22). On the social function of public punishment, cf. P. Veyne, *La société romaine* (Paris 1991) 72.
33–36. **vermes adque alia portenta**: cf. Herodotus 4.205: Οὐ μὲν οὐδὲ ἡ Φερετίμη εὖ τὴν ζόην κατέπλεξε. ὡς γὰρ δὴ τάχιστα ἐκ τῆς Λιβύης τεισαμένη τοὺς Βαρκαίους ἀπενόστησε ἐς τὴν Αἴγυπτον, ἀπέθανε κακῶς· ζῶσα γὰρ εὐλέων ἐξέζεσε, ὡς ἄρα ἀνθρώποισι αἱ λίην ἰσχυραὶ τιμωρίαι πρὸς θεῶν ἐπίφθονοι γίνονται (worms as divine punishment for excessive revenge); Isaiah 66.2 *Macc* 9.9; *Acts* 12.23; SGD I no. 114; Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 33.7–9; cf. Groß-Gerau 2 ll. 9–13: *ut illius manus, caput, pedes vermes, cancer, vermitudo interet, membra medullas illius interet*.
35. **exitum**: cf. l.15 f.
43f. **cistas caecas aureas sacras**: the "hidden, golden, holy boxes" may be the sacred boxes of the sanctuary, the *cistae penetrales* mentioned in no. 2 l.5. But the final nine lines of the text remain obscure.

No. 18 (inv. no. 31, 2) = *DTM* no. 6.
Previously published: Blänsdorf 2005a, 686–89 no.6 = *AE* 2005: 1126; idem 2005b, 23f. no.11; idem 2005c no.6.

Text:
Obverse (see Plate 6):

Quintum in hac tabula depono auersum
se suisque rationibus uitaeque male consum-
mantem. ita uti galli bellonariue absciderunt concide-
runtue se, sic illi abscissa sit fides fama faculitas. nec illi
in numero hominum sunt, neque ille sit. quomodi et ille
mihi fraudem fecit, sic illi, sancta Mater Magn<a>, et relegis
cu[n]cta. ita uti arbor siccabit se in sancto, sic et illi siccet
fama fides fortuna faculitas. tibi commendo, Att{i}hi d(o)mine,
ut me uindices ab eo, ut intra annum uertente[m]. . . . . exitum
illius uilem malum.

Reverse: At 90° to obverse

ponit nom(en) huius mari-
tabus | si agatur ulla
res utilis, sic ille nobis
utilis sit suo corpore.
sacrari horr<e>bis.

Translation:
In this tablet I curse Quintus, who has turned against himself and reason, and leads his life to a bad end. Just as the galli or the priests of Bellona have castrated or cut themselves, so may his good name, reputation, ability to conduct his affairs be cut away. Just as they are [5] not numbered among mankind, so may he too not (be so numbered). Just as he cheated me, so may you (deal with him), holy Mater Magna, and take everything away from him. Just as the tree shall wither in the sanctuary, so may his reputation, good name, fortune, and ability to conduct his affairs wither. I hand (him) over to you, Lord Atthis, that you may punish him for me, so that by the end of the year (he may suffer a) horrible bad [10] death. . . . (Reverse) He writes the name of this person to the wives. If anything useful is to be done, he shall be useful for us by his body. Being cursed you shall be horrified.

The text as we have it was written in two phases. P.-Y. Lambert drew my attention to some odd inverted letters in line 7 (which are omitted from my text here). They read: QUINTI NOMEN. In our view, this

was the text the *defigens* began writing. But he became dissatisfied with such a primitive curse that simply named Quintus; or perhaps he mistook NOMEN for a text-word rather than 'insert the name here' in a master-text.[60] At any rate, he stopped, turned the tablet upside-down, and wrote out a much longer text he thought more effective.

Notes:

1. **depono in hac tabula**: cf. *DTAud* 135: *defico in (h)as tabel(l)as*.
aversum se: cf. *hoc ego averse scribo*, no. 7 l. 6.

2f. **male . . . consummantem**: *consummare* is frequent in Silver Latin, in the sense of *perficere*, specially of the completion of temples or altars, e.g. *CIL* XIII 11810 (Mainz): *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Conservatori arcum et porticus, quos Dativius Victor dec(urio) civit(atis) Taun(ensium) sacerdotalis Mo/gontiacensibus [p]romisit, Victori Ursus frum(entarius) et Lupus fili(i) et heredes consummaverunt*. In the sense of moral conduct, as here: *CIL* VI 17540: *D(is) M(anibus) L(ucio) Fabio Ianuario, qui et Derisori, qui vixit bene et consummavit bene.*

3f. **galli**: the day when intending *galli* were believed to geld themselves, and other devotees whipped and slashed themselves, was 24 March (*dies sanguinis*): cf. Ps.-Acro, Σ Horat., *Sat*. 2.3.223: *eum qui famae seruiat, insanire dicit, sicuti bellonarii, cum lacertos umerosque concidunt* (cf. no. 16 l. 10).

bellonariue . . . concideruntue: the suffix *-ue* is frequent in legal or quasi-legal language, cf. J.B. Hofmann and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik* (= M. Leumann, J.B. Hoffmann and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik* 2.2.ii) (Munich 1965, repr. 1972, 1997) 503.

4. **in numero hominum**: On the exclusion of the target from the human community, cf. *AE* 1907: 99 (Poetovio): *Paulina aversa sit a viris omnibus et deficsa sit, ne quid possit mali facere. Firminam [cl]od[as] ab omnibus humanis; AE* 1961: 181 = 1998: 999 (Veldidena) . . . *ut persicuatis et eum aversum a fortunis [s]uis avertatis et a suis proxsimis et ab eis, quos carissimos (h)abeat. (h)oc vobis mandat, vos [e]um cor[ipi]atis* (Egger: *per[secu]atis* Kropp).

7. **arbor siccabit**: This refers to the festival on 22 March, *arbor intrat*, when the pine-tree representing Attis was brought into the sanctuary,

[60] See the remarks of Faraone and Kropp on this text, p. 386 below.

so perhaps we should assume this curse was written soon after this festival (R. Gordon).
Reverse:
A second writer added a shortened but somehow specified version of the curse. The *maritae* are the two goddesses of the sanctuary.

Bibliography

Blänsdorf, J. 2004a. "Guter, heiliger Atthis". Eine Fluchtafel aus dem Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtum (Inv.-Nr. 201, B 36, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 51–58.
——. 2004b. Zwischenmenschliche Dramen, 2: Fluchtäfelchen aus Mainz, in Reuter and Scholz 2004, 72–74.
——. 2005a. Cybèle et Attis dans les tablettes de *defixio* inédites de Mayence, *CRAI* 2005, 669–692.
——. 2005b. The Curse-tablets from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Mater in Mainz, *MHNH* 5, 11–26.
——. 2005c. Survivances et métamorphoses des cultes orientaux dans l'empire romain, in H. Duchêne (ed.), *Survivances et métamorphoses* (Dijon) 95–110.
——. 2007. "Würmer und Krebs sollen ihn befallen". Eine neue Fluchtafel aus Groß-Gerau, *ZPE* 161, 61–5.
——. 2008. Die *defixionum tabellae* des Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtums, in Hainzmann and Wedenig 2008, 47–70.
Brodersen, K. and Kropp, A. (eds.) 2004. *Fluchtafeln: Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt a.M.).
Faraone, C.A. 1991. The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 3–32.
Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D. (eds.) 1991. *Magika Hiera* (New York).
Faraone, C.A., Garnand, B. and López-Ruiz, C. 2005. Micah's Mother (*Judg*. 17:1–4) and a Curse from Carthage (*KAI* 89): Canaanite Precedents for Greek and Latin Curses against Thieves? *JNES* 64, 161–186.
Gordon, R.L. 1999. Imagining Greek and Roman Magic, in Ankarloo/Clark 1999, 161–275.
Graf, F. 1997. *Magic in the Ancient World.* Tr. P. Franklin (Cambridge MA).
Hainzmann, M. and Wedenig, R. (eds.) 2008. *Instrumenta Inscripta Latina, 2: Akten des 2. Internationalen Kolloquiums Klagenfurt 2005*. Aus Forschung und Kunst 36 (Klagenfurt).
Hepding, A. 1903. *Attis, seine Mythen und sein Kult*. RGVV 1 (Gießen).
Jordan, D.R. 1976. *CIL* VIII 19525 (B): QPVVLVA = q(uem) p(eperit) vulva, *Philologus* 120, 127–132.
Lane, E.N. (ed.) 1996. *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults*. RGRW 131 (Leyden).
Marco Simón, F. 2001. La emergencia de la magia como sistema di alteridad en la Roma del siglo I d.C., *MHNH* 1, 105–32.
——. 2004. Magia y cultos orientales: Acerca de una *defixio* de Alcácer do Sal (Setúbal) con mención de *Attis, MHNH* 4, 79–94.
Marina Sáez, R.M. 1999. Notas lingüísticas a una tabella defixionis hallada en Carmona (Sevilla), *ZPE* 128, 293–300.
Nuber, H.U. 1984. Eine Zaubertafel aus Schramberg-Waldmössingen, Kreis Rottweil, *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 9 (Stuttgart) 377–384.

Ogden, D. 1999. Binding-spells: Curse-tablets and Voodoo-dolls in the Greek and Roman worlds, in Ankarloo/Clark 1999, 1–90.
Reuter, M. and Scholz, M. (eds.), *"Geritzt und entziffert": Schriftzeugnisse der römischen Informationsgesellschaft*. Schriften des Limesmuseum Aalen 57 (Stuttgart 2004).
Scholz, M. 2004. Im Banne böser Absichten: Fluche, wenn irdische Gerechtigkeit versagt: Verfluchungstäfelchen aus Groß-Gerau, in Reuter and Scholtz 2004, 67/70f.
Scholz, M. and Kropp, A. 2004. "Priscilla, die Verräterin": Eine Fluchtafel mit Rachegebet aus Groß-Gerau, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 33–40.
Tomlin, R.S.O. 1993. The inscribed Lead Tablets: an Interim Report, in Woodward and Leach 1993, 112–30.
——. 1998. The Curse Tablets, in B. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, 2: The Finds from the Sacred Spring*. Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Monograph no. 16 (Oxford).
——. 2004. *carta picta perscripta*: Anleitung zum Lesen von Fluchtafeln aus dem römischen Britannien, in K. Brodersen and A. Kropp (eds.), *Fluchtafeln: Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt am Main) 11–29.
Schwertheim, E. 1974. *Die Denkmäler orientalischer Gottheiten im römischen Deutschland*. EPROER 40 (Leyden).
Sillières, P. et al. 1995. *Baelo Claudia*. Coll. de la Casa de Velázquez 51 (Madrid).
Vermaseren, M.J. 1977. *Cybele and Attis. The Myth and the Cult* (London).
Versnel, H.S. 1991. Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 60–106.
Vidman, L. 1969. *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapicae*. RGVV 28 (Berlin).
——. 1970. *Isis und Sarapis bei den Griechen und Römern. Epigraphische Studien zur Verbreitung und zu den Trägern des ägyptischen Kultus*. RGVV 29 (Berlin).
Witteyer, M. 2004. Verborgene Wünsche. Befunde antiken Schadenzaubers aus Mogontiacum-Mainz, in K. Brodersen and A. Kropp (eds.), *Fluchtafeln. Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt a.M.) 41–50.
Witteyer, M. 2005. Curse-tablets and Voodoo-Dolls from Mainz. The Archaeological Evidence for Magical Practices in the Sanctuary of Isis and Magna Mater, *MHNH* 5, 105–124.
Woodward, A. and Leach, P. 1993. *The Uley Shrines: Excavation of a Ritual Complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire: 1977–9*. English Heritage Archaeological Report 17 (London) 113–30.
Wünsch, R. 1898. *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* (Leipzig).
——. 1910. Die *laminae litteratae* des Trierer Amphitheaters, *BJ* 109, 1–12.

CHAPTER FIVE

RELIGION AND MAGIC AT ROME: THE FOUNTAIN OF ANNA PERENNA[1]

Marina Piranomonte

The fountain of Anna Perenna and her Nymphs was discovered in October 1999 during work on the construction of an underground car-park at Piazza Euclide in the area of modern Parioli in northern Rome. Here I need give just a brief account of the excavation and the cult of the goddess and the nymphs before going on to present a selection of the finds that came to light in the cistern of the fountain, which offer new perspectives on the rituals and cult performed at the shrine, and are of particular interest for the question of malign magic at Rome, mainly, but not exclusively, in IV^{P}.[2] The fountain consisted of two parts, a cistern (length unknown; 2.93m wide, c. 2.50m high) built around the spring itself; and, in front of it, and slightly below, an open rectangular trough or basin (4.38m long; 0.88m wide), built using a late-antique technique of bricks alternating with tufa blocks (*opus vittatum*).[3] When found, this trough was filled with sizeable sherds of

[1] This is a revised version in English of my earlier reports in Italian, which include some further details. I would like to thank very warmly Jarmila Polakova, Idana Rapinesi, Olimpia Colacicchi of the Laboratorio di Restauro della Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma, supervised by Giovanna Bandini, for the excellent work of preservation and restoration they have performed. They are extraordinary friends and colleagues who have worked on the materials, organic and inorganic, with expertise and passion. I am also most grateful to the Istituto Centrale del Restauro for its continued support.

[2] Detailed descriptions can be found in Piranomonte 2001; Piranomonte 2002; Faraone 2003; G. Piccaluga, Review of Piranomonte 2002, in *StudRom* (June–July 2003) 162f.; J. Scheid, Anna Perenna, in idem, *Religion, institutions et societé de la Rome antique* (Paris 2003) 906–12; M. Piranomonte, La scoperta della fonte di Anna Perenna a Piazza Euclide, in Piccaluga, forthcoming; Piranomonte 2005; S. Laurant, De la déesse oubliée à la sorcière maléfique, in *Le monde de la Bible* (May–June 2005) 49f.; Wiseman 2006; Piranomonte 2006; Piranomonte 2007; Piranomonte and Ricci, 2009; Piranomonte forthcoming (a) and (b).

[3] The coins and the magical deposit were found in the cistern (see below), not in the open trough; before it was covered with a block of tufa in late antiquity, there was an aperture opening from above directly into the cistern. The fountain as a whole now lies between 6.20m and 10.00m below street level.

wine-amphorae datable to late IV^{p}–early V^{p}, and thus rendered unusable. The first important discovery was the three inscribed monuments dating from II^{p}, briefly described below, two of which bear the dedication *Nymphis sacratis Annae Perennae*. They had been incorporated into the revetment of the late-antique trough (see below), and are of great interest both as being the first inscriptions from Rome to mention the name of the deity, and her nymphs, and in providing new information about the public cult itself.[4]

Anna Perenna was an ancient Roman deity; according to the Tiberian *Fasti Vaticani*, her festival at Rome was at that date celebrated on the Ides of March (15th) near the first milestone along the Via Flaminia in the Campus Martius.[5] The fact that the Fasti Vaticani mention the celebration at the 1st milestone seems to contrast with the archeological evidence of the fountain findspot, which for sure can be placed between the 2nd and the 3rd milestone. Peter Wiseman has recently expressed the hypothesis that in the early imperial age the cult of Anna Perenna was shifted from an unknown site close to the 1st milestone (i.e. more or less near via Condotti) to Piazza Euclide, on the basis that the coins I have found date back between the Augustan age to the reign of Theodosius, while there are no coins of earlier date. Apart from the fact that in Roman religion cults are moved very rarely and for very serious reasons, I here repeat what I have already said many times to Wiseman (who, by the way, does not know the site at all): the late-antique fountain is only a part of the find, for beside the trough in *opus vittatum* there is another one in *opus reticulatum* severed by the car-park piling, which is certainly much earlier. Moreover, the archaeological evidence is confirmed by the presence of ceramic materials found in direct contact with the spring itself: two miniature kyathoi and several fragments of Campanian pottery, votive figurines and others, all of which date between IV^{a} and III^{a}, demonstrating beyond any reasonable doubt that the cult of Anna Perenna has always been there

[4] The fountain has been open to public since 3rd December 2004. A selection of materials has been on show since June 2001 in the new Epigraphic Section of the Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme. The remainder is still being analysed by the conservation department of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma

[5] *Feriae Annae Perennae (in) via Flam(inia) ad lapidem prim(um)*: *CIL* I^{2} 1, p. 242. The Fasti Vaticani are dated 15–31 CE (not 37, as both Mommsen and Degrassi state): A.E. and J.S. Gordon, *Album of Dated Latin Inscriptions* (Berkeley 1958–65) 1: 73f. no. 66. By the date of the Calendar of Filocalus (354 CE), the date had been moved to 18 June: *CIL* I^{2}.1 p. 266 = *InscrIt* XIII.2 pp. 248f., 472.

and was never moved. The solution proposed by Adriano La Regina, in his Introduction to Piranomonte 2002, that the Fasti could refer to the wall circuit of the *pomerium*, which was largely extended by Claudius and to the 1st cippus of the *pomerium* found in Via Flaminia 53 (300 metres outside the present Piazza del Popolo) has been criticised,[6] but it presents again the incredible controversy between historians and archaeologists, who often make the mistake of finding "out of place" temples and sanctuaries, whose location seemed assured on the basis of literary and other sources (Wiseman 2006, 59f.).[7]

In the *Fasti*, Ovid provides a memorable account of this popular celebration at the original site.[8] In his day, the festival took place not far from the Tiber bank (*non procul a ripis, advena Thybri, tuis*, 524) and had a markedly licentious character: during the celebrations quantities of wine were drunk, and the couples laid down on the grass or withdrew into tents or improvised bowers built with branches and togas placed over cane props.[9] Everybody thus celebrated the coming of the

[6] See in particular Capanna 2006, pp. 65–70.

[7] The location of the fountain in the area where I have found it seems assured by Martial 4.64.16f.; the mention of Fidenae, some little way due north of Rome along the Via Salaria, among the places that can be also seen makes it certain that the monte Mario is meant. The expression *longo Ianiculi iugo* remains curious, but see S.B. Platner and T. Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Rome* (Oxford 1929) 274 s.v. Ianiculum. Wissowa 1894, 2223 was rightly sceptical of Pliny's mention of an *Annae templum* (*HN* 35.94): this is the reading only of the Bamberg ms., all the others read *Antoniae*. Given that a temple of Anna Perenna (even supposing there was one at Rome, which is highly unlikely) is hardly likely to have contained a statue of Hercules, Preller's conjecture *Dianae* is preferable. Little can be done with a ceramic fragment with the letters ANA found in the Cloaca Maxima.

[8] The festival: *Fasti* 3.523–42; 655f.; 675–96; Anna: 543–654; elaborated by Silius Italicus, *Punica* 8.49–201; see further the important commentary by F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso. Die Fasten* (Heidelberg 1958) 2: 179–92; a narratological perspective in F.-R. Herber, *Ovids elegische Erzählkunst in den „Fasten"* (Diss. Saarbrücken 1994) 300–12. Between 222 and 153 BCE, the consuls had taken up their office on the Ides of March (in the latter year the date was moved to 1st January); early on in the *Fasti*, 1.149–60, Ovid toys with the idea that the year ought 'naturally' to begin in March, but the 1st, not the 15th: D. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2007) 204. The most important literary references can be found in F. Graf, s.v. Anna Perenna, *DNP* 1 (1996) 708. See further the useful discussions by R. Lamacchia, Annae festum geniale Perennae, *La Parola del Passato* 63 (1958) 381–404; G. Brugnoli, Anna Perenna, in idem and F. Stok, Ovidius *Parōdēsas*, Testi e studi di cultura classica 10 (Pisa 1992) 21–45.

[9] Martial 4.64.16 (see n. 7 above) writes: *et quod †virgineo cruore† gaudet*, which, if it makes any sense, might imply that at the Piazza Euclide site girls lost their virginity, something Ovid does not mention. O. Immisch, Der Hain der Anna Perenna, *Philologus* 82 = NF 36 (1927) 183–92 suggested reading *virgineo crudiore*, which seems, if anything, even less intelligible.

new year and of spring, convinced as they were that they would live as many years as cups of wine they had drunk.[10] There was singing and performances of mimes; and all through the festivities women were to be seen dancing around with their hair unbound. At the same time Ovid provides a good example of the way in which obscure ancient deities could be, and were, re-invented in the late-Republican/Augustan age of antiquarianism. He offers a number of different versions of the origin and identity of the deity. According to the most popular one, she was to be identified with Dido's sister Anna, who after Dido's death in Carthage fled to Malta and thence to Latium, where she was welcomed by Aeneas. Hated by Lavinia, who caused her to drown in the waters of the Numic(i)us river, Anna became the nymph of the locality and took the surname Perenna from the *amnis perennis*, the ever-flowing river that had welcomed her (*Fasti* 3.653f.).[11] According to Ovid, other accounts identified her with the Moon, with Themis, Io, with one of the daughters of Atlas, or even Hagno, a Naiad who in Arcadian myth was, together with Theisoa and Neda, the nurse of Zeus.[12] Ovid mentions finally the identification of Anna with an old woman born in Bovillae who fed the Roman plebs when they seceded

[10] Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.12.6 says that on this day *et publice et privatim ad Annam Perennam sacrificatum itur, ut annare perennareque commode liceat*, *annare* referring to the entry into the new year, *perennare*, bringing it to a close (cf. Wissowa 1912, 241 n. 8); cf. Joh. Lydus, *De mens.* 4. 49 Wünsch: εὐχαὶ δημόσιαι ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὑγιεινὸν γενέσθαι τὸν ἐνιαυτόν. This information is truly antiquarian, since it must derive from a source prior to 153 BCE (see note 8 above). Varro however seems to have considered that they were 'really' two separate names, *Anna ac Perenna: Sat. Menipp.* frg. 506 Bücheler. D. Porte, Anna Perenna: Bonne et heureuse année?, *Revue de philologie* 45 (1971) 282–91. The post-Tiberian festival may have been moved to 18 June, the date given by the Calendar of Filocalus for the festival of Anna Perenna. Wiseman suggests that, since this was shortly after the cleansing of the temple of Vesta, a day often chosen for weddings, Anna may have shared her grove and summer festival with Priapus, to whom girls 'offered' their virginity (2006, 60).

[11] The Numicius (the form Numicus also occurs) was a meandering stream in Latium that flowed into a lake or lagoon, where Venus washed Aeneas clean of his mortal parts (e.g. Vergil, *Aen.* 7.150, 242; Ovid, *Met.* 14.596–608 with Bömer ad loc.), cf. H. Philipp, s.v. Numicius 1, *RE* 17 (1931) 1341. Wissowa 1894, 2224 comments acidly on the etymologising activity that led to this pseudo-history; for Wiseman it picks up, transforms and elaborates some of the underlying themes of the festival (2006, 55–59). On this river see lately G. Messineo, *Corniger Numicius*, in Orizzonti, VII, 2006.

[12] 3.657–60. The motivation of the identification with a daughter of Atlas is not clear (cf. Wernicke, s.v. Atlas, *RE* 2 [1896] 2120f.); the reference to Hagno however is clearly linked to the marvellous qualities of the famous pool or fountain of Hagno in Arcadia (Pausanias 8.38.2–4); see M. Jost, *Sanctuaires et cultes d'Arcadie*, Études peloponnésiennes 9 (Paris 1985) 245–47.

to the Mons Sacer (traditional date: 494 BCE) with her country cakes (661–74). As a reward, she was granted the honour of a statue (*signum Perennae*). These ancient interpretations suggest that there were in the Augustan period at least three different places associated with the goddess: one near the Mausoleum of Augustus not far away from the Tiber bank; the marvellous Numicius in Latium; and Bovillae, reputed as a colony of Alba Longa and therefore directly associated, like the Numicius, with the earliest history of Rome.[13]

Farther afield, two items of documentary evidence have been found at opposite ends of the Italian peninsula. In 1922 a limestone altar with the simple two-line inscription *Anna[e | Peren[nae* was found not far from the Cathedral at Feltre, that is in the former Gallia Cisalpina.[14] And at Buscemi near Akrai in Sicily Paolo Orsi discovered several inter-communicating niches set within an architectural frame inside some caves, one of them natural, three artificial. The inscriptions were unfortunately in very bad condition, but dedications in Greek to *Anna*, who seems to be the central figure, to the *Paides* ("Girls" = ? Nymphs), and to Apollo could nevertheless be made out. One of them carries the date 35 CE; the others, whose lettering is similar, are also likely to be from the first half of the first century CE. Orsi conjectured that the Sicilian cult of Anna Perenna might have begun in this natural cave.[15]

Let us return to the archaeology of the fountain, below the modern Piazza Euclide. It had a very long life, from IV^{a}–VI^{p}.[16] The rectangular trough was lined with *opus signinum* and the bottom was constructed

[13] Under Augustus, the obvious resonance of Bovillae was its role as the origin of the gens Iulia (*CIL* XIV 2387; Suetonius, *Aug.* 100.2; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.41). Eleven miles down the Via Appia, it was reckoned as one of the 30 members of the ancient Latin League (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 5.61), and its representatives duly took part in the annual celebration on the Mons Albanus. A relevant connection with Rome is the existence at Bovillae of Vestal Virgins, said originally to have been from Alba Longa (*CIL* XIV 2410).

[14] *AE* 1925: 82 = *SupplIt* 5 F 1 = T. Campanile, Feltre: Importante trovamento di epoca romana, *NSc* 1924, 149–153 with fig. 1, p. 151.

[15] P. Orsi, Buscemi. Sacri spechi con iscrizioni greche, scoperti presso Akrai, *NSc* 1899, 452–71; see also M. Guarducci, Il culto di Anna e delle Paides nelle iscrizioni sicule di Buscemi e il culto latino de Anna Perenna, *SMSR* 12 (1936) 25–50. For the association betwen nymphs and caves, see Larsen 2001, 226–67; specifically on Buscemi, 221f., where she comments on the tendency for plural deities such as nymphs to be given generic names corresponding to social categories.

[16] For the fountain in the Republican period, see Piranomonte and Ricci 2005. It may have continued to be used in some form into the medieval period (XII^{p}).

of *bipedales*. The late-antique revetment was built, as I have mentioned, of rough *opus vittatum*, but there are traces, largely destroyed by the piling for the garage, of a much earlier one in *opus reticulatum*. Four lead *fistulae* pass through the trough, presumably deriving from different periods of use; they indicate that the spring also supplied water to some other hydraulic facility further down the valley. The fountain was a *krene*, a type very common all over Greece and Asia Minor, with the water from a concealed cistern debouching through a spout into a basin or trough: there are, for example, many representations on Greek vases depicting women (and men) drawing water from such fountains; the spouts often had the form of animal, especially lion, protomai.[17]

It is however the finds in the cistern that most concern us here. It is clear that the water from the spring continued to flow into the cistern long after the shrine was given up or closed down in the late IV^{p} or early V^{p}, and deposited the layers of clay and sand that preserved the contents perfectly in a quasi-anaerobic environment. These finds include 549 coins, 74 oil-lamps, 22 randomly-scattered curse-tablets, 18 cylindrical containers made of lead-sheet, some containing poppets (anthropomorphic figurines), 3 containers made of clay, a large copper-alloy pot or bucket (*caccabus*) with traces of use on a fire, seven pine cones, egg-shells, twigs and a number of small plaques made of different kinds of wood. Given the context, a cistern constantly filled with water, it is difficult to organise the materials chronologically.

Deposits such as this in springs, fountains and nymphaea are common enough. Leaving aside the issue of magical practice for the moment, such locations, whether sacred to a named deity or the anonymous nymphs (or, as in our case, both), are obvious transit-points between two worlds, and thus tend to be specially favoured for symbolic and specifically religious action. In our case, it seems that the nymphs were of particular interest. Despite the dominant poetic tradition, which offers a reassuring image of them as harmless, happy beings venerated near springs and rivers, the personification of waters,

[17] For example, the IV^{a} fountain below the temple of Athena at Priene, cf. A.W. Lawrence, *Greek Architecture* (Harmondsworth 1957) 236 with pl. 114b; cf. Larson 2001, 10; 26. There are about 50 Attic black-figure *hydriai* showing images of women collecting water from such fountains surviving from the period 530–500 BCE alone, cf. E. (Zwierlein-)Diehl, *Die Hydria: Formgeschichte und Verwendung im Kult des Altertums* (Mainz 1964) 230 T259; a nice example illustrated in E. Simon, *Die griechischen Vasen* (Munich 1976) pl. XXX.

in Greek religion they are chiefly deities of the untamed or partially tamed landscape, with a particular association with pastoral or rustic gods, notably Dionysus, the silens, and Pan (Larsen 2001, 91–96). Although in the Classical period the nymphs' influence on individuals was seen as positive, a heightening of awareness and verbal skill (e.g. Plato makes Socrates declare himself νυμφόληπτος, inspired, by the nymphs of the Ilissus, by whose banks he and Phaedrus are sitting),[18] in the post-classical period they become more sinister: nympholepsy is a dangerous and unwelcome mental state, connoting loss of self-restraint, abduction or even disappearance and death (Larsen 2001, 66–72). Nymphs incarnate a dangerous and anomalous femininity often synonymous with premature death; seductive and dangerous, they lie in wait for attractive boys or men, and then drown them; we may think of the young Hylas, drowned by one (or three) nymphs at a spring as he fetched water.[19] Very often their nature is semi-wild, hidden inside an alluring body; it is the water itself that facilitates the passage between their two natures.[20] All these associations, which are really so many stories about the special nature of springs and fountains as transition-points, made springs reputedly inhabited by the Nymphs seem attractive for religious purposes, especially instrumental ones (i.e. requests for help, healing, fecundity etc.). The fact that the fountain of Anna Perenna and her nymphs came to be used also as a transit-point for malign messages to the other world (i.e. *defixiones*) over a period of a century or more cannot therefore surprise us, though in fact there are no examples of *defixiones* addressed to them in the eastern Mediterranean, and only one earlier case in Italy, an Arretine example dating to II^{p}, addressed to the *Aquae ferventes, siv[e v]os Nimfas [si]ve quo alio nomine voltis adpel[l]ari*, and found in 1869 together with coin deposits in the iron-rich spring of Poggio

[18] Plato, *Phaedr.* 238d; on the Classical view, see W.R. Connor, Seized by the Nymphs: Nympholepsy and Symbolic Expression in Classical Greece, *ClAnt* 7 (1988) 155–89.

[19] Apollonius Rhodius, *Argon.* 1.1228–39; Theocritus, *Idyll* 13.43–50. Bormos the Mariandynian is another case in point (Nymphis ap. *FGrH* 432 F5b). Note also the girl drowned some way up the Via Nomentana, part of whose epitaph reads: νύμφαι κρηναῖαι με συνήρπασαν ἐκ βιότοιο: *IG* XIV 2067 (not in *IGUR*).

[20] Moreover, in the classical *imaginaire* plunging people or objects into water was a typical motif in tales involving a shift of status: L. Mancini, *Il rovinoso incanto: Storie di sirene antiche* (Bologna 2005) 149–223.

Bagnoli.[21] However David Jordan has recently proposed reading the formula ὑμις δέε φρυγια δέε νυμφε εἰδωνεα that occurs at the beginning of many of the (mainly) Greek *defixiones* from Porta S. Sebastiano, and was understood by Wünsch as an epithet of Osiris (= *deus Ephydrias deus Nymphaeus Aidoneus*), as representing an original invocation of the Nymphs: ὑμεῖς δέ, ἐφυδριάδες νύμφαι, ἀϊδώναιαι, ἔγχωροι κατοικοῦσαι, "You watery Nymphs, of the Underworld, who dwell in this place".[22] This perfectly suits the assumptions underlying the practice at the Fountain of Anna Perenna. Wünsch plausibly dated the 50–odd 'Sethian' texts around 390–420 CE, somewhat later than ours; it is however quite uncertain whether there was in fact a spring in the vicinity of the find-spot of these *defixiones*, reportedly found in the ash-urns of a columbarium "nella prima vigna a mano sinistra uscendo dalla Porta S. Sebastiano" (i.e. the vigna Marini).[23] As is shown by the initial word in most of the Greek texts, ΛΟ(γος), the formula is clearly copied from a previous document. If Jordan's suggestion is correct, there must have been other appeals to the nymphs for malign ends, which are now lost.

The Finds

My task here is simply to provide a brief overview of the material recovered, in order to provide a context for the detailed commentary on the *defixiones* in Latin by Jürgen Blänsdorf that immediately follows this contribution. For the sake of proper contextualisation, however, I first present the three inscriptions, which seem to provide some corrective to Ovid's account of the celebrations at the March festival of Anna Perenna.

---

[21] *CIL* XI 1823 = *ILS* 8748 = *DTAud* no. 129; for the date, cf. D.R. Jordan, *CIL* VIII 19525 B2, QPVULVA = *q(uem) p(eperit) vulva, Philologus* 120 (1976) 127–32 at 128.

[22] D.R. Jordan, Ψεγματα κριτικὲς, *Eulimene* 1 (2000) 127–31 at 130f.; accepted by Mastrocinque 2005, 53.

[23] Wünsch reports two rather different accounts, the earlier by Matter (1852), who says the *defixiones* were found in small marble and terracotta 'sarcophagi', in a ruined tomb, the later by de Rossi (1880), mentioning the columbarium and the ash-urns (1898, 1 and 3)

1. *The inscriptions*

The marble altar and two votive bases were built into the late-antique retaining wall of the trough and evidently stem from an earlier phase of the shrine.[24] The fountain, or the enclosure around it, must have been damaged and the votives that once stood on the bases removed. This final arrangement was presumably intended to restore dignity to the place, which was no doubt still much visited.

The first text (*AE* 2003: 251) is inscribed on a marble base dedicated by a freedman to the nymphs of Anna Perenna on the occasion of a victory in some competition by his *patronus* C. Acilius Eutyches. The text, addressed to the *Nymphae sacratae* rather than to Anna Perenna herself, contains five lines of iambic senarii, followed by a 'signature'. On the stone it is laid out thus:

> *Votum sacratis quondam | Nymphis feceram, | boni patroni meritis ob victoriam | C. Acili Eutychetis reddimus | et esse sanctas | confitemur versibus | aramque gratis | dedicamus fontibus. | Eutychides lib(ertus).*
>
> The vow (which) once I had made to the consecrated nymphs, who deserved it because of the victory of my good patron C. Acilius Eutyches, we pay; and we attest in verse that they are sacred, and we dedicate an altar to the welcome springs. Eutychides the freedman.[25]

Sacratae here means that the nymphs have a cult dedicated to them at this spot; they are the essence of the spring, the divine beings who cause it to flow without drying up. Before considering the type of competition that may have been involved, to which the metre is obviously a key, we need to look at the other two texts, which are closely related to one another and evidently refer to the same occasion. The more important is a fine marble altar (Pl. 7), with balusters and rosette-finials, and a *patera* and *culter* on the (damaged) tympanum. The text (*AE* 2003: 252) reads:

---

[24] Cf. F.W. Deichmann, *Die Spolien in der spätantiken Architektur (*Munich 1975); J. Alchermes, Spolia in Roman Cities of the Late Empire: Legislative Rationale and Architectural Re-Use, *DumbOP* 48 (1994) 167–78.

[25] See R. Friggeri in Piranomonte 2002, 26–8; the English translation is by Wiseman 2006, 51. Preliminary versions of the texts may be found in Piranomonte 2001, 60f nos. 1–3. One of the senarii (l. 3) can only be made to have six feet if CAI is spelled out and both elisions are ignored.

Nymphis sacratis ‖ *Suetonius Germanus cum* | *Licinia coniuge* | *Annae Perennae votum* | *quod susceperant si se victo* | *res statuerent, aram mar* | *moream se posituros (esse) denuo* | *victores facti votum me* | *riti solvimus.* | *Ded(icata) non(is) Apr(ilibus), Silvano et Augurino* | *cos.*

To the consecrated nymphs. ‖ Suetonius Germanus with his wife Licinia, now once again made victors, deservedly pay the vow that they had undertaken to Anna Perenna, that, if they established themselves as victors, they would erect a marble altar. Dedicated 5th April (156 CE).[26]

The paired text on the second base (*AE* 2003: 253) seems explicitly to name the nymphs as as those 'of' Anna Perenna, that is, her attendants:

C. Suetonius Germ[anu]s | *Nymphis sacra[tis]* | *Annae Perennae d(ono) d(edit).*[27]

One hypothesis based on Ovid's account might be that the allusion is to a competition to see who could drink the most cups of wine. That the consumption of wine played a role at the shrine is suggested by the discovery of two miniature *kyathoi* (wine ladles) at the mouth of the spring, which might be connected with libations and so merry-making.[28] But Eutychides' iambic senarii (the metre of comedy) and the joint vow by Germanus and his wife Licinia surely render it more likely that the victory was in one of the competitions in singing, mime and poetry-recitation that were held on the Ides. Friggeri and Wiseman link the performances to the dramatisations of cult-myth that were a common feature of Roman *ludi publici*; the accounts of Ovid and Silius Italicus imply a drama of "wandering, search, epiphany" in the cult of Anna Perenna (2006, 57). I do not think we necessarily need follow them in this suggestion, but there can be little doubt that the mid-second century festival was more highly organized, and perhaps more formal, than the popular one described by Ovid around 8 CE (granted that a poet such as Ovid is not in any sense a neutral reporter). Probably, the loss of importance of the archaic cult could

[26] Friggeri ibid. 29–32.

[27] My text here, as in Piranomonte 2001, 60f., differs slightly from that given by Friggeri and *AE* (2006, 51), both of whom omit Germanus' praenomen. Wiseman 2006, 51 n. 2 admits the possibility of two alternative translations, 1) assuming the ellipse of *et* between *sacratis* and *Annae*, so that the latter would be dative not genitive, and the votive made to her and the nymphs jointly; 2) understanding *sacratis* as governing *Annae Perennae*, so that the nymphs would be 'consecrated to Anna Perenna'.

[28] For the *kyatho*i, see Piranomonte and Ricci 2009.

have caused the shift of the celebration from the building of the Auditorium to the sole fountain of Piazza Euclide. If so, the new inscriptions help to relativise the suggestion, underscored by the concluding narrative to explain the girls' singing of naughty songs (*Fasti* 3.675–96), that the festival was entirely devoted to drunken fun.

2. *The coins*

Some 549 coins were found, almost all in the deeper strata of the cistern, attesting to the practice of throwing money into water as a sign of devotion to the resident nymph(s) or deity. The coins in the fountain are all imperial, extending from Augustus to Theodosius; there are no Republican coins. Even the imperial coins however are grouped in periods rather than being evenly distributed over the entire continuum: in the High Empire, they cluster in the reigns of Domitian and Trajan, then of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus; and finally Aurelian; in the Late Roman period, the reigns of Constantius II, Julian, Valens, Valentinian II and Theodosius, that is, the second and final thirds of IV^{P}. The fact that the series begins with Augustus helps to confirm that the fountain may have been cleaned out in the reign of Augustus.[29] The last datable coin is a bronze with the legend *Salus reipublicae* issued by the mint at Rome between 388 and 393 CE.[30] One possibility is that the shrine was closed in accordance with Theodosius' edicts of 16 June 391 and 8 Nov. 392 CE obliging the citizens of the Empire to abandon the pagan cults.[31] It must however be remembered that this was also the period of the Gothic raids, and of marked, if temporary, population shrinkage.[32]

---

[29] I have already pointed out that there were traces of older walls in *opus reticulatum* abutting the fountain that had unfortunately been destroyed by the building works. This however only provides a *terminus post-quem* in I^{a}.

[30] This is a common coin, found in many hoards in the western Empire, cf. *RIC* 9 (1933) p. 133f.; in the East, for example at Alexandria, it continued to be issued until 395.

[31] *CTh*. 16.10.11 and 12; cf. F. Catalli, L'offerta di moneta nei santuari e le monete del lacus di Anna Perenna, in Piranomonte 2002, 34–37. However even Theodosius II was still complaining that the stringent laws had had little evident effect (*Nov. Theod*. 3.8)

[32] Alaric's forces besieged Rome for 18 months from early 409-summer 410. His army was joined by numerous barbarian slaves, perhaps the remnants of Radagaisus' army defeated in Italy by Stilicho in 405/6: P. Heather, *The Goths* (London 1996) 147–49. The shrine of Anna Perenna lay around 1 Roman mile north of the Aurelian Wall. Many of the inhabitants left Rome during this period, but seem to have returned

3. *The oil lamps*

The cistern contained 74 well-preserved oil lamps. As many as 54 of these had never been lit, against eighteen that had been used at least once.[33] Typologically, forty-eight can be classified as Warzenlampen, usually dated IV^{p}–early V^{p} (Pl. 8).[34] Four others are so-called catacomb lamps datable to V^{p}.[35] This association between oil lamps and a water-source finds parallels in the Greek world, where Roman and Late-Roman lamps have often been found in caves dedicated to nymphs in Greece and the northern Balkans (especially in Pontic Thrace and modern Bulgaria).[36] A deposit of about 4000 lamps, mainly Christian or 'Christian', was found in the 'Fountain of the Lamps' in the Gymnasium area at Corinth in 1968–1969.[37] But there are earlier parallels from Rome itself, where numerous lamps have been found in the Tiber, in the vicinity of the Tiber Island and the *pons Aemilius*.[38] The tens of thousands of votive-lamps known from the Greek world (including Southern Italy) make perfectly clear that the lamps in our cistern were mainly votive offerings to Anna and the Nymphs.[39] However, six of them contained *defixiones*, so these at least were not ordinary but magical offerings.

---

relatively quickly (Olympiodorus frg. 25). In 419 CE 120,000 families still received meat-rations (*CTh* 14.4.10).

[33] Piranomonte 2005, 96f.

[34] Dressel Type 30 = Bailey R = Provoost 4.

[35] = Bailey Type U.

[36] See Larsen 2001, 231, 235, 240; Bulgaria:175f. The traditional belief that these late lamps are 'Christian' has been criticised by J.M. Wickens, 'The Archaeology and History of Cave-use in Attica, Greece, from Prehistoric through Roman Times' (unpubl. Ph.D. Diss. Indiana), cited by Larsen 2001, 231.

[37] J. Wiseman, Excavations in Corinth: The Gymnasium Area 1967–68, *Hesperia* 38 (1969) 64–106; idem, The Fountain of the Lamps, *Archaeology* 23 (1970) 130–37.

[38] J. Le Gall, *Recherches sur le culte du Tibre* (Rome and Paris 1953) 73. As in the case at the shrine of Anna Perenna, many of these had never been lit.

[39] For the massive finds of lamps as dedications in Greek cult during the Classical and Hellenistic period, especially in the context of shrines of Demeter and Persephone (though not invariably: some such temples have no lamps at all), in Attica and other parts of mainland Greece, in S. Italy and Sicily, at Cnidus, Halicarnassus, Troy and Cyrene, see E. Parisinou, *The Light of the Gods: The Role of Light in Archaic and Classical Greek Cult* (London 2000) 136–45; a sample in L. Palaiokrassa, s.v. Beleuchtungsgeräte: Lampen, in *ThesCRA* 5 (2005) 365–67 with the relevant references.

4. *Pine-cones and egg shells*

Seven pine-cones and a number of fragmentary egg-shells were also found in the cistern. The Istituto Centrale del Restauro has proved there were no pine-trees growing nearby or in the *nemus*. We may therefore infer that the cones were thrown into the cistern as simple gifts or for good luck. Eggs too were associated with fertility.[40]

5. *The* caccabus

Among the objects found in the cistern was a flat-bottomed, ribbed cauldron, 25 cm in diameter, made of copper-alloy, with a handle of twisted iron wire simply pushed through holes in the lip. It bears marks of fire on the bottom surface, so had evidently been used for some kind of cooking, or preparing recipes with herbs (like the Nymphs of Nitrodi on Ischia) presumably during sacrifices at the shrine.[41]

6. *Finds that can be associated with magical practice*

In view of the differences between them in date, orthography and language-use, it is clear that the remaining items recovered from the cistern, that is the *defixiones* and the 18 cylindrical containers, cannot all be associated with the activities of a single professional practitioner in the mid-late IV^{p}. Moreover, among the lamps found, six contained small, carefully-rolled *defixiones* that had been fitted into their nozzles, which is clearly a quite different strategy of deposition, one much more in keeping with the traditional offerings in the cistern (two other lamps contained a coin).[42] Nevertheless, the originality of

---

[40] For the reconstruction of the sacred wood of Anna Perenna see A. Altieri and G. Galotta, I macroresti vegetali: fisionomia di un paesaggio e presenza umana, in Piranomonte 2002, 60–69.

[41] A copper-alloy cauldron, likewise with an iron handle, was found at the bottom of the eastern well (Well 2) at Cheapside London (I–II^{p}): I. Blair et al., Wells and Bucket-chains: Unforeseen Elements of Water-supply in Early Roman London, *Britannia* 37 (2006) 1–52 at 24 with fig. 24 (p. 25). In northern Europe, complete and undamaged vessels are found in wells, probably as offerings.

[42] Using the rolled *defixiones* as 'wicks' figures the intended transmission of the curse to the Nymphs, the flame being an obvious metonym for mediation between worlds. See also A. Mastrocinque, Late-antique Lamps with *defixiones*, *GRBS* 47 (2007) 87–99.

the idea of using sealed containers, the recurrence of certain motifs (particularly the cock-deity, see below) and the choice of a single site for their deposition, suggest that the 18 containers at any rate are the work of one practitioner at that period.

6.1. *The* defixiones

Apart from the *defixiones* in the lamps, however, we found sixteen others scattered in the basin. The total of new texts therefore is twenty-two; of these twenty are made of lead-sheet (four are fragmentary) and two of pure hammered copper. According to Prof. Blänsdorf, the Latin texts are to be dated to the mid-late IV^{p}, though one at least appears to be dated to II–III^{p}; at any rate they seem to be somewhat earlier than the Porta S. Sebastiano deposit. However the two series are faintly connected, since both Seth and the black Bull of Heliopolis, Mnevis, seem to be invoked at both sites, albeit only once at the fountain of Anna Perenna.[43] This implies that, with the increasingly dominant public presence of Christianity in Rome, the cistern's traditional role as a votive site, attested by the earlier coins and the II–III^{p} text, was intensified; Christian identification of pagan divinities as 'demons' made it seem plausible to treat the Nymphs as somehow 'underground' and therefore especially competent in relation to malign magic.[44] For detailed information on the texts mainly in Latin, and their dating, I can refer to Prof. Blänsdorf's article immediately following.

6.2. *The containers and the figurines*

The most remarkable find in the cistern however was the 18 lead and 3 terracotta containers with lead lids. The former were made of lead-sheet of varying thickness. All were hermetically sealed, in some cases

---

Lamps are elsewhere found in the contexts of amatory, and divinatory magic, e.g. Apuleius, *Met.* 2.11 (with 2.13; the lamp in 3.21 is irrelevant here).

[43] See Blänsdorf no. 3 (pp. 218, 232 below). Although many of Wünsch's texts do illustrate Seth as a horse-headed deity, the name 'Sethian' is more or less completely unfounded, being based on Wünsch's mistaken idea that the Porta S. Sebastiano texts were 'Gnostic' (Wünsch 1898, 74; 95f.); if anything, they should be known as 'Osirian'; cf. Mastrocinque 2005, 49–51.

[44] The continued offering of Warzenlampen, however, suggests that this negative use was fairly short-lived.

with a special sealing material, or by compressing the cylinder-wall against the rim of the lid, so that they could not be opened and the contents removed. All the metal containers consisted in fact of three cylinders placed one inside the other, but constructed in different ways: sometimes the smallest was dropped into the middle-sized one, which was in turn dropped into the largest one (like Russian dolls), all with the mouth uppermost, and a single lid provided for all three (Pl. 9). Alternatively, the innermost container might have its own lid (Pl. 10); or be closed off simply by being turned upside down. I hardly need remind the reader of the special quality of the number three, since it appears so frequently in folk-magic.[45] The forensic technicians who were asked to analyze the fingerprints preserved on the resins used to seal one of the containers inclined to think they were a woman's prints on grounds of their small size. However, before we jump to the conclusion that it was a professional sorceress who performed her magic by our fountain at Piazza Euclide (cf. Faraone 2003), we should remember not only that several different hands wrote the Latin *defixiones* that have up to now been deciphered but also that they are written in different forms of Latin, some close to Classical, others heavily marked by Vulgar and late forms, implying that they were written, as we might expect, by people of different levels of education. Taken together, the finds suggest that some individuals opted for what was, over a period, acknowledged to be the most elaborate, expensive and effective means of cursing a target (or requesting aid/blessing), namely the triple canister; whereas others chose the cheaper vehicle of the lamp with (a) leaden wick(s); and still others did not record their wishes in writing at all. On the other hand, although most of the texts are in Latin, many do use *charakteres*, albeit unsophisticated ones, and drawings of *daemones*, all of which seems to indicate a certain level of professional expertise—though much lower than that displayed by the author(s) of the Porta S. Sebastiano texts. At any rate, it seems quite clear that there was a single 'major' practitioner at work.

Six of the 18 canisters contain crude poppets (figurines) made of organic material, wax, flour, sugars, herbs and liquid substances such

[45] E.g. E. Tavenner, Three as a Magic Number in Latin Literature, *TAPhA* 47 (1916) 117–43; R. Mehrlein, s.v. Drei, *RfAC* 4 (1959) cols. 269–310 at 291–94; see also Fernández Nieto in this volume, p. 564 n. 35.

as milk.[46] They are of varying types and sophistication, but in most cases the head and shoulders are modelled and the rest of the body tapers away into a sort of tail (Pl. 11). Numerous ancient poppets in lead and other metals, such as copper-alloy and bronze, and in clay or mud, baked or unbaked, have survived in different contexts; late-antique poppets made of wax have been found in Egypt, and there is no doubt that they were very common, perhaps the commonest type.[47] Such poppets had a variety of functions. As is well known, Plato assumes that they could be left in 'significant' places such as doorways, crossroads or tombs to serve as warnings to individuals that someone was out to attack them (*Laws* 9, 933b2f.). Faraone argued that they were mainly used to disable opponents (temporarily) in legal disputes. Other sources refer to their use in 'love magic' to represent the target person(s) to be affected by the spell.[48] None of the Latin texts that have been deciphered are clearly amatory; many are certainly malign. In my view, the containers served in the latter cases deictically to 'isolate' the target, to cancel his social and moral integrity, to express the fact that he has been 'caught' by magical attack and is never to escape—the tossing of the sealed canister into the cistern makes clear that, just as it can never be recovered, so the target is never to be free. A further interesting feature of the organic poppets is that, as has been revealed by X-rays, all of them were formed around slivers of (animal-) bone. In two cases, the bones have fallen out, thus revealing that they too were inscribed.[49] One of the erotic recipes in *PGrMag* calls for the

---

[46] The analyses were performed by the Instituto Centrale del Restauro.

[47] See Faraone 1991, 200–05 (Appendix), listing 38 cases/groups, a figure now out of date thanks to the finds at Mainz and in the Fountain; 1992; Ogden 1999, 71–79.

[48] E.g. Vergil, *Ecl.* 8.80f.; Horace, *Sat.* 1.8.30–33; *PGrMag* IV 297–334 with *SupplMag* nos. 46–51. I hardly need to refer to the well-known poppet from Antinoopolis now in the Louvre, stuck with thirteen pins: P. du Bourguet, Ensemble magique de la période romaine en Égypte, *Revue du Louvre* 25 (1975) 255–7; idem, Une ancêtre des figurines d'envoûtement percées d'aiguilles, avec ses compléments magiques, au Musée du Louvre, *Livre du centenaire 1880–1980 de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire*. BIFAO 104 (Cairo 1980) 225–38; cf. Faraone 1991, 204 no. 27; Ogden 1999, fig. 4. Faraone mentions a further two very similar poppets, one of baked clay, the other of wax, of unknown provenance but certainly Egyptian, offered on the antiquities market in 1987.

[49] The image will not reproduce adequately in half-tone, and has had to be omitted. A wax poppet (inv. no. EA 37918) now in the British Museum has been moulded around a rolled-up piece of papyrus, carrying the curse: Raven 1983, 12; Ogden 1999, fig. 5.

practitioner to manufacture a model of a dog (i.e. Anubis/'Cerberus') out of wax and other substances, and to insert a sliver of bone from the skull of an executed criminal into its mouth.[50] The dog is then able to bark, and so act as a means of erotic divination. Like the Greek elements of these *defixiones*, and the images they contain, this detail invites speculation about the modes of distribution of such relatively learned and inventive magical practice.

6.3. *Symbolic resourcefulness*

To complete this brief report, I propose to discuss the construction and design of one or two of the containers in more detail. The obvious parallel is with the now well-known late V^{a}/early IV^{a} poppets found in the 1950s by J. Trumpf and Barbara Schlörb-Vierneisel in tombs in the Kerameikos at Athens.[51] These were of lead, and placed in small rounded lidded caskets, also made of lead. Both components were inscribed. The idea of enclosing poppets in containers thus occurred, so far as we know, spontaneously both in late fifth-century BCE Athens and in fourth-century CE Rome. In keeping with the technical progress over the intervening seven and a half centuries, however, the latter are far more sophisticated constructions. Likewise considerable ingenuity has gone into the selection of symbolically-effective actions that contributed to the ritual 'catching' of the target.

6.3.1. I have already referred to the triple container we identify as inv. 475549 (Pl. 10), made of three cylinders hermetically sealed with natural resins. The innermost of these contained a very interesting poppet, made of organic matter, which was partly enclosed by a lead-sheet with two nails driven through it at the level of the poppet's midriff and lower legs (Pl. 12). This sheet is inscribed with Greek letters and *charakteres*, including a Θ (perhaps the sign for 'deceased'), and a human mask with one of the nails driven through it (Pl. 13). The most striking and original feature of the ensemble, however, is the snake that

[50] *PGrMag* IV.1873–1901 with Raven 1983, 17. The bone belongs of course to a member of the class 'restless dead'.

[51] J. Trumpf, Fluchtafel und Rachepuppe, *MDAI(A)* 73 (1958 [1962]) 94–102; B. Schlörb-Vierneisel, Eridanos-Nekropole, *MDAI(A)* 81 (1966) 4–111, Beil. 51.1; 71.1–2; Faraone 1991, 201 no. 6; for images of them, see conveniently Gager, *CT* 17 fig. 3; 128 fig. 17.

emerges from beneath the lead carapace and is about to bury its fangs into the victim's face. As Blänsdorf points out in another connection, snakes are associated with Osiris and the Underworld, but here no doubt it simply images the idea of a horrible and painful death.[52]

The symbolism of this ensemble thus makes use of one of the most familiar features of magical texts, repetition as a figure of insistence. In other words, it says the same thing again and again and again. The poppet is enclosed in a lead tablet, it has been penetrated by two nails, a face presumably denoting the target has been disfigured, it bears the sign of death (if that is what the Θ signifies), it has been 'caught' by the *charakteres*, and confined in a small container. This in turn has been sealed with resin, engraved with a curse, and placed first into one, then into another larger cylinder, which were also sealed. The ensemble was then 'drowned' in the murky cistern from where it could never be recovered; subjectively even more important to the practitioner, however, was its ritual transfer to the powers of the spring.[53]

6.3.2. At least two other triple ensembles make use of the image of a cock-headed deity (with human feet), whose body bears *charakteres* or possibly a cryptic name or numbers. This seems to bear out my inference that at least one of the people who manufactured the triple ensembles in the cistern knew, or at least convinced himself that he knew, something about Graeco-Egyptian methods.

(a) Inv. no. 475558 (= Blänsdorf no. 2 below) proved to contain not a poppet but an inscribed sliver of bone and a fragment of parchment (still unread). The inner container appears to have been re-used because there is evidence of it having been inscribed at different points all over the outer surface.[54] These texts can only be read when the container is held upside-down. The most interesting image is of a crude bird or bird-man, whose body has been enlarged to carry the following letters or *charakteres* (Pl. 14):

[52] Cf. Blänsdorf on his no. 7, p. 226 below.
[53] However, the name of the target has not (yet) been read on the container.
[54] Two of the other inner containers proved to be engraved; I think this indicates that they were intended to function more or less as *defixiones*.

Line 1: I X N Π ° X
Line 2: X N K Θ Θ Θ

(b) The smallest container of inv. no. 475558 carries a very similar image, but in this case the letters or *charakteres* are more legible:

Line 1: I X N O Π
Line 2: X N K Θ
Line 3: Θ Θ

This iconography vaguely resembles that of Iao, the cock-headed, anguipede god, who normally holds a whip and a shield.[55] A similar figure elsewhere (Pl. 15) in fact holds an object in its right hand, which might represent a shield (or whip). If that is the intended reference, we would have to assume a virtually complete ignorance of (or incapacity to reproduce) the earlier standard iconography, which is perhaps not impossible. On the other hand, at least two of the demons represented as responsible for carrying off the victim in *POslo* I = *PGrMag* XXXVI have the heads of cocks—in this case the imagery must derive from the ferocity of fighting-cocks.[56] Each holds a sword in his free hand; with the other he drags the victim off. This type of Graeco-Egyptian imagery is surely more likely to lie behind the cock-deity than the Cock-headed anguipede, normally associated with protection.[57] Since the name of the victim, Leontius, is spelled out beside the god or daemon in the first ensemble (a; see Pl. 14), it is clear that he is the one who is imagined as responsible for carrying out the curse.[58]

The Greek characters ABΛΑΝΑΘΑΝΑΛΒΑ are clearly recognizable against the head of the cock-headed god or daemon in inv. no. 475539.

---

[55] For the various types, see Michel 2004, 239–49 no. 3A; cf. F. Marco Simón, Abraxas. Magia e religion en la Hispania tardoantigua, in J. Alvar, C. Blánquez and C.G. Wagner (eds.), *Héroes, semidioses y daimones*. ARYS 1 (Madrid 1992) 485–510; Á. Nagy, Puzzling out the Anguipede: Magical Gems and their Relation to Judaism, *JRA* 15 (2002) 159–172.

[56] The clearest case is *PGrMag* XXXVI 85–95 (Col. III) = *PGrMag*. vol. 2 pl III fig. 18. But the images in Col. I (ll. 10–34) and Col. X (ll. 241–55) are also beaked (ibid. figs. 14 and 17 resp.).

[57] See the similar point made by Tomlin with reference to the supposed reading 'Iau' in his commentary on Saguntum 1 (his no. 5) l. 2 (p. 266 below).

[58] There is a parallel from Hadrumetum in Proconsularis, namely a series addressed to the daemon Baitmo Arbitto, whose name is written on the figure (*DTAud* 286–91; *AE* 1911: 6): R.L. Gordon, Competence and 'Felicity Conditions' in two Sets of North African Curse-tablets (*DTAud.* nos. 275–85, 286–98), *MHNH* 5 (2005) 61–86.

This palindrome is one of the commonest *logoi* in relatively up-market magical practice.[59] But here it seems merely intended to provide an allure of technical knowledge: there are no other *nomina magica*. The palindrome may be linked to the male poppet inside the container; the poppet itself seems to be uninscribed, but the splinter of bone inside is engraved with the letters LAN. On the other hand, and more plausibly, these letters may simply refer to the target's name.

6.3.3. There are a number of *charakteres* engraved on the wall of the intermediate container of the same ensemble (inv. no. 475539). Among them is the one recently identified by Mastrocinque as the wheel of Tyche (or the year); the Greek X, an universal symbol with many magical and astrological meanings (not all of them defined); Greek K with so-called Brillen (small circles at the ends of the strokes); and some other probable Greek letters with magical significance such as E, N etc.[60] This treatment of the middle container recalls that of inv. no. 475555, which also has *charakteres* engraved on the intermediate cylinder, as well as what seems to be the word *Ablatanalba* in Roman letters (Pl. 16).[61] On the wall of the innermost container we find the cock-deity or demon once again, with the same letters on its belly,[62] and apparently drawn by the same hand as inv. no. 475558 (= Blänsdorf no. 2 below) (Pl. 17). The conception and design of all three ensembles thus seem closely linked to one another, even if they may not all be by the self-same practitioner or individual.

---

[59] Preisendanz' *Index* (*PGrMag* 3, Index VI, p. 211f.) lists 16 occurrences, plus many variants; see also Index XII, p. 243, with 10 more; add *SupplMag* nos. 9; 10; 18; 20; 21; 42; 48c; 67a; very often on amulets, e.g. *SGG* 99 n. 375; G. Bevilacqua and R. Casentino, Ablanathanalba, nuovo amuleto da Caere, in *RendPontAccad*. 72 (1999–2000) 211–19 with further refs. For speculation about its meaning (none very convincing), see W.M. Brashear, The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994), *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995) 3380–3684 at 3577; as Daniel and Maltomini remark, "no convincing explanation of its meaning has been given" (comment on *Suppl.Mag.* no. 9 ll. 1–7).

[60] Resp. *SGG* 97; 94 nn. 309–312; 91. It must be said that these claims are all highly speculative.

[61] Variants in the spelling (i.e. reception) of the palindrome are common: see *PGrMag* 3, Index VI, p. 212.

[62] I read: I X N O Π or Γ / X N K Θ / Θ Θ.

6.3.4. Finally, I want just to illustrate a suggestive detail from the most interesting, and tantalizing, of the images on the *defixiones* proper (inv. no. 475567), of which the reader will find a complete drawing in Prof. Blänsdorf's paper (Text-fig. 3, to his no. 7). The central rhombus (= symbol of vagina?) of this enigmatic design depicts a limbless, apparently female, figure wearing a crown, a mark of divinity (Pl. 18). We cannot tell who she is, but I would very much like her to be Anna Perenna herself, the titular deity of the fountain.

Conclusion

Given the lack of close comparanda, the detailed interpretation of the finds in the cistern of Anna Perenna is a work in progress for me and my colleague Blänsdorf. The matter is made more difficult by the late date of the most interesting finds, which I have briefly described in §6: by the mid-fourth century, the relatively coherent rules of composition were being flexibly reformed to generate new options and possibilities. We would very much like to be able to provide a convincing identity for the cock-deity or demon. The palindrome Ablanathanalba might conceivably point to the Anguipede, invoked together with the other *vox magica* to reinforce the curse. Again, how are we to understand the letters or *charakteres* on the deity's belly, which seem, from repeated autopsy, in all three cases to be the same? Following a suggestion by Perea Yébenes, I now incline to think they might be intended as numbers. Taken as such, the letters I X N O Π / X N K Θ Θ Θ would give a sum of 1457 (line 1: 760; line 2, 697). The occurrence of the divine name Seth and the sacred bull Mnu = Mnevis (Blänsdorf no. 3), if we accept the hypothesis, not only reveals that the Nymphs were not the sole addressees at the spring but throws up questions about the relationship between magical practice here and the later Porta S. Sebastiano texts. Prof. Blänsdorf's discovery that the names Blobes and Irilesus in his Text 7 (inv. no. 475567) are genuinely Egyptian, and genuinely connected with the subject of the curse, also seems to have implications for the 'Sethian' texts, with the startling possibility of continuing access to written Graeco-Egyptian formularies (see p. 225). We also need to do further work on the nature of the ritual(s) that was/were followed; for example, some of the poppets are inscribed all over the body (Pl. 19). What are we to make

of this practice? Might it be a creative misapprehension for malign magical ends of the "Inschriften-Figur", the inscribed deity found on magical amulets?[63]

Bibliography

Blänsdorf, J. Forthcoming. Dal segno alla scrittura. Le defixiones dalla fontana di Anna Perenna, in *Atti del Convegno "La fattura scritta", Roma, Università La Sapienza 3 febbraio 2009*.

Capanna, M.C. 2006. Il culto di Anna Perenna al I miglio, in A. Carandini with M.T. D'Alessio and H. Di Giuseppe (eds.), *La fattoria e la villa dell'Auditorium* (Rome) 65–70.

Faraone, C.A. 1991. Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of "Voodoo Dolls" in Ancient Greece, *Classical Antiquity* 10, 165–221.

——. 1992. *Talismans and Trojan Horses. Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New York and Oxford).

——. 2003. When Spells worked Magic, *Archaeology* (March–April 2003) 48–53.

——. Forthcoming. A B(l)inding Curse from the Fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome, in *Atti del Convegno "La fattura scritta", Rome; Università La Sapienza 3 febbraio 2009*.

Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D. 1991. *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York and Oxford).

Larsen, J. 2001. *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore* (New York).

Mastrocinque, A. 2005. Le *defixiones* di Porta San Sebastiano, *MHNH* 5, 50–59.

Michel, S. 2004. *Die magischen Gemmen: Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln auf geschnittenen Steinen der Antike und Neuzeit.* Studien aus dem Warburghaus 7 (Berlin).

Ogden, D. 1999. Binding-spells: Curse-tablets and Voodoo-dolls in the Greek and Roman worlds, in Ankarloo/Clark 1999, 1–90.

Piccaluga, G. (ed.) Forthcoming. *Anna Perenna ritrovata, Atti della giornata di studi, Roma, 'La Sapienza' 20 maggio 2003*.

Piranomonte, M. 2001. s.v. *Annae Perennae Nemus*, in A. La Regina (ed.), *LTUR Suburbium* 1, 59–63.

——. (ed.) 2002. *Il Santuario della musica e il bosco sacro di Anna Perenna* (Rome).

——. 2005. La fontana sacra di Anna Perenna a Piazza Euclide: tra religione e magia, in Proceedings of the Symposium 'Professional Sorcerers and their Wares in Imperial Rome: an Archaeology of Magical Practices', held at the American Academy in Rome, 12th Nov. 2004 = *MHNH* 5, 87–104.

——. 2006. Le ultime scoperte nel territorio del II Municipio, in M.A. Tomei (ed.), *Roma. Memorie dal sottosuolo. Ritrovamenti archeologici 1980/2006*, 184–211.

——. 2007. *Un paradiso ritrovato. Scavi al Villino Fassi* (Rome) 31–49.

——. Forthcoming (a). The Fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome, magical ritual connected to the water, in *Atti del Convegno " Rituelle Deponierung", Mainz, april 2008.*

[63] Cf. e.g. H. Philipp, *Mira et magica* (Mainz 1986) no. 187 (wrongly identified as a Hermes); other exx., Michel 2004, 296f. no. 29 "Inschriften-Figur", with pls. 62–64; also A.A. Barb, Three Elusive Amulets, *JWarbCourtInst* 27 (1964) 1–22 at 5f. Note also the inscribed Akephalos from *PGrMag* II 166 (pl.I fig.2) and the beaked malign daemon in *POslo* 1 = *PGrMag* XXXVI Col. I (see n. 56 above), whose torso, arms and legs are all inscribed.

——. Forthcoming (b). I contenitori di piombo della fontana di Anna Perenna e la loro valenza magica, in *Atti del Convegno "La fattura scritta"*, *Roma, Università La Sapienza 3 febbraio 2009*.

Piranomonte, M. and Ricci, G. 2009. L'edificio rustico di Viale Tiziano e la fonte di Anna Perenna. Nuovi dati per la topografia dell'area flaminia in epoca repubblicana, in V. Jolivet, C. Pavolini, M.A. Tomei, R. Volpe (eds.) *Suburbium II. Il Suburbio di Roma dalla fine dell'età monarchica alla nascita del sistema delle ville (V–II sec. a.C.)* 413–35.

Piranomonte, M. and Marco Simón, F. Forthcoming. The Daemon and the Nymph, Abraxas and Anna Perenna, *Atti del Convegno AIAC, Roma, settembre 2008*.

Raven, M.J. 1983. Wax in Egyptian magic and symbolism, *OMRL* 64, 7–47.

Wiseman, T.P. 2006. Documentation, Visualization, Imagination: the Case of Anna Perenna's Cult-Site, in L. Haselberger and J. Humphrey (eds.), *Imaging Ancient Rome: Documentation, Visualization, Imagination*. JRA Suppl. 61 (Portsmouth RI) 51–62.

Wissowa, G. 1894. s. v. Anna 3, *RE* 1, 2223–25.

——. 1912. *Religion und Kultus der Römer*[2] (Munich).

Wünsch, R. 1898. *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* (Leipzig).

CHAPTER SIX

THE TEXTS FROM THE *FONS ANNAE PERENNAE*

Jürgen Blänsdorf

Prior to 1999, our information about the cult of Anna Perenna seemed exiguous but sufficient. As Marina Piranomonte has explained in the preceding contribution to this volume, Ovid gives us a brief but vivid account of her annual festival then held by the river Tiber in the Campus Martius.[1] He offers two different aetiologies: how Anna, the sister of Dido, became one of the nymphs of the river Numicius; and the rather frivolous tale of Anna of Bovillae.[2] A little further information is offered by other authors.[3] None of these texts, however, gave us any clue to the religious basis of the cult of the nymphs or of how the cult developed over time. The discovery of the nymphaeum or 'fountain' of Anna Perenna beneath Piazza Euclide in the Parioli district of modern Rome has now shown that the spring was in use even before the Republican period (ceramic evidence), and continued to be used until V^{P}, while on present evidence the cult of Anna Perenna was celebrated there for several centuries, with some apparent interruptions, until the late IV^{P}.[4] During the later imperial period the fountain was also used as a place to perform, or complete, magic rituals, in this case the binding of named individuals by means of ritual acts (sacrifices) and written curses on lead, the wide-spread technique of *defixiones*.

In view of Piranomonte's presentation of the archaeology of the site and the finds in the cistern, my task here is simply to present the readings of the Latin texts that I have managed to arrive at so far, together

---

[1] Ovid, *Fasti* 3.523–542. For a survey of the literary tradition and the religious interpretations, see F. Bömer (ed., comm.), *P. Ovidius Naso. Die Fasten* (Heidelberg 1958) 179–92.

[2] *Fasti* 3.543–660, repeated by Silius Italicus, *Pun*. 8.49–20; Anna of Bovillae: *Fasti* 661–74.

[3] Varro, *Menipp*. fr. 506, Martial 4.64.16, Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.12.6.

[4] Cf. M. Piranomonte and G. Ricci, L'edificio rustico di Viale Tiziano e la fonte di Anna Perenna. Nuovi dati per la topografia dell'area flaminia in epoca repubblicana, in *Atti del Convegno Suburbium II*, École française de Rome, febbraio 2005 (forthcoming).

with a short commentary on each. In all, the cistern yielded twenty-one texts on metal-sheet, including fourteen on lead and two on copper.[5] Like those found at Aquae Sulis/Bath in Britain, they had been deposited in the water together with other offerings during or after the ritual.[6] In November 2004, on the occasion of a congress on "Professional Sorcerers and their Wares in Imperial Rome: An Archaeology of Magical Practices" organised in Rome by Christopher Faraone, Marina Piranomonte, who had already managed to read two, offered me the chance of studying the remaining Latin texts.[7] In this contribution, I publish her two readings and my readings of six further texts, mainly in Latin. The rest are still in the process of being unfolded or cleaned in order to be made legible.

The form, language and contents of the texts vary, but there is insufficient information to enable us to construct a relative chronology.[8] Nineteen of the inscriptions are written exclusively in Latin; two offer a curious mixture of Latin and Greek. Seven are accompanied by drawings and magical letters (*charakteres*). Two of the texts are of special interest because they refer explicitly to the sacred place or its nymphs.

In keeping with R.S.O. Tomlin's practice in *TabSulis*, it has seemed advisable to present the texts of the eight new documents in the Appendix, each with a brief technical commentary. In the main part of my contribution, I offer some general remarks on each in the order in which they are presented in the Appendix. It is important to remember that the order in which the texts are arranged is not by date but proceeds from the most elementary type to the most complex.[9]

1. Let us begin with the simplest form of *defixio*, by name alone. The obverse of Text no. 1 (inv. no. 475561) shows the name *Antonius* writ-

---

[5] Some of the containers that have not yet been opened may carry inscriptions. I have received a photo of a circular inscription written on the bottom of the innermost container of one of the triple-ensembles (inv.-nr. 475539), mentioning the name Quirinus Pistor. Much of the lettering is unfortunately very faint.

[6] M. Henig et al. in B Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, 2: The Finds from the Sacred Spring*. Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Monograph no. 16 (Oxford 1988) 5–53 at 5; Tomlin 1988, 102f.

[7] The proceedings of the conference were published in *MHNH* 5 (2005) 7–123.

[8] The letter-forms are fairly similar to those of the Abinnaeus-archive dated 344 CE; cf. Seider 1972–81, 1: nos. 49–52. Those of V^p are significantly different.

[9] To decipher many of the texts, I used a specially-focused light and the binocular microscope of the laboratory of the Museo Nazionale Romano.

ten in neat majuscule letters. Beneath it is a roughly-drawn figure with the name *Antonius* written on the body and the two first syllables, AN/TO, between its legs.[10] The drawing obviously represents the target. Most of the late-antique *defixiones* from the Porta S. Sebastiano edited by Richard Wünsch in 1898 have drawings of the targets identified by their *agnomina* or sobriquets.[11] The name *Antonius* recurs on the verso in jumbled form. The writer may have been barely literate, first practising the name on one side, and then turning the tablet over to write it out again together with the drawing. Even so, he evidently knew something of the appropriate procedures to follow and the type of drawing required.

2. The second text (inv. no. 475558), as Piranomonte has stated (p. 209 above), was inscribed on one of the small lead containers, and can only be read when it is placed upside-down—perhaps one of the many symbols of the perverted world of malign magic. In this case, the name *Le/ont/ius* is written in majuscule immediately beside a daemon with a bird's head, cock's comb and arms (the one on the spectator's right might also be a cock's tail: see Plate 14).[12] On other containers, the cock apparently represent the god Iao/Abrasax, invoked as Ablanathanalba (see following note). On its body are eleven majuscule letters that cannot be interpreted as a word (see p. 209 above). So they are obviously *charakteres*. To the left of this group are some more traces of letters, among which IVS can be made out. I take it they are trial versions rather than evidence for re-use of the container. Although there is no explicit curse-text here, the writer's intention seems clear enough: Leontius is to be taken by the daemon, in other words, he is to die.

In Text 1, therefore, the drawing denotes the target, in Text 2, the daemon invoked. It is thus clear that figures depicted on these *defixiones* may indicate either possibility. In the following examples, however, the relation of text and image is more difficult to interpret.

---

[10] See the drawing in Piranomonte 2005, 98 fig. 12.

[11] Wünsch 1898, with the remarks of Preisendanz 1926, 17ff. and the discussion by Mastrocinque 2005.

[12] Above the name Leontius is an unfinished bird's head; the left arm of the daemon may also have been inserted between this and the name Leontius.

3. Inv. no. 475549 is very well preserved because it was the innermost of three containers. The surface of the metal is smooth and polished. A male figure has been incised on the lower wall, wearing what looks like a helmet or crown (Plate 20). A series of curved lines on his body may perhaps be interpreted as the circlets of a cuirass (the figure was immediately dubbed "il gladiatore") or perhaps a charioteer. There are texts in late-antique minuscule on either side. In the first line to the left, the letters SETE are clearly visible. I interpret this as the name of the Egyptian god Seth, in the vocative. Below it we read MNU, an approximation to one of the ritual names of the deceased Mnevis-bull, identified with Osiris. Below that again we find the late minuscule form of the letter S—which is the same in the Latin and the Greek scripts of this period—and below it an uncertain letter. I think these are to be taken together and interpreted as a Greek abbreviation of *Seth* (ΣΗΘ), spelled without the vowel and serving to reinforce or specify the Latin. As many of the Roman and North-African *defixiones* show, magical practitioners were often bilingual in Roman times. Since the name *Seth* is written twice, once in the vocative, I suppose the figure represents this god, not his victim. If I am right, it is notable that a god not worshipped in the sanctuary of Anna Perenna could be invoked there. That implies that the local deity had nothing against a demand for help to another (foreign) god; it was the sacred site itself that granted the requisite ritual efficacy.[13]

The two lines on the right-hand side of the helmeted figure are to be read as DECEN/TIAS. This can be interpreted in at least three ways: 1) as the acc. pl. of a feminine noun *decentia* meaning 'what is appropriate'. However it is unclear how we should then understand the reference: is it to the fact that the *defixio* has been properly performed by its author? or to the appropriate punishment of the target, whose name is anyway missing?; and why the accusative? 2) We might read *decent ias (= eas)*. That would imply that Seth and another person—why not Mnu?—are appropriate to some female persons; 3) *Decentia* might be a well-attested woman's name. But again, why is it in the acc. plur.?[14]

Although Seth seems to be invoked in this text, I think it unlikely that we should take it as belonging directly to the Porta S. Sebastiano

[13] In 2008, I was able to read the name *Abrax[as]* followed by *Abl[lanathanalba?]* on another of these texts (inv. no. 475564).

[14] The name Decentia has now been deciphered on inv. no. 475539 (see commentary).

group (which Wünsch wrongly dubbed 'Sethian' curses, Sethianische Verfluchungen). It is clearly different from these in its extreme brevity; the lack of long repeated formulae; the absence of *nomina magica*, and perhaps of the name of the target. I have even found myself wondering whether an oral curse may not have been substituted in this case for a written one; or even whether it might not be a *defixio* at all but a request for something positive, a victory for instance. However, Seth is only invoked in such texts in a malign context. Moreover the entire context, the triple container, the poppet it contained, and the sliver of bone bearing letters or signs now too faint to be read, tends to confirm the assumption that the intention was to harm or kill someone.

4. The fourth text too (inv. no. 475721) does not quite fit into the usual type of Roman *defixiones*, since it apparently combines a list with an injunction or invocation. It was written with a very sharp stylus on very thin lead sheet in an unusually tall and slim majuscule script up to 8mm high.[15] The right-hand side of the tablet is broken off, but the original overall dimensions can be inferred from the missing four letters of the name *Fortun[atus*. It seems to begin with a list of names of the targets in the nominative. The first line is difficult, because after initial NE there is a magic symbol probably hiding an O; the rest seems to read Φ*ILAṂ* (or *Ṇ*). However no such name is attested. Nevertheless the end of the line must conceal a name ending in *-us*, since VS appears at the beginning of l. 2. Following on from this, l. 3 clearly reads ET SEBERUS, with the change from *v* to *b* that is typical of late Latin. When I studied the text at Rome, I read in l. 3 LOCVS SAN(*ctus*), which I took to refer to the sanctuary and perhaps to the ritual act performed there. But the drawing subsequently made by D. Rosati has LOCUIS CAN[…]. *Locuis* could be a Vulgar form of *loqui*; but CAN[seems impossible. Ll. 5f. remain unintelligible. Conjectures would be welcome.

5. The fifth text (inv. no. 475722) refers more certainly to the sanctuary. The letters are 4–6 mm high and resemble the uncial alphabet of Late Antiquity. They are easy to read, but the fragments are too small to permit a reliable estimate of the overall dimensions of the tablet and

[15] As regards the orthography, the inscription is certainly late-antique, but the form of the letters would suggest a fairly early date within that period.

the inscribed area. I can make no sense of ll. 1 and 2. In the remainder, there is no evident indication of malign intention, and ROGAT in l. 3 might indicate a prayer. In ll. 3–4 the request or demand is expressed in the form of a comparative clause: *ut ille te[---]/ rogat*, but the grammatical object is missing.

At the beginning of l. 5, XOREAM might be read as *uxor eam* or as the adjective *uxoream*. So the text may refer to a husband talking about what his wife has done to another female person, or, if we suppose *uxoream rem*, saying something about her affairs (or a lawsuit). In l. 6 the best conjecture for FITEATUR is *[con]fiteatur*. In the remainder of l. 6, FEM must represent some form of *femina*, no doubt referring to one of the women just mentioned—his wife or the other person.

At the beginning of l. 7, my initial reading was NTAI, which I guessed might be part of a Greek verb such as τιμωροῦνται. Danilo Rosati's drawing however shows the reading is in fact *-ntas*. If taken as a noun, we could conjecture *voluntas* or, less probably, *iuventas*. But in *defixiones* the word *voluntas* always refers to the principal's demands, not a god's. There seems to be no suitable adjective to fit the context;[16] and anyway the order adj. + noun is not usual in later Latin. The most plausible conjecture is thus a form of one of the lexical cluster *cantare, decantare, excantare* or *occentare* (this latter being the oldest term for a magical charm: Cicero, *De rep*. 4.12). The sense may be that a third party (or the target) had invoked the nymphs of the fountain, since the following word NIMFA clearly refer to them. These nymphs are apparently invoked again in l. 8, RO[GO] VO[S, and it seems probable that the principal is directing a prayer to the nymphs of the sanctuary, analogous to the inscriptions on the votive altar and bases built into the revetment of the trough, which thank Anna and her nymphs for help vouchsafed (see p. 199 above). Several of the Porta S. Sebastiano texts invoke the nymphs besides Seth, Osiris and other gods, but here they are invoked as the inhabitants of the sanctuary of Anna Perenna.[17]

The letter L in the last line (l. 9) shows that it is in Latin. It is unclear how the previous five letters VO/BON[are to be construed. I think *bon[* might be an invocation of a good deity; the same sequence of letters is to be found in Text 8, l. 4: *bona*, but probably with a different significance.

---

[16] I have considered *quintas, quingentas, tantas, attentas, contentas, cruentas, remulentas, vinolentas*. Amina Kropp convincingly suggests *[sa]n(c)tas*.

[17] See the citations in Piranomonte above (p. 198 n. 21).

6. This item concerns the three tiny sheets of lead (inv. no. 475565), of irregular shape, but complete, which were found in a lamp (inv. no. 445018). As Piranomonte emphasises (p. 202), oil-lamps are a very common type of votive gift. The deposition of the tablets in a lamp was therefore certainly part of an occasional magic ritual.

Although the letters are very difficult to read because of the heavy corrosion of the surface, the texts clearly belong to a well-known type of Roman *defixio*. Each sheet is inscribed on both sides and carries three or four lines of late Roman cursive letters and *charakteres*—mostly N and X—in the form of 'ring-letters' (Ringbuchstaben), and N and ω with lines above it, mostly repeated four times. Compared with the Porta S. Sebastiano texts, the design is rather poor. One line is repeated with minor variations in two of the texts: *Victor quem peperit Pria[…]alluia* and *Victor quem peperit Pell[.]ta.* As is well known, many of the *defixiones* of imperial date from Egypt, Africa Proconsularis and Byzacena, and the later examples from Rome itself, identify the target by means of his personal name and that of his mother.[18]

The various letters that can be read on the reverse make no sense. I have not yet been able to decipher the third tablet because of the extensive corrosion of the surface; it is possible that the grounds for the curse, which is always given in the Porta S. Sebastiano texts, may have appeared there.

7. In many ways no. 7 (inv. no. 475567) is the most interesting of these texts: it is complete, has the most sophisticated drawing, the longest text, the most cruel punishment; and explicitly refers to the Nymphs of the sanctuary. Let us begin with the drawing (Text-fig. 3).

A rough lateral frame is provided by four snake-like animals, joined in the middle and facing towards the centre. All have prominent eyes. The animals pointing upwards are opening their mouths or beaks; the one at top left has a sort of mane or crest, and *charakteres* on the 'neck'. Their lower ends do not taper off; they seem to be fantastic creatures modelled on birds or snakes. The two lower animals, likewise symmetrically arranged, are inverted, with their heads downwards. Their tails taper off to meet the upper pair. The bands are presumably scales, so they must represent snakes.

[18] The practice is also standard in *PGrMag*. The best brief discussion of the phenomenon is J.B. Curbera, Maternal Lineage in Greek Magical Texts, in *WAM* 195–204; see also the references given in the commentary below.

Fig. 3. Drawing of *defixio* with snakes (inv. no. SAR 475567). Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme, Dipartimento Epigrafico. Showcase of the Fountain of Anna Perenna.

The field so created is further delineated by two vertical lines drawn from the mouths of the upper pair to those of the lower one. In the midst of the rectangle so created is a lozenge or rhombus containing a limbless, thick necked figure with a roughly 'cello-shaped body. The face, with large, round eyes, is facing forward; there are four strokes on top, perhaps representing a crown. The lozenge seems to be connected to the vertical lines left and right by small arrows of different types (but see below). In the fields created between the animals and the vertical lines are a number of designs, which I try to explain below. The lowest register of the drawing, as it were the exergue, contains seven large ring-letters; at the top, there are another five just left of centre.

The text itself was incised after the drawing had been finished—the letters overlap in one or two places. It consists of two longish lines above the upper row of *charakteres*, seven rather cramped lines to their right, and below; and a further seven lines in the space between the lower point of the rhombus and the 'exergue', framed by the two vertical lines. Altogether, then, there are sixteen lines of intelligible text. In addition, there is a label just by each of the upper creatures, and what seems to be a daemonic name beside the lower ones. The latter are intelligible enough; the upper words, the labels, are, as we shall see, more unusual.

The text is written in skilled, almost elegant, minuscule cursive, but is nevertheless very difficult to read because the average letter-height is only 1mm. Moreover, some letters are ligatured, others bear signs of having been written rapidly: for example, the two strokes of the cursive *a* are separated from each other by nearly 1mm.[19]

The text begins by invoking holy and sacred female entities (*sacras santas*), evidently the Nymphs of Anna Perenna, since they are referred to in much the same way in the three votive monuments set into the revetment of the trough.[20] In addition, *angili* are cited in the dative or ablative case; they are qualified as *supteri*, those 'below'. These angels are of course not the Christian type but divine intermediaries between the gods and human beings. Such daemonic messengers, and the Nymphs, are invoked in several of the Porta S. Sebastiano texts (see commentary), though without any special reference to a river or a well. We may therefore conclude that nymphs might be thought of as belonging to the infernal world. In our text however they are not invoked as assistants of Seth, but as the main deities of the cult of the fountain of Anna Perenna, and there is no explicit reference to their belonging to the underworld.[21]

The author of the text uses the formal expression *rogo et peto virtutem vestram*, solemnly requesting that their 'great virtue' utterly remove the sight of a man named Sura, 'the eyes, the right one and the left one', as he meticulously puts it, like a Roman lawyer. Eyes are cursed in a number of other Latin *defixiones*, but only as one item in a long list of parts of the body being cursed. This seems to be the only

[19] I would again like to express my gratitude to P.-Y. Lambert for valuable discussion of the readings and their interpretation.

[20] *AE* 2003: 251: *sacratis nymphis* and then *sanctas* (l. 5); *AE* 2003: 252 and 253: *nymphis sacratis*. For the texts, see p. 199f. above.

[21] Cf. Piranomonte, p. 197f. above.

case of a curse directed solely against the eyes. The reason for this choice becomes clear in the second part of the text.

Sura is a fairly common cognomen in the late Republic and the Empire. A target's parentage is often abused; here we find the insulting formula, *nat(us) maledicta modo <est> de vulva*, "who was born from an accursed vulva". The first section ends with an insistent repetition of the demand: *Fiat; rogo et peto magnam virtutem vestra(m)*, "Let it so be—I require and request it by your great virtue".

The remaining section beneath the lozenge restates the whole curse with slight variations, adding an important item of information: *tollite oculus (= oculos) dextru sinesteru, ne possit durare virtus arbitri Surae, qui natus est de vulva maledicta.* During the discussion of my presentation at the conference, David Jordan proposed to take *virtus* with *arbitri(i)*, comparing γνώμη, ἐπιστήμη, λογισμός in Greek *defixiones*.[22] However, as far as I know, the phrase ἀρετὴ γνώμης is just as unparalleled as *virtus arbitrii*, so I prefer to take *arbitri* with *Surae*, and understand: "Take the eyes, the right one (and) the left one, so that the virtue of Sura the Arbitrator may not persist, who is born from an accursed vulva". In my view, the term *arbiter*, which is certainly not part of the name Sura, is the key to the entire curse. In the jurisdiction of the mid-late Principate and Late-Roman period, an *arbiter* was not, as in the Republic, a private individual chosen by both parties to attempt to resolve a dispute without recourse to the courts, but an official, an assistant of the judge, who was entrusted with the preparation of a lawsuit, the inquiry into the facts, and the execution of the judgment. For such a person to become blind would be precisely the sort of catastrophe imagined by our principal. I therefore incline to think that this is a judicial text (Audollent's *tabulae iudiciariae*), and that the Nymphs are being asked either to prevent a case coming before Sura, or to take revenge for an adverse judgement in some case. Indeed, although though some typical features are absent here, such as the name of the petitioner, the express desire for justice or revenge, and the justification for the curse, we could classify the text as a prayer for justice.[23]

---

[22] Even if we accept this interpretation, the meaning of the curse would not be much altered, the idea being that through being blinded he would no longer be able to function in a reasonable manner.

[23] See H. Versnel's contribution to this volume (p. 279f.), where he sums up the main characteristics of the category as he understands it.

Let me now turn to the remaining four words. The two labels at the top read *dextru* and *sinesteru*, and obviously refer to the eyes, right and left, which are to be plucked out of Sura, or otherwise incapacitated. Yet oddly enough *dextru* appears on the left of the drawing, and *sinesteru* on the right. I take this reversal to signify the inverted world of magic.

Beneath the curious circular designs we read BLOBES on the left, and IRILESUS on the right. As neither are Greek or Latin words, they might be magic words, *nomina magica*. For what it is worth, however, neither is among the hundreds listed in *PGrMag* 3, *GMPT* and the Demotic Papyri.[24] Nor are they to be found in the texts from Porta S. Sebastiano. I therefore began to wonder whether *blobes* and *irilesus* might not be real words with an ascertainable meaning in some appropriate language. Thinking it might perhaps be Egyptian, the origin of many of the magic rites and formulas, I asked three German scholars of Egyptian or Coptic, Prof. Ursula Verhoeven-van Elsbergen (Mainz), Prof. Sebastian Richter (Leipzig), and Prof. Heinz J. Thissen (Cologne). Though all are very sceptical about the possibility of interpreting magic formulae in general, they unanimously agreed that *blobes* is Coptic, and means either 'the Great Eye (of) Bes' or 'Baal (and) Bes'.[25] In Egyptian belief, Bes was a dwarf-like good spirit; who already in the Old Kingdom, but especially in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, became a powerful, generally beneficent, sometimes violent, divine power.[26] *Irilesus*, too, is Egyptian, probably composed of

[24] [The name βολ βε σρω, however, occurs as a 'Typhonic' god, e.g. *PGrMag* IV 1010; *DTAud* 16 II 8 (Fiq, Syria); at *CIL* VIII 12510 = *DTAud* 240 l. 3 (Carthage) he is named as one of the seven συνθρόνοι of the Lord of the Underworld. On the discussion of the possible meaning, cf. Brashear 1995, 3583 s.v. *Bolbes* might represent the same name with metathesis of *-ol-*; other corruptions or variants seem to occur in *DTAud* 15 l. 51 (βολσεβωχ); βολσοχ (*PGrMag* II 32); βολσαχυ (IV 2027) etc. Eds.]

[25] [Depending on dialect, *bal* (Saidic, Bohairic) or *bel* (Achmimic) (m.) means 'eye'; *o* (m.) 'great', usually placed after the noun, as in *PGM* III 633; cf. W.G. Till, *Koptische Grammatik*² (Leipzig 1961) 70 §122. Eds.]

[26] [On Bes and the relevant images, see Hopfner 1974–90, 2.1: 288–302 §§185–88; G. Mihailidis, Le dieu Bes sur une stèle magique, *BIE* 42–3 (1960–62) 65–85; idem, Bès aux divers aspects, *BIE* 45 (1963–64) 53–93; H. Altenmüller, s.v. Bes, *LÄg* 1, 720–24; F. Romano, The Origin of the Bes-image, *BES* 2 (1980) 39–56; G. Nachtergael, Les terres cuites 'du Fayoum' dans les maisons de l'Égypte romaine, *CdÉ* 60 (1985) 223–39 at 232ff.; D. Meeks, Le nom du dieu Bès et ses implications mythologiques, in U. Luft (ed.), *The Intellectual Heritage of Egypt: Studies for L. Kákosy* (Budapest 1992) 423–36; D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton 1998) 124–31. The late-V^{p} Coptic *Life of Apa Moses* mentions that 'a wicked demon' named Bes, probably at the

the two roots for 'eye' and 'tongue'.[27] Again, the link between the name and the drawing is puzzling, perhaps insoluble. But the link between each of the names and the intention of the curse now seems obvious: they refer to the act of seeing or looking, *irilesus* also to speaking. Sura, the Arbitrator, who has seen and said something he ought not to have seen or said, is to be attacked by daemons of looking and talking.

We come finally to the figure in the centre of the lozenge. The main text itself does not appear to name it. In that case, it cannot be Sura himself. A human being would anyway have arms and legs, as in Text 1. There are comparable figures on the Porta S. Sebastiano tablets, who are also enclosed in boxes (usually rectangles however, never lozenges), depicting Osiris, Seth or other beings associated with the underworld (Wünsch 1898, 85f.). In one of the Greek magical papyri, there is a drawing of Bes wearing a crown, which looks rather like the 'hair' on our figure.[28] However I incline to agree with Marina Piranomonte's view that the latter is meant to be female. She even suggests it might be Anna Perenna herself (p. 211). It is true that Anna is never mentioned in this or any other of the texts so far deciphered; it is also true that the nymphs are always invoked in the plural. But since Anna is herself a nymph, she and her nymphs might conceivably be denoted by a single image. In the end, however, I think we should probably conclude that the figure is some sort of daemon: the very large eyes seem clearly to allude to the central feature of the curse.

This tablet stands out from the others recovered from the cistern for its overall design, its solemn imprecatory formula, the reference to

---

Memnoneion at Abydos where there was a Bes-oracle, had attacked villagers, and "some of those attacked had become blind in one eye" (Frankfurter, p. 129). Eds.]

[27] [The Middle Egyptian word for 'eye' is *irt* (Gardiner D4), represented at Plutarch, *de Iside* 10 (355a) as *iri* so as to explain the *iri* in *Osiris*, cf. Griffiths 1970, 288; in the form *(e)iorh* it meant 'see' (verb) or 'sight' (n.) in Coptic. 'Tongue' is *ns* (there is no *l*-sound in written Egyptian); the determinative for 'limb/flesh' could also be read as *3s* or *ws* (cf. Gardiner F51), which might explain the *–sus*; the Coptic word was *las* (Saidic, Bohairic) or *les* (Achmimic, Fayyumic). Eds.]

[28] [*PGrMag* VIII Col. III, cf. Pl.I fig. 6 (Bes is not however explicitly addressed in the text). The terracotta Bes-figures (which have very prominent eyes) mostly wear a tall ostrich-feather crown, of which this must be a stylisation; see L. Török, *Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas from Egypt*. Bibliotheca Archaeologica 15.6 (Rome 1995) 32–39 nos. 10–25 with Pls. XVIII–XXII. Preisendanz 1926 wrongly interpreted the 'hairs' as the nails of a *defixio*. Eds.]

the Nymphs of the sanctuary, its use of Egyptian terms, and the harsh vigour of its expression. Interestingly enough, however, the language itself is nearly classical, with just minor changes typical of late Latin, e.g. *santas* for *sanctas, oculus* as acc. pl. = *oculos*, the dropping of final *-m* in *dextru* and *sinesteru*, and of final *-s* in *natu* (l. 16), though this last might also be due to lack of space.

8. The problems of Text 8 (inv.no. 475566) are quite different. In spite of its odd shape, we can be sure the tablet is complete (Text-fig. 4), since the first and last lines follow the irregularities of the lead, and none of the lines is broken off either to the left or the right. The undulations and the gap between ll. 2 and 3 show that the large bifurcated crack in the centre was already present before the tablet was inscribed. The letters are up to 8mm high, the individual strokes deep and undamaged. Nevertheless the text is very difficult to read: the letters are a mixture of majuscules and uncial minuscules, they are often badly formed (*c* can be mistaken for *t*, the writer seems to use the *l* as an *s*, and there are two types of *a*), and in some places the writer has corrected himself by overwriting. At least one line (l. 3) is in part, or even wholly, retrograde (i.e. from right to left), but the individual letters are not reversed. Finally, the language is Vulgar Latin—for instance the final *-m* is always dropped—and the sentences seem to be unfinished. All in all, the writer cannot have been very literate. The strongly-marked parataxis is however typical of Vulgar Latin.

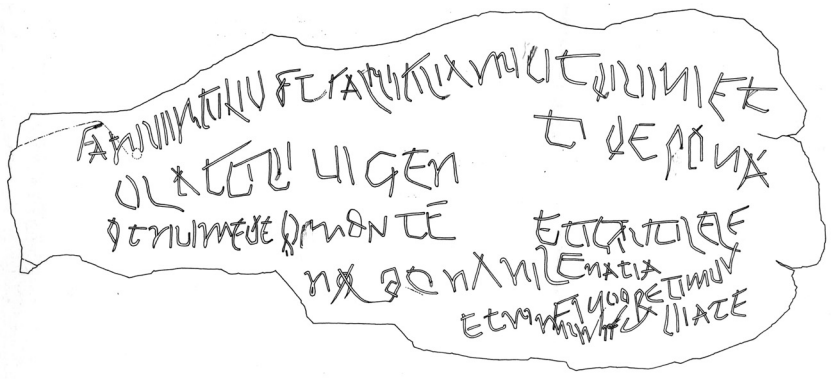

Fig. 4. Drawing of curse against Fanius, (H)erculius and Fapricilianus (inv. no. SAR 475566). Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme, Dipartimento Epigrafico.

All this naturally has implications for the sense we can make of the text. I can really only share my indecisions with the reader. In the first line we find some men's names in the accusative, implying that they are the object of an action. The first is *Faniu(m)*, a well-attested name. The second—or the second part of the first name, separated from it by two vertical strokes—is *Herculiu(m)*, hitherto unrecorded. The third name was first written FAPUCILIANU, but then corrected to FAPRICILIANU. But there is no epigraphic or literary record of any name such as *Fapucilianus*, *Fapricilianus* or *Fabricilianus*. The following letters OCDIUINI are to be read as *hoc divini*—the dropped *h* is typical of later Latin. We must understand an ellipse, with the injunction or request omitted: "(Do as I request in performing) this divine (rite)". OSACCIPI at the beginning of l. 2 would be *hos accipe* in classical Latin, "take them". The god is asked to accept the targets as an offering, i.e. to kill them.[29] The god himself is not named, because the context was assumed to supply such details. I take UIGENT (the T separated from the rest of the word by the crack in the lead), 'they are strong', as both a warning and a justification for the curse. The next word DEPONA(s) is the demand itself, expressed in the briefest manner possible: the victim(s) are to be taken into the underworld.

L. 3 is very problematic. *(H)oc nume* (= *nomen*) is clear, but there follows a series of jumbled syllables. The reading of l. 6 below seems to confirm that these syllables are to be read from right to left, and I therefore propose to read *hoc nomen deponam* (or *deponas*). *Et agite, ut ille se[*—. The end of the sentence is unfortunately lost, since the beginning of l. 4 is missing. The O of the first syllable NO in l. 4 is crossed out, and the entire word was probably replaced by BONA. No sense can yet be made of the following letters NISENATIA or NILENATIA. *Bona nis<i> nati(v)a*, 'only genuine things' seems a possibility. If the reading is indeed BONA NILENATIA, it is perhaps worth remarking that the same sequence of letters BON…LE occurs in Text 5 (inv. no. 475722). If that is significant, *bona nilenatia* might represent an invocation; but I cannot explain either *Nilenatia* or *Nisenatia*. *Senatia* or *Enatia* would be well attested names, but then what to do with

[29] Cf. *AE* 2001: 1135: *Domine Megare invicte, tu qui Attidis corpus accepisti, accipias corpus eius, qui meas sarcinas supstulit, qui me compilavit de domo Hispani illius*…, with the improvements of Marco Simón 2003, and the comments in this volume by Tomlin (p. 260 below) and Versnel (p. 297 below).

bona ni or *bonani* or *bonanis*? I look forward to receiving readers' suggestions.

In line 5 an immediately possibility seemed to be RETIMUS, which however makes no sense. I therefore tried reading it backwards, which, leaving the R aside, would give SUMITE. *Sumite*, 'take away', would indeed fit the genre of the text. But through the microscope I then saw that the third stroke of the R did not belong here but to l. 6, where it crosses the first stroke of a Q or an A. We must therefore read PETIMUS, *petimus*, which makes good sense taken together with the preceding *et qod* (the *q* written without a *u*): 'and what we ask for'.

The solution to ETRIMUSQUEATE in l. 6 only occurred to me long after the conference was over. Once I had read *petimus* in l. 5, I decided *-rimus* must also be the ending of a verb. Searching for the stem, it occurred to me that it must be *que* = *qu(a)e-*. This would give the perfectly satisfactory concluding sequence *et quod petimus et quaerimus a te*.[30] The writer evidently used at least two methods of encoding his text, displacing words and jumbling syllables.

Text 8 thus turns out to be a curse against two or three powerful men written by a fairly illiterate person who was nevertheless more or less able to communicate his wishes to an apparently female deity, perhaps Anna Perenna herself, and to use more than one means of 'estranging' his text.

Summary

The inscriptions in Latin, or mainly in Latin, found in the cistern of the fountain or nymphaeum of Anna Perenna at Rome and a selection of which is presented for the first time here, are very different from one another as regards a) form, b) script, c) language, d) contents and e) genre. There is a clear sense that the traditional rules for writing *defixiones* no longer held good.

a) The sizes and shapes of the tablets discussed here are so different from one another that it seems unlikely they were deposited by a single professional practitioner. On the other hand, the containers

[30] Tomlin describes some even more difficult encodings to be found in British prayers for justice in 2004, 25–27.

must have been made by specialised craftsmen. So probably the petitioners bought ready-made containers and wrote the texts themselves.

b) The conclusion that many different hands were at work is supported by the variety of different scripts employed: genuine majuscules, cursive minuscules and uncial-like letters. Some of the texts may well be fairly early, though most are to be dated to IV^{p} (second half). We need to be cautious here, however: for example, the letter-forms of Text 4 look early, but the language is IV^{p}.

c) Some of the language employed is close to classical Latin, but in other texts (nos. 4, 7, 8) there is a considerable variety of Late and Vulgar Latin. In addition, the texts illustrate the bilingualism of the Late Roman period.

d) As concerns the contents, the selection includes only one text (no. 7, but cf. 5) that explicitly addresses the Nymphs, the deities of the sanctuary; another (no. 3) is apparently addressed to Egyptian Seth without referring to the local gods or the sanctuary.

e) Two of the eight texts (nos. 4, 5) may not even be *defixiones* but prayers asking for help or success, the usual reasons for depositing gifts at this sanctuary. We must also remember the three votive inscriptions relating to victories evidently won in the annual dramatic competitions at this shrine.

Despite their rather unsatisfactory state of preservation, and the difficulty of deciphering them, the Anna Perenna inscriptions offer us an unexpected glimpse into private 'pagan' practice at Rome, mainly in the second half of IV^{p}, thus providing both a foil to the official establishment of Christianity and an insight into the practices that caused contemporary emperors repeatedly to inveigh against the persistence of 'superstition', divination and sacrifice.

Appendix[31]

Text 1 (inv. no. 475561).
Lead tablet. Dimensions: 0.10 × 0.063m. Date: late IV^{p}?

Transcript:
Obverse:
ANTONIUS

Reverse:
ANTION
TOENT
USUNU
O

These three lines look like the transcript of a kind of syllabic dictation: *An—ti—o—n—to—en—i—us.*

Text 2 (inv. no. 475558). See also Piranomonte no. 6.3.2 (p. 208 above). Outer face of the innermost of three cylindrical containers, made of sheet-lead, which contained a scrap of parchment and a sliver of animal-bone, with inscribed sigla. Date: late IV^{p}. This type of inscription, consisting of a drawing, magical letters and the name of the target is known from many other texts e.g. from Hadrumetum.
Left side: Traces of previous script, inverted: IVS. Also some scratches.
Centre: Incomplete bird's head (evidently abandoned), looking left, with a stroke through the eye; beneath it an inscription in majuscules:

Transcript:
LE
ONTI
IVS

[31] In the diplomatic versions, capitals denote capital-letter script, minuscules Old Roman Cursive (ORC).

Reading:
Leontius

Right side: Representation of a deity or daemon with a bird's head and comb, a distended trunk, and human legs. On the body some *charakteres*:
a) I X N I X
b) U K E Θ Θ (majuscule letters, the last two are Greek thetas).
Also two legs with feet and a long tail.

Back of cylinder:
AA IV IVS IVE IVE IA VIN
A semi-literate writer evidently tried out single letters before writing the main text.

Text 3 (inv. no. 475549).
Outer face of the innermost of three cylindrical containers. Dimensions: H.: 0.07m; diam.: 0.048m. See Plate 20. Date: IV^{p}

Transcript/reading:

Sete		*DECEN*	
Mnu	standing		TIAS
S	figure		
Θ			

Sete: Invocation to the Egyptian god Seth. The stroke beneath *t* is a scratch due to the stilus not being lifted sufficiently between writing *t* and *e*. Typhon-Seth is invoked by name in just one of the agonistic tablets of Porta S. Sebastiano cache, Wünsch 1898 no. 25 ll. 1, 2, 8, 19 (wrongly entered by Audollent as part of Wünsch no. 24; = *DTAud* no. 163 ll. 48: λό(γος·) δ]έε Τυφῶν Σήθ; also ll. 49, 55, 66: Σήθ).[32] A fine malign invocation of the god, including his secret names, in *PGrMag* XIVc (II–III^{p}). **Mnu**: One of the ceremonial names of the black bull of Heliopolis, *Mr-wr*, pronounced *Mnewe*, Gk. Μνεῦις, was *Mnỉ*, of which *Mnu* is doubtless a version. The living bull was believed to be

[32] The name also appears in other contexts however, such as the curse on Valeria Quadratilla from Cumae: *DTAud* 198, superseded by *AE* 2003: 337 l. 28 (II–III^{p}); cf. *PGrMag* LVII l. 5, related to *DTAud* 188; *SupplMag* 95 ll. 12f. (*diakopos*). Wünsch identified the horse-headed creature with human trunk and webbed feet that appears on several of these tablets (e.g. Tremel 2004, figs. 19–22) with Seth-Typhon. Preisendanz 1926, 22–41 argued more plausibly that they represent horse-demons; cf. Gager, *CT* 68 n. 85.

the incarnation of Atum-Re, the sun-god: Griffiths 1970, 425. In the Late Period, however, a deceased Mnevis-bull was assimilated (like all deceased humans) to Osiris; the Greek term was Ὀσοροννῶφρις (e.g. *PGrMag* XIXa6, cf. VII 445). Our Greek sources take this to mean that the bull itself was sacred to Osiris, cf. Diod. Sic. 1.21.10; Plutarch, *de Iside* 33 (364bc): ὁ δ' ἐν Ἡλίου πόλει τρεφόμενος βοῦς ὃν Μνεῦιν καλοῦσιν, Ὀσίριδος δ' ἱερόν. From other evidence, too, it seems likely that in the Roman period the dead bull, whose cult was also celebrated at Memphis and at Soknopaiou Nesos, came simply to be equated with Osiris (cf. A. Rusch, s.v. Mnevis, *RE* 15 [1932] 2285–89 at 2288f.; L. Kákosy, s.v. Mnevis, *LÄg* 4 [1982] 165–67 at 166). The name Osoronnophris occurs several times in the Porta S. Sebastiano texts, always closely connected with Osiris (and once with the Bull of Memphis, Apis), in the form Osirimnephris *vel sim.*: e.g. Wünsch 1898 no. 17 = *DTAud* no. 156 ll. 2f.: Οὔσιρι Μνε | Φρι; also ll. 29 and 30: Οὔσιρι Μνωφρι and Οὔσιρι Μνε; Wünsch no. 24 = *DTAud* no. 163 ll. 4f.: Οὔσιρι Μνε | Φρι.[33] For the abbreviated form of Seth, cf. *DTAtt* p. xxii: Σ Θ.
Decentias: the same female name occurs twice in inv. no. 475539 (see p. 210, and Plate 16).

Text 4 (inv. no. 475721).
Very thin sheet of lead, right side broken off. Dimensions: 0.045 × 0.052m. Letters up to 8mm high. Date: Late-Roman, but relatively early in that period.

Transcript:
NEO(magic sign)ΦILAN (?)
VS FORTVN[
ET SEBERUS
FIT LOCVS SAN (Blänsdorf); T LOCUISCAN (Rosati)
5 DḌCFIDSIE PEṚ
I I V…A DII[..

Reading:
NEO(magic sign)ΦILAN (?)
us Fortun[atus]
et Seberus

[33] See e.g. Tremel 2004, 283, Index s.v. Osiris. A complete list in *DTAud* p. 467.

fit locus san(ctus) (Blänsdorf);… *T LOCUISCAN* (Rosati)
5 *DḌCFIDSIE PEṚ*
I I V…A DII[..

Text 5 (inv. no. 475722).
Fragment of a lead sheet. Dimensions: 0.056 × 0.068m. Letter heights: 4–6mm. Left margin entire. Script: Latin majuscules; four letters in ORC. Genre of text: Request for help? Date: Late-Roman, IV^{p}.

Transcript:
….at
ETH[
ETILLETE[
ROGATV . IO[
5 XOREAM….RTV[
FITEATVR FEM[
NTAS NIMFA[
ro……..VO[
BON….LE[

Suggested reading:
……*at*
[S]eth or: *et h[oc]*
et ille te
rogat il[li] o<mnia?>
5 *<u>xor eam* (or: *uxoream*) *[con-]*
fiteatur fem[inam]
[sa]n(c)tas nimfa[s]
ro<go> uo[s]
bon <…> le[

3/4: **et ille te / rogat**: looks like a sentence, but the following lines are longer, so some letters must be lost after *te*.—The writer requests help from the god.
7f.: **-ntas**: the most probable conjecture is *[sa]n(c)tas* (A. Kropp): see p. 220 n. 16 above. Vulgar Latin spelling *nimfa*, as in *DTAud* no. 129b l. 6: *Nimfas*; cf. Preisendanz 1926, 32f. D.R. Jordan has plausibly read the formula ὑμις δέε Φρύγια δέε Νύμφεε at Porta S. Sebastiano as a misunderstanding of an original ὑμεῖς δὲ, ἐφυδριάδες νύμφαι, cf. Mastrocinque 2005, 52f. (see also p. 198 above). As Piranomonte has stressed, the Nymphs were worshipped at the shrine of Anna Perenna.

Text 6 (inv. no. 475565).
Three pieces (a, b, c), measuring 0.042 × 042m or less, found in the nozzle of a lamp. Script: LRC. Date: late IV^{p}.

Transcript:
a)
Obverse:
V]I CTORQVEMPE-
PERITPRIA
.]ALLVIA.

Reading:
Victor quem peperit Pria[…]alluia
Victor whom Pria[…]alluia bore.

Reverse:
N N N N (all ring-letters), 2 crossed circles
ω ω ω ω X (ring-letter) ω ω ω ω (each with a stroke on the top)
N N N (each with a stroke on top) 10 magic letters
T V A

b)
Obverse:
Transcript:
V . LI . .I
OC . ERIT . I

Reading:
(h)oc . erit (?)
This shall be

Reverse:
Three lines of *charakteres*.

c)
Obverse:
Transcript:
VICTORQUEMPE
PERITPELL . T
A

Reading:
Victor quem peperit Pell[.]ta
Victor whom Pell[.]ta bore.

Reverse (lower part heavily corroded):
Three lines made up of repeated N und X (all ring-letters), crossed circles and Θ, then:
ϖ I ϖ P Q . L Q Q V

a, c: *Victor quem peperit Pria[…]alluia; Victor quem peperit Pell[.]ta*: on the use of mother's names in curse-texts influenced by Graeco-Egyptian practice, e.g. in protective charms, pagan: *SupplMag* 9–11, 18f., and Christian: 21f., 28; erotic: 37–51; malign curses: 53, 55, 57. "The practice is indicative of the meticulous, legalistic nature of prayer language in general and of magic in particular": D.G. Martinez, *A Greek Love-charm from Egypt*. American Studies in Papyrology 30 (PMich XVI) (Atlanta 1991) 56; cf. Graf 1996, 116.

Text no. 7 (inv. no. 475567),
Lead sheet with drawing containing a text. Dimensions: 0.07 x 0.075m. Letter heights: 1mm. See Text-fig. 3 (p. 222). Date: Late-Roman, IV^{p}. Script: Latin minuscules, cf. Seider 1972–81, 1: nos. 49–52 (Abinnaeus archive, 344 CE); J. Mallon, *Paléographie romaine, Scripturae*. Monumenta et Studia 3 (Madrid 1952) pl. XXIII 1–3 (IV^{p}); G. Bartoletti, La scrittura romana nelle tabulae defixionum (secc. I. A.C.–IV. D.C.). Note paleografiche, *Scrittura e civiltà* 14 (1990) 7–47; on the form of *G* as 3, see esp. Mallon, pl. XXV 3 (III^{p}).

Drawing framed by two long-necked creatures with 'beaks' in the upper half, and two snakes pointing downwards in the lower half. Between them a lozenge, with a frontal figure lacking arms and legs in the centre. Snakes are associated with the underworld and so with Osiris.[34] It is uncertain whether we should identify the figure in the centre as a daemon, like the chthonic (?) snakes, as Anna Perenna herself (as Piranomonte suggests), or as the victim of the curse. At any rate it is not Seth, who is depicted in the Porta S. Sebastiano texts as a male bust with rays on his head, placed on Osiris' coffin (Wünsch 1898, 85f.). At the left angle of the lozenge: ΘEE (?) or perhaps bird's claws. Two vertical lines between the creatures frame ll. 3–16 and the lozenge.

[34] Audollent, *DTAud* p. 30 comm. on no. 15 l. 15: "*Serpens nempe*, δαίμων χθόνιος, *saepe magicis artibus interest*", cf. p. 273; Wünsch 1898, 100–02.

The 'ring-letters' (Ringbuchstaben; ἅγιοι χαρακτῆρες, Augustine, *de doctr. Christ*. 2. 30: *quasdam notas quos characteres vocant*) at the top and bottom of the tablet are part of the drawing. Other examples of this technique for creating *charakteres* may be found in *PGrMag* 2, pp. 18f, 26, 36f., 130, 140, 170f. 182, 188; *SupplMag* nos. 66, 92, 94, 96–98; *DTAud* nos. 272, 276, 278, cf. the discussion in Brashear 1995, 3380–84. *DTAud* 156 gives the meaning of the symbols as: Εὐλάμων X Οὔσιρι Z Οὔσιρι Μνε Y Φρι. *DTAud* 161, 163, 165 etc. however offer different values.

On either side of the lozenge are some complex designs I cannot interpret. There is a single word above and below each, beside the creatures: to the left, *dextra* (above), *blobes* (below); to the right, *sinestera* (above), *irilesus* (below). *Blobes* and *Irilesus* are presumably the names of the daemons.[35] **Blobes**: The name probably means 'Great Eye of Bes'. Egyptian religion had a class of small, ugly but beneficent demons called Bes(as), with notably large eyes, who became major gods in the popular religion of the Late Period and in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Bes is rarely invoked by name in the magical papyri, and then only for divination (e.g. *PGrMag* VIII 64–110); the most relevant of these is *PGrMag* VII 222–49, which addresses the *daemon* adjured as the "headless god who has a head and face on his feet", Βησᾶς ἀμβλυωπός, 'half-blind Bes' (245). The weakness of the god's eyes was thus thematised in some contexts.[36] I take it that Blobes and Irilesus are here considered as assistants: cf. Wünsch 1898, no. 16 ll. 20–22 = *DTAud* 155:…καὶ ἅγιοι πάρεδροι, οἳ ἐν δεξιῷ κα[ὶ ἀριστ]ερῷ.[37]

The line-ends show that the text was written after the drawing was completed.

---

[35] See nn. 26–27 above.

[36] [The papyrus reads ἀμβλυώπως. In a somewhat misleading account of this recipe, where he does not give the actual reading, Hopfner read ἀμβλυωπής, and translated "die Sehkraft (des bösen Blickes) schwächend" (see also *PGrMag app. crit*. ad loc.: "der den Blick lähmt"), comparing Bes to the Greek Gorgon head (1974–90, 2.1: 296 §187). Preisendanz more plausibly reads ἀμβλυωπός, meaning "dim- or weak-sighted" (only in active sense at Dioscorides, *Med*. 2.107). See also Preisendanz 1926, 44f. Eds.]

[37] The eye of Aion is invoked at *PGrMag* V 465f. and *SupplMag* 95 l. 17 as a source of power.

Transcription/reading:
Above the lozenge:

sacras santas a supteris et angilis quod
rogo et peto magnam uirtutem uestram:
tollatis pertolla{e}tis
oculus siue dextrum et
sinesteru Surae, qui nat(us)
maledicta modo ets de uulua.
fiat rogo et peto
magnam uirtu-
tem uestra(m).

Beneath the lozenge:

tollite oculus
dextru sinesteru,
ne possit dura-
re uirtus arbitri
Surae, qui natu(s)
est de uulua
maledicta.

The sacred and holy (nymphs), through the infernal gods (?) and the messengers, what I wish and demand from your great virtue: remove, utterly remove the eyes, the right or the left one, of Sura, who was born from a cursed womb. I wish and demand from your great virtue it shall happen: take the eyes, the right and the left one, in order the virtue of Sura the judge may not persist, who was born from a cursed womb.

1: **sacras santas . . . peto**: invocation of the nymphs of Anna Perenna. Compare the three votive inscriptions from the revetment of the trough (*AE* 2003: 251–53), reprinted by Piranomonte (p. 199f. above), giving thanks for victories won in the dramatic and/or poetic competitions held in the shrine.[38] Apart from the probable reading of the stereotyped *logos* of the Porta S. Sebastiano texts (see comm. on Text

[38] [This aspect of the cult has been explored more fully in the light of the new finds by T.P. Wiseman, Documentation, Visualization, Imagination: the Case of Anna Perenna's Cult-Site, in L. Haselberger and J. Humphrey (eds.), *Imaging Ancient Rome: Documentation, Visualization, Imagination*. JRA Suppl. 61 (Portsmouth RI 2006) 51–62. Eds.]

5 l. 7f.), the sole invocation of the nymphs in curses is *CIL* XI 1823 = *ILS* 8748 = *DTAud* 129 (Arretium, II^{p}): *Q. Letinium Lupum, qui et vocatur Caucadio, qui est fi[lius] Sallusti[es Vener]ries sive Ven[e]rioses, hunc ego apud vostrum numen demando devoveo desacrifico, ut vos Aquae ferventes, siv[e v]os Nimfas [si]ve quo alio nomine voltis adpe[l-] lari, ut vos eum interemates interficiates intra annum itusm* (cf. Piranomonte, p. 197f. n. 21 above).—**santas without c**: cf. Fulgentius Planciades, *Comm. in Theb*. p. 699: *mens enim humana ex santa luce quam habuit iocundatur*.—**FU supteris**: the first two letters are clear, but the import is not; *supteris* is not yet attested, but easily intelligible by analogy with *superis*. It means the same as *inferis*. The passage as a whole must mean something like *sacras santas cum supteris et angilis*.—**angilis**: intermediaries between gods and men, especially to the underworld, were first called δαίμονες, but the term ἄγγελοι becomes common esp. in Anatolia (they occur frequently for example in the Mysian-Phrygian 'confession texts': Petzold, *BIWK*), possibly under the influence of Jewish religion, and then spread westwards (see J. Michl, s.v. Engel I–IX, *RfAC* 5 [1962] 54–258). References to them in later curse-contexts are very frequent, e.g. *DTAud* no. 74 (Attica): καταγράφω κ(αὶ) κατατ[ίθω] ἀν[γ]έ[λης καταχθο]νίοις, Ἑρμῆ καταχ[θ]ονίω; cf. 75a ll. 1–4; Wünsch 1898 no. 49 l. 52 = *DTAud* no. 187: ἐξορκίζω ὑμᾶς, ἅγιοι ἄνγελοι καὶ ἅγια ὀνόματα; *PGrMag* VII 880–87: ἐπικαλοῦμαι σε, δέσποινα τοῦ συμπάντος κόσμου,…δὸς ἱερὸν ἄγγελον ἢ πάρεδρον ὅσ<ι>ον διακονήσοντα τῇ σήμερο[ν ν] υκτὶ,…καὶ κέλευσον ἀγγέλῳ ἀπελθεῖν πρὸς τὸν δεῖνα, ἄξαι αὐτὴν τῶν τρίχων; also IV 1932–35; 3024f. From Rome itself we have *SGD* II no. 84 (Via Latina): κατάσχετε, κύριοι ἄγγελοι, Κλ[ω]δίαν Βαλερίαν Σωφρόνην [καὶ] μὴ <e.g. ἐάσῃς: Jordan> Πωλ[ειτορ]ίας τυχῖν; and a Late-Roman example (*AE* 1941: 138): *deprecor vos, sancti angeli, ut, quomodo (ha)ec anima intus inclusa tenetur et angustiatur et non vede (=videt) neque lumine (=lumen) ne aliquem (=nec aliquod) refrigerium non habet, sic ut anima mentes corpos Collecticii, quem peperet Agnella, teneatur ardeat detabescat. usque ad infernum semper ducite Collecticium, quem peperet Agnella*.[39] Such angels belong to the netherworld: *SupplMag* no. 97 → ll. 5–8 (a formulary text, V–VI^{p}): πρῶτε ἄνκε[λε τ-] ὸν καταπθωνύον Βαρουχ· κὲ σέ, πορύμορφε ἄγγελε Ολαμτηρ· ταύ[τ]ῃ τῦ ὥρᾳ μή μου παρακούσατε, "First angel of those in the underworld,

[39] Also cited by I. Velázquez, p. 607 below.

Barouch, and you, many-formed angel, *Olamtêr*, in this hour do not disobey me…" (tr. Daniel and Maltomini); Wünsch 1898 no. 16 ll. 54f. = *DTAud* no. 155b 2f.: ἐξορκίζο ὑμᾶς… κατὰ τῶν ἁγίων ἐνφερνίων ὑμῶν; but they may also be associated with a god, e.g. the first seven angels of the creator of the world: οὐτοί εἰσιν οἱ πρῶτοι φανέντες ἄγγελοι (*PGrMag* XIII 147f. with *GMPT* p. 176 n. 34; cf. 452–54). We may also cite ll. 3f. of the oracle by Apollo of Oenoanda (II-III^{p}) discussed by Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 1.7.1–9: μεικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄνγελοι ἡμεῖς (= *SEG* 27 [1977] 933). Christian writers took over this pagan meaning in certain contexts: Arnobius cites the doctrine of the pagans who accused Jesus of having been a sorcerer, and used the force of mighty angels: Arnob., *Adv. nat.* 1.43: *magus fuit, clandestinis artibus omnia illa perfecit, Aegyptiorum ex adytis angelorum potentium nomina et remotas furatus est disciplinas*; Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 9.19: *nonnulli istorum, ut ita dicam, daemonicolarum, in quibus et Labeo est, eosdem perhibent ab aliis angelos dici, quos ipsi daemonas vocant*. The Christian baptismal formula bade the candidate renounce the devil, his train, and his angels, e.g. Tertullian, *De spect.* 4: *renuntiasse nos diabolo et pompae eius et angelis eius*; cf. R. Heinze, *Xenokrates* (Leipzig 1892) 112f.; A. Dieterich, *Nekyia* (Leipzig and Berlin 1913) 60f.; Hopfner 1974–90, 1: 64–82, §§ 135–162, esp. 154.

2f.: **uirtutem**: cf. Wünsch 1898 no. 24 ll. 9–12 = *DTAud* no. 163: ἐξορκίζο ὑμᾶς κατὰ τῆς ὑμετέρας ὑμῶν δυνάμεως…, cf. Wünsch 1898 no. 16 ll. 54f. = *DTAud* no. 155b l. 2. On gods and demons in curse tablets, see Graf 1996, 133–35.

4 and 10: **oculus**: late Latin for *oculos*. Curses specifically upon horses' vision occur in charioteer-texts, e.g. *DTAud* no. 237 ll. 47–50 (Carthage): ἄφελε αὐτῶν τὴν νείκην τὸν ἀπόβασιν καὶ τὴν ὅρασιν, ἵνα μὴ δυνασθῶσιν βλέπειν…(= 240 ll. 40–44); 241 ll. 13f.: ἀμαύρωσον αὐτῶν τὰ ὄμματα ἵνα μὴ βλέπωσιν.

5 and 14: **Sura**: for Sura as a masculine *cognomen*, cf. e.g. *AE* 1910: 34; 1938: 98: *Aurelius Sura*; 1945: 35: *Licinius Sura*; 1965: 281e: *Avillius Sura*; 1993: 468: *L. Licinius Sura cos.*; 1996: 340: *M. Barronius M. f. Sura*; 1983: 40: *M. Q. M. lib. Sura*. *OPEL* 4 (2002) lists thirteen examples in the Latin-speaking provinces. The name also occurs in a *defixio* from Siscia (Pannonia superior): *Adverssaro(!) nosstro(!) / G(aio) Dometiu(!) Secundo / et Lucius Larcio / et Ssecun(dus)(!) Vacarus / Ciba(lenses) et P(ublius?) Citroniu(s) / Cicorelliu(s) Narbone / et Lic(i)nius Sura Isspan(—) / et Luccillius(!) / Vallente(!) ne possi(nt) / cuntra sse*

faceri / avertat illo(s) a me(n)te / cantra(!) locui ne ma/li(nt) illor(um) us (=os) mutu(m) o fac / G(aius) Domtius Ssecundo / et Lucius La(r)c(i) o Giba / m(u)ta tagita [---] / [---]iloru[---//(exterior:) *Data deprementi / ma(n)data da is / Savo cura aga / deprema adveraro / nosstro omutua ne / contra nos lucuia* (*AE* 1921: 95 = *AIJ* 557).[40] The correct reading might also be *Susa*. For this name at Rome, see e.g. *CIL* VI 7707: *M. Flavius M. l(ibertus) Susas Epaphra filius*.
6: **ets** instead of *est*.
6 and 13: **uulua**: cf. D.R. Jordan, *CIL* VIII 19525 (B): QPVVLVA = q(uem) p(eperit) vulva, *Philologus* 120 (1976) 127–32:].*ento, demando tibi, ut a<c>ceptu<m> <h>abeas [S]ilvanu<m> q(uem) p(eperit) vulva, facta et custodias*; *SGD* II no. 18: ὃν ἔτεκεν μήτρα (also nos. 19–21).
13: **uirtutem**: *AE* 1912: 140 (Rome): *Bona pulchra Proserpina, Plutonis uxor, sive me Salviam dicere oportet, eripias salutem, corpus, colorem, vires, virtutes Plauti*; cf. *SGD* II no. 82 (Tiriolo, IV/III[a]):— ATIEAN ἐνδίδ[ω]μι παρ' Ἑρμῆι [ἐπ]ὶ παρκάτθεμα καὶ ψυχάν, γλώσας, [σῶ]μα, ἰσχύν, δύναμι<ν> τὰν κριτᾶν ΩΝΚΥΣ [---]ΥΩΣ μυσαρά, ψυχρά, μ[ι]σετά.

Text 8 (inv.no. 475566).
Oblong lead sheet. Dimensions: 0.135 × 0.063m. All lines are complete. See Text-fig. 4 (p. 227). L. 1 follows the upper margin; l. 2, with the injunction, is written in larger letters of a slightly different character. Ll. 2 and 3 are interrupted by a large blemish, split or flaw, which was in the lead before writing commenced. NO in l. 4 *ad init*. makes no sense. The lower left edge of the sheet may have been broken during writing, and *bona* written out again complete. Language: Vulgar Latin. Date: II-III[p].

Script: Latin majuscule with some minuscule letters, cf. the tablet from Dax (Landes) of the same period, F. Marco Simón and I. Velázquez, Una nueva defixio aparecida en Dax (Landes), *Aquitania* 17 (2000) 261–74.

Transcript:
FANIVVERCVLIUETFAPRICILIANVOCDIVINIET
OSACCIPI VIGEN TDEPONA

[40] See now F. Marco Simón and I. Rodà de Llanza, Sobre un *defixio* de Sisak (Croacia) invocando al dios fluvial *Savus*, *MHNH* 8 (2008) 99–126.

OCNVMEDEPOMANTE ETIGAVTILESE
..]NO BONANISENATIA
ETQUOPETIMVS
ETRIMUS . QUEATE

1: Double stroke separating the first two names. If this is to be read as E, *(H)erculium* is a well-attested name. **Fapucilianu** has been corrected to *Fapricilianu*; the C is written with two strokes, as often in majuscule cursive; **et**: the *t* is overwritten.
2: *S* sloping to the left as in l. 1, not *L*. The *P* has an unusual serif.
3: at least partially retrograde, though the individual letters are written in the normal manner. The form of S as in l. 2; at first sight it looks like O, but it was written twice in different directions.
4:]**no**: perhaps the remains of *bono*. The O has been crossed out and the whole word replaced by *bona*.
5: **petimus**: P looks like *R*, but the overlaps indicate that the third stroke of *R* belongs to Q in line 6.
6: **ETRIMUS**: see the general commentary, p. 229 above.

Suggested reading:

Faniu(m), (H)erculiu(m) et Fapricilianu(m) (h)oc divini et
(h)os accipi. uigent. depona(s).
(h)oc nume (= nomen) deponam et agite ut ille se
{no} bona nise(/i) nati(u)a.
et quo(d) petimus
et qu(a)erimus a te.

Fanius, Herculius and Fapricilianus—(Do as I request in performing) this divine (rite)—and receive them (as a ritual offering). They are strong. Take them down below. I'll take this name down below. And act in order that he shall […] the property except the physical one. And what we demand and request from you.

1. **Faniu**: Acc. with dropped *-m* in Vulgar Latin. The variant spelling Fanius for the *nomen* Fannius is not very common but attested, e.g. *CIL* V 1793 (p. 1052) = *AE* 1982, 390 (Fagagna): *T. Fanius T.f., C. Fanius T.f. Niger, T. Fanius C.f., Tullia M.f. / Secunda uxsor(!) v(ivi) f(ecerunt) s(ibi) et s(uis)*; *AE* 1977: 265b (Ravenna): *Dedicata d(ominis) n(ostris) Diocletiano et Maximiano Aug(ustis) co(n)s(ulibus) VII Idus Iunias Domitius Felicissimus patronus impendi(i)s suis fecit. Patroni Mecennius Felix…Fanius Primigenius…; CIL* VI 1057 II 39: *T. Fanius Iustianus*; 32522b II 4: *S. Fanius Severus*; *CIL* VIII 1151 (Carthage):

D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) Fanius Saturninus v(ixit) a(nnos) XX h(ic) s(itus) e(st); *CIL* VIII 9857 = *IAltava* 255: *D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) Fanius Africanus fecerunt heredes vixit annis LXXX m(ensibus) VII Fanius Restutus VN(…) vixit an(nos) IV*; 24390: *Fania Sedata*; additional exx. in *OPEL* 2 [1999] 134 –**Fapricilianus** (*Fabricianus, Falcidianus?*) is otherwise unknown.—**oc** = *hoc*: *h* was no longer pronounced in Vulgar Latin; cf. *DTAud* nos. 28f. *(h)ic*; nos. 229ff. *(h)ora*; nos. 23; 286b l. 4; 289b. Since this occurs repeatedly in the text, I do not remark on it again.—**diuini**: 'prophecy' or 'rite'? The genitive depends on *hoc*. The sentence is not completely intelligible because the verb is missing.
2: **accipi** = *accipe*; *i* and *e* very often mixed up in Vulgar and late Latin. The curse itself constitutes the demand that the targets be 'received', i.e. become the property of the god; cf. *AE* 2001: 1135 (cited n. 29 above).—**uigent**: I suppose this to mean that the writer wishes to inform the addressee that the targets are still healthy and ought to be taken into the underworld. **depona(s)** (= κατατίθημι): a quasi-legal word for depositing something, here practically a technical word for cursing to death, cf. *DTAud* no. 300: *deponas eum at Tartara*; also Mainz tablet no. 18 l. 1: *in hac tabula depono*, with my note (p. 187 above). Dropping of *-s* is frequent in Vulgar Latin.
4: **nise** = *nisi* cf. l. 2, *accipi* = *accipe*. **nati(u)a**, with *u* dropped between vowels as usual in Vulgar Latin, is the attribute of *bona*. *natiuus* means 'personal, physical'.
6: The writing becomes smaller and ever more uncertain.

Bibliography

Brashear, W. 1995. The Greek Magical Papyri: an Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994), *ANRW* II.18.5, 3380–3684.
Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D. (eds.) 1991. *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York and Oxford).
Graf, F. 1996. *Gottesnähe und Schadenzauber. Die Magie in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Munich). Enlarged version of *La magie dans l'antiquité gréco-romaine* (Paris 1994).
Griffiths, J.G. (ed., comm.) 1970. Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff).
Hopfner, Th. 1974–90. *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde 21, 23 (Amsterdam). Original hand-written ed., Leipzig 1921–24.
Marco Simón, F. 2004. Magia y cultos orientales: Acerca de una *defixio* de Alcácer do Sal (Setúbal) con mención de Attis, *MHNH* 4, 79–94.
Mastrocinque, A. 2005. Le *defixiones* di Porta San Sebastiano, *MHNH* 5 (2005) 45–60.
Piranomonte, M. 2002a. Il ritrovamento della fontana sacra di Anna Perenna, in Piranomonte 2002e, 17–20.

——. 2002b. I materiali nella cisterna: religione e magia, in Piranomonte 2002e, 21–25.
——. 2002c. Anna Perennae il suo nemus nelle fonti antiche, in Piranomonte 2002e, 70f.
——. 2002d. Acheloo e le ninfe, in Piranomonte 2002e, 84–87.
——. (ed.) 2002e. *Il santuario della musica e il bosco sacro di Anna Perenna* (Rome).
——. 2005. La fontana sacra di Anna Perenna a Piazza Euclide tra religione e magia, *MHNH* 5, 87–104.
Preisendanz, K. 1926. Akephalos. *Der kopflose Gott*. Beiheft zum Alten Orient 8 (Leipzig).
Seider, R. 1972–81. *Die Paläographie der lateinischen Papyri* (Stuttgart).
Tomlin, R.S.O. 1988. The Curse Tablets: Roman Inscribed Tablets of Tin and Lead from the Sacred Spring at Bath, in B. Cunliffe, *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, 2: The Finds from the Sacred Spring.* Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Monograph no. 16 (Oxford) 59–277.
——. 2004. *carta picta perscripta*: Anleitung zun Lesen von Fluchtafeln, in K. Brodersen and A. Kropp (eds.), *Fluchtafeln: Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt a.M.) 11–29.
Tremel, J. 2004. *Magica agonistica: Fluchtafeln im antiken Sport.* Nikephoros Beihefte 1 (Berlin).
Versnel, Beyond Cursing. The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 60–106.
Wünsch, R. 1898. *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* (Leipzig).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CURSING A THIEF IN IBERIA AND BRITAIN*

Roger Tomlin

In Britain we recently celebrated the two-hundredth anniversary, not just of the Battle of Trafalgar,[1] but the discovery of the first British 'curse-tablet'. It was found in 1805 at Lydney Park in the Severn valley, in the ruins of a Roman temple locally called the Dwarfs' Chapel because the hypocaust was thought to have been inhabited. It was an inscribed piece of lead:

> Silvianus to the god Nodens. He has lost his ring and has given half to Nodens. Among those who have the name of Senicianus, do not allow them health until he bring it to the temple of Nodens.[2]

The first real editor, Charles William King (1818–1888) in 1879, recognised this as a curse against a thief, and astutely compared it with "the leaden scrolls discovered at the 'Demetrium' at Cnidus, which similarly invoke the wrath of heaven upon certain obnoxious parties".[3] These are now in the British Museum, and were published in 1862/63; they are Greek texts 'dedicating' wrongdoers to Demeter: false accusers,

---

* I use 'Iberia' in the sense of modern Spain and Portugal, and 'Britain' in the sense of the Roman province of Britannia. I have seen the British tablets I discuss, but for the Iberian ones I depend upon published drawings and photographs. For invaluable help with bibliography I am grateful to Francisco Marco and Richard Gordon, who invited me to Zaragoza, where a knowledgeable audience helped me by commenting on ideas previously expressed at Santander by kind invitation of Mar Marcos. I am also grateful to Henk Versnel for exchanging drafts with me of our contributions to this volume; to Jürgen Blänsdorf for details of the Mainz tablets; and to Antón Alvar Nuño for sending a copy of Guerra's article, which was unobtainable in Oxford. The key to the brief names I have used for the texts (e.g. 'Uley') will be found in the first section of the Bibliography to this paper. Note that a reference to Tomlin 1988 is to a discussion, or set of references, in that publication; 'Bath' (but also sometimes *Tab. Sulis*) + number denotes a specific text; see also p. 272 below.

[1] Cf. H. Hoock (ed.), *History, Commemoration and National Pre-occupation: Trafalgar 1805–2005* (Oxford 2007).

[2] Lydney Park, *devo Nodenti Silvianus anilum perdedit demediam partem donavit Nodenti inter quibus nomen Seniciani no(n) (i)llis pe(r)mittas sanitatem donec perfera(t) usque templum [No]dentis.*

[3] King 1879, 45f.

for example, and people who borrowed clothes or money and did not return them, and thieves, or the 'other woman' who seduced my husband, and those who beat me up.[4] These 'curse-tablets' are the first items in Audollent's great collection, but they are not typical of it. Their special character has been illuminated by Henk Versnel, who aptly calls them 'prayers for justice'.[5] They are not anonymous spells consigning enemies to demons and the Underworld, but messages written to respectable gods, asking (but not compelling) their intervention; the petitioner says that he (or she) has been maltreated, and seeks divine redress. The gods are treated like superior Roman officials, Abinnaeus for example, who commanded a late-Roman fort in Egypt. He received statements of the offence committed followed by this formula:

> Wherefore I request and beg of your philanthropy to apprehend this man and compel him to restore to me what he has wickedly seized.[6]

Some British curse-tablets are explicitly 'pleas' (*pet(it)io, iteratis precibus*), or 'complaints' (Tomlin 1988, 66) beginning with *queror* or *conqueror*, and there is even this *commonitorium* from Uley:

> A memorandum to the god Mercury from Saturnina, a woman, concerning the linen cloth which she has lost. (She asks) that he who has stolen it should not have rest before, unless, when he brings the aforesaid property to the aforesaid temple, whether man or woman, slave or free.[7]

The god of Uley was too polite to say so, but he must have felt like Pliny on his Tuscan estate: "I am beset on all sides by the peasants with all their petitions full of complaints".[8]

When I started working on British 'curse-tablets' twenty years ago, I was struck by similarities in language and formulation in two Spanish tablets from Emerita and Italica, to which can now be added four tab-

---

[4] See e.g. *DTAud* nos. 1; 2 = *Syll*. 1179; 3; 4A, 6 and 8; 5; 10; 11; 12; 13. They were re-edited, albeit without commentary, by W. Blümel in *I.Knidos* nos. 147–59.

[5] Versnel 1991, 2002 and his contribution to this volume (p. 278f.). His earlier term was 'judicial prayers'.

[6] Bell, Martin, Turner, van Berchem, 1962 no. 44. Compare nos. 45–57, and see p. 99.

[7] Uley 2: *commonitorium deo Mercurio a Saturnina muliere, de lintiamine quod amisit, ut ille qui ho[c] circumvenit non ante laxetur nissi quand[o] res s(upra)dictas ad fanum s(upra)d[ic]tum attul[e]rit, si vir si [m]ulier, si servus si liber*.

[8] Pliny, *Ep*. 9.15.1: *tam multis undique rusticorum libellis et tam querulis inquietor* (trans. Radice).

lets from Baelo, Salacia and Saguntum. These are all directed against thieves, one-third of extant Latin 'curse-tablets' from Spain and Portugal, compared with two-thirds of a much larger total from Britain.[9] I reprint the six Iberian texts here as published, adding some notes of my own; by no means a complete commentary, but after noting points of similarity with British tablets and suggesting a few emendations, I offer a translation. I do not discuss whether the similarities are so great as to imply the use of Latin 'handbooks', but there is certainly much variation, and nothing like the repetition and stereotyping found in some Greek texts. My own impression, in Britain at least, is that an author was aware of what was expected of him, but like a Roman with his Will, "the document was emphatically his own invention, written by himself or dictated to another".[10] But before I start happily comparing thieves in Iberia and Britain, I should reiterate the insight we owe to Versnel: the Latin texts from Spain and Portugal were preceded by Greek texts like the Cnidus tablets, so it follows that the British texts do not derive from the Iberian, but like them express a much older belief which is not western and localised, but is common to the Mediterranean world—the idea that we can ask the gods for justice.

1. *Augusta Emerita/Mérida*

The Lydney Park tablet was found only five or ten years after the first Iberian 'curse-tablet', a marble plaque found near Mérida at the end of the eighteenth century:

> *dea Ataecina Turi|brig(ensis) Proserpina, | per tuam maiestatem | te rogo, oro, obsecro, |*[5] *uti vindices quot mihi | furti factum est, quisquis | mihi imudavit, involavit, | minusve fecit [e]a[s res] q(uae) i(nfra) s(criptae) s(unt). | tunicas VI, [p]aenula |*[10] *lintea II, in[dus]ium. cu|ius I.C[…]M ignoro | i[…]ius | […]*

Notes:
3–4. per tuam maiestatem te rogo is the language of petition, cf. Tomlin 1988, 65 s.v. *maiestas*; 70f.; *Tab. Vindol.* II 344 l. 4f.: *tuam maies[t]atem imploro* (citing the Saltus Burunitanus petition to

[9] See the Bibliography at the end of this paper. The Mainz tablets being published by Jürgen Blänsdorf (p. 141 above) also offer many similarities, but I will not consider them here.

[10] E.Champlin, *Final Judgements: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills, 200 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1991) 183. See also Tomlin 1988, 98–101.

Commodus, *[im]ploratum maiestatem tu[am]*). In 'curse-tablets', cf. Baelo: *rogo, domina, per maiestate(m) tua(m) ut (h)oc furtu(m) reprindas*; Bath 35: *dea Suli Minervae rogo sanctissimam maiestatem tuam ut vindices ab his [q]ui [fraude]m fecerunt*; Uley 72: *me vindicatum esse a maiestate tua*.[11]

4. rogo, oro, obsecro: *rogo* is also used to address British gods (Tomlin 1988, 67 s.v. *rogo*), e.g. Pagans Hill: *iteratis precibus te rogo*; cf. Salacia l. 11. There is no instance of either *oro* or *obsecro*, but cf. Bath 99: *execro qui involaverit*.

5. uti vindices: for this verb, see Tomlin 1988, 68 s.v. *vindices*, and London Bridge, *tibi rogo, Metunus, u(t) m(e) vendicas*. By *vindicare* the writer means 'punishment' of the theft, but it can have the extended sense of 'recovery' of the property stolen: cf. *Digest* 47.2.9: *sed si (rem subreptam) a fure vindicassem*.

quot mihi furti factum est: cf. Baelo, *tibi conmendo furtu(m) me(um)…ut (h)oc furtu(m) reprindas*; for Britain, Uley 68 (unpublished): *[?queror] de furto quod mihi factum est*. The noun *furtum* is not found at Bath, except in 102, where it is confused with *fur* ('thief'), but *fraudem* is used similarly (Tomlin 1988, 64 s.v. *fraudem*).

7. imudavit: the context requires a rhetorical synonym of *involavit*. The form is probably Vulgar Latin for Classical *immutavit*, the voicing of *t* > *d* being typical of Vulgar Latin and Romance (cf. *evides* in Baelo, 6), so the verb means 'change (for the worse)'. *TLL* records no instance in the sense of 'steal', but in view of *minus fecit* (8), an exact equivalent is unnecessary. Alternatively, but less likely, since it would not be a Vulgar form, *imudavit* is a mistake for *immundavit* ('dirtied').

involavit: Vulgar Latin 'stole' (and thus in Italica); much the most common verb in British curse-tablets (Tomlin 1988, 64 s.v. *involare*), where its occasional synonyms are *decepit*, *levavit*, *furaverit*, *tulit / tulerit*, *sustulit*.

8. minus fecit: yet another rhetorical synonym of *involavit*; literally 'diminish', but stronger than this; *minus* has become a prefix like *mis-* in Vulgar Latin and early Romance which (like *dis-*) reverses the sense of the following verb. There is no British example, but cf. Uley 76: *qui mihi male cogitant et male faciunt*.[12]

---

[11] Uley 72 is published as *Britannia* 23 (1992) 310 no. 5. Similar language is found in the Mainz tablets.

[12] Published as *Britannia* 26 (1995) 373 no. 2.

[e]a[s res] q(uae) i(nfra) s(criptae) s(unt): *res* (things, not affairs), found also in Italica 3, is frequent in British texts for (stolen) property: e.g. Bath 32, etc., Kelvedon, Uley 2. The language is not magical but bureaucratic or quasi-legal, cf. Bath 8: *a nomin[i]bus infrascrip[tis] deae exactura est*; Uley 2: *non ante laxetur nissi quand[o] res s(upra)dictas ad fanum s(upra)d[ic]tum attul[e]rit*, with Tomlin 1988, 64 s.v. *infrascriptis*; 71.

9–10. There is no British instance of these actual garments, but many tablets refer to stolen clothes and textiles e.g. cloaks (*pallium* or *caracalla*) at Bath and Uley, and especially Bath 62: *perdedi la[enam pa]lleum sagum paxsam* [*paxsa* is British-Latin for *tunica*]; cf. Tomlin 1988, 79–81. These lists are 'quasi-legal' (Tomlin 1988, 70f.; 79–81): Ulpian, *Digest* 47.2.19 recommends that in actions for theft one should make a careful list of the objects stolen, including the colour of clothes. There is a similar list in Baelo ll. 8–10.

10–12. The tablet is broken after 12, and the last four lines are badly worn. Mommsen conjectured *cuius [ego nomen cu]m ignoro* (etc.), and a reference to the 'name' of the (unknown) thief is possible. By extension, *nomen* means 'account' and thus 'the (unknown) person responsible'; it is often cursed e.g. Bath 16, *nomen furis… donatur*, cf. Tomlin 1988, 65 s.v. *nomen*.

Translation:

> Goddess Ataecina of Turibriga, Proserpina, I ask you by your majesty, I beg you to avenge the theft which has been done me, whoever has changed, stolen, diminished the things which are written below. 6 tunics, 2 linen cloaks, a shift. (?) Whose name, I do not know…

The Emerita tablet is unique in being marble instead of lead, and quite unusual in being intended for display. It is notable that the next two Iberian tablets (Italica and Baelo) are of ansate form, as if intended for suspension, even though Baelo was actually found in a well. They are three 'display' tablets, so to speak, out of six, a much higher proportion than in Britain, where only three tablets can be so described.

Only two British tablets are ansate: these are Caerleon (Text-fig. 5), which (to quote the editors) "has two nail-holes for attachment", and Bath 15, which was nonetheless folded up and deposited in the hot spring. In being thus deposited, it accompanied the third tablet, Bath 10 (Text-fig. 6a,b), which is nonetheless beautifully inscribed like a miniature votive inscription with centred heading; nor was it ever folded, and it is even pierced by an apparent nail-hole, but since it

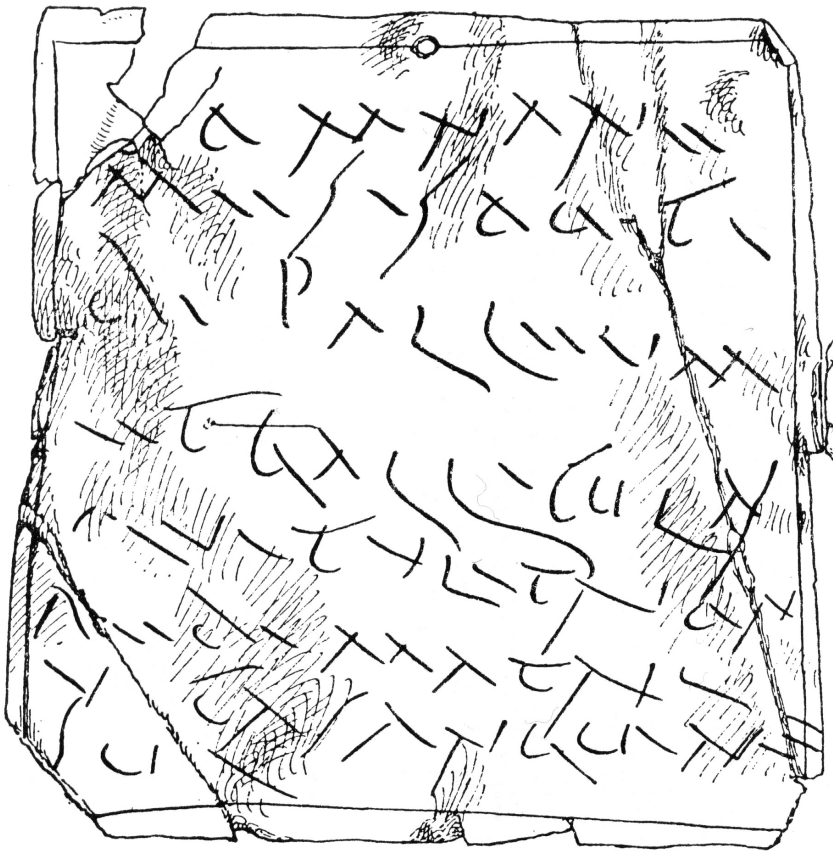

Fig. 5. Curse invoking Nemesis: *RIB* 323 + add. (= Caerleon). Drawn by R.G. Collingwood, *Archaeologia* 78 (1928) 158.

is double-sided, only two-thirds of the text would have actually been visible.

With these three exceptions, British 'prayers for justice' are mostly rolled-up, unless too thick to fold. They have also been often found in inaccessible places like estuary waters (for Neptune) or the hot spring of Sulis. When found buried at temple-sites like Uley, we cannot be sure they are in their original location, but there is no evidence of previous display; and a suggestion that they were not, since they are rolled-up. It follows that they were not intended for the thief to read, but for the deity; this might be surprising to a modern mind, but if we rationalise how tablets 'worked', we risk underestimating the belief that prompted them. In that climate, a thief might expect to be cursed,

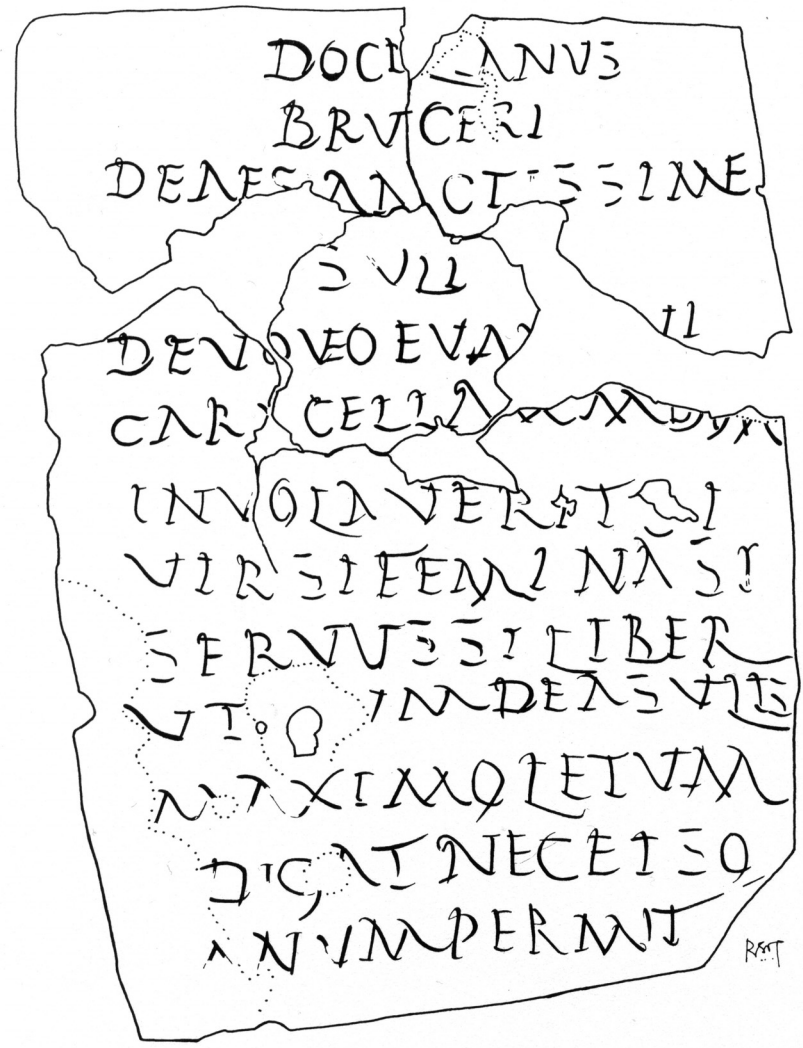

Fig. 6a. Curse by Docilianus against the person who stole his cloak: *Tab. Sulis* 10 (= Tomlin, Bath 10): (a) obverse. Drawn by R.S.O. Tomlin.

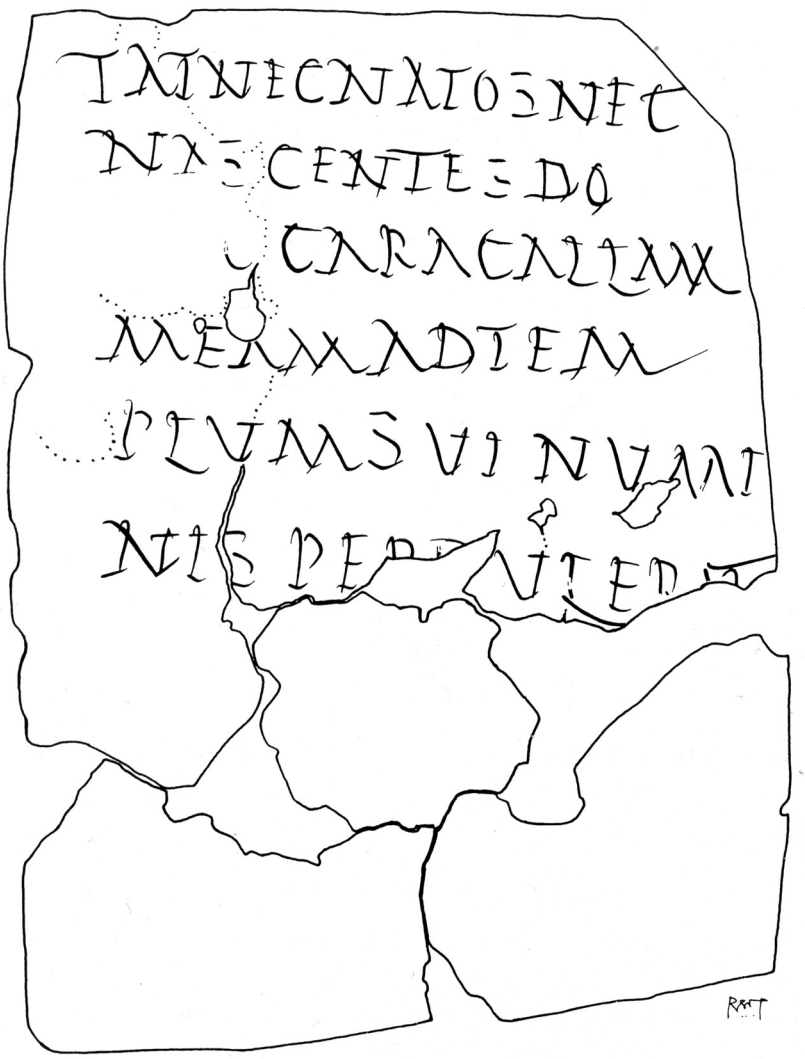

Fig. 6b. Curse by Docilianus against the person who stole his cloak: *Tab. Sulis* 10 (= Tomlin, Bath 10): (b) reverse. Drawn by R.S.O. Tomlin.

but hope to be overlooked by a busy or self-absorbed deity—until illness or misfortune reminded him to search his conscience.[13]

2. *Italica/Sontiponce (nr. Seville)*

The Caerleon tablet already mentioned was found in south-east Wales, not far from Lydney Park. There is an Iberian connection, albeit remote: the modern (Welsh) place-name, like Spanish León, preserves the Roman word *legio*; and Caerleon was the base of *leg. II Augusta*, one of Augustus' legions which completed the conquest of Iberia and formed part of the garrison. In 1927 'King Arthur's Round Table', the Roman amphitheatre outside the fortress, was excavated and this tablet was found. With the exception of two lists of names from the bathhouse at Leintwardine, it happens to be the only tablet from a military site in Britain, but there is no sign of this in the text:

> Lady Nemesis, I give you my cloak and sandals. Let him who stole them not redeem them unless with his life and blood.[14]

Collingwood at first saw this correctly as a curse against a thief, but he assumed that it was a gladiator who would die in the arena; later he moved towards Oxé's idea that the gladiator had 'brought' (*tulit*) his cloak and boots to the cloak-room, but would not be able to 'withdraw' (*redimat*) them. This idea was developed by Egger, who suggested that cloak and boots were buried with the tablet as proxy for the gladiator himself, instead of (say) nail-clippings; and with the unwitting help of a descender from the previous line, he re-read the last four words as *ni vita Sanguinei sui*, 'except with the life of his Blood-red charger', a curse on the gladiator's horse. This fantasy was adopted by *RIB* in 1965, which could hardly be expected to recognise the British tablets' obsession with 'blood' before the evidence had accumulated.[15] Egger himself was thinking of curses from the circus at Rome, Carthage and

[13] Tomlin 1988, 101–05. A 'psychosomatic mechanism for curse tablets' is developed by Kiernan 2004, with anthropological parallels.

[14] Caerleon, *dom(i)na Nemesis do tibi palleum et galliculas qui tulit non redimat ni v[i]ta sanguine suo*. First published by Collingwood in *JRS* 17 (1927) 216 no. 21; also Oxé, in *JRS* 21 (1931) 248 no. 7; Egger 1943, 108–10.

[15] 'Payment in blood' next occurred in Kelvedon, found in 1957, but was only well attested when the Bath tablets were found in 1979 (e.g. *Tab.Sulis* 66 l. 11; 6 l. 6f.); cf. Tomlin 1988, 67. There is no Iberian instance.

Hadrumetum, and it was unfair that this curse had been found in an amphitheatre. The true find-spot, in a sense, was not the arena but the adjoining shrine of Nemesis, appropriately the goddess of divine retribution. This is easy to say now, when another tablet relating to the theft of clothes has just been found in the London amphitheatre, addressed to another goddess associated with amphitheatres who is sometimes identified with Nemesis:

> I give to the goddess Deana my headgear and band, less one-third. If anyone has done this, whether boy or girl, whether slave or free, I give him, and through me let him be unable to live.[16]

At Caerleon, there was a bath-house next to the amphitheatre, and no doubt the cloak and shoes were stolen there. So at least the experience of bathers at Bath would suggest.[17] Understanding the Vulgar verb *tulit* and shoes as an object of theft would have been easier if the Italica tablet (Text-fig. 7) had been available to Collingwood and *RIB*, but it was only found in 1972. It has obvious affinities with Bath as well as Caerleon, in language and formulation, besides being addressed to the goddess of a spring:

> *dom(i)na fons fove[ns] | ut tu persequaris tuas | res demando, quiscun|que caligas meas tel|*[5]*luit et solias. tibi, | dea, demando ut tu | illas, ad(cep)tor si quis | puel(l)a, si mulier sive | [ho]mo involavit, |*[10] *[..]illos persequaris.*

Notes:

1. dom(i)na: cf. Baelo: *rogo, domina, per maiestate(m) tua(m)*; Caerleon: *dom(i)na Nemesis*; Bath 98: *tu, d[o]mina dea, ab ipso perexi[g]e.*

fove[ns]: thus Canto; Gil and Luzón read 'Foyi[ ]', but Y is a very rare letter. This 'v' or 'y' is unlike V elsewhere in the text, but taken with the next vertical stroke is acceptable as N with incomplete diagonal; thus FON, followed by the bottom tip of T. So read *dom(i)na fons, font[i]…demando*, vocative, dative, verb, repeated by *tibi, dea, demando* in 5–6.

2. tuas: there is no sign of the cross-bar of T, and the downstroke is slightly sinuous and certainly longer than that of T elsewhere; in fact the letter resembles L, but D is made with only a tiny loop (compare

[16] London Guildhall Yard, *d]eae Dea[na]e dono capitularem et fas[c]iam minus parte tertia si quis hoc feci[t s]i p[u]er si [p]uella s[i s]er[vus] s[i liber] don[o eum] nec p[er] me [vi]v[ere] possit.*

[17] Tomlin 1988, 79–81.

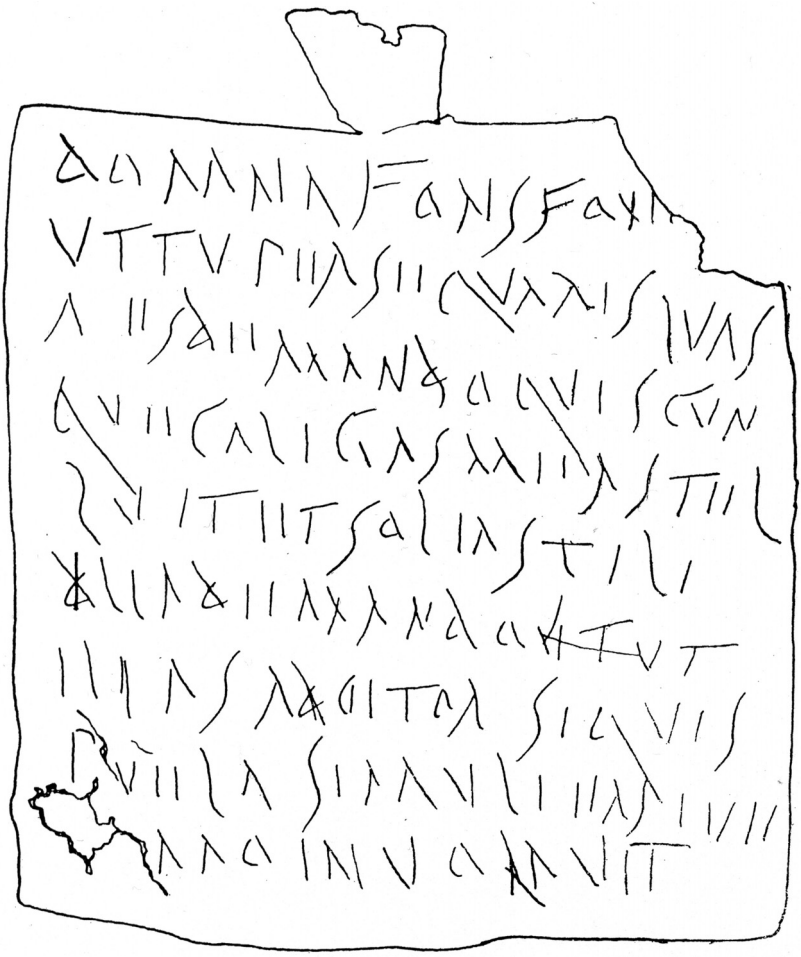

Fig. 7. Curse addressed to *Domina Fons*: *AE* 1975: 497 = Gil and Luzón 1975, 124 (= Tomlin no. 2, Italica).

demando in 3 and 6), whose loss here is easy to assume; compare the B of *tibi* at the end of l. 5, where this has actually happened. So read *duas*, the 'two' things being the boots and sandals, each pair being regarded as a single unit, as in *Tab. Vindol.* II 346 l. 5, *solearum paria du[o]*.

persequaris is not found in British texts, but *exigas* is frequent in this sense (Tomlin 1988, 64 s.v. *exigas*); it occurs in four Bath tablets, as well as in Pagans Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar 2, and Uley 2. The intensive form *perexige* is found in Bath 98, quoted in the note to l. 1 above. The extended idea of paying the gods a commission for their 'exaction' (Tomlin 1988, ibid.)—one-tenth in Ratcliffe-on-Soar 1, one-third in

Uley 2, one-half in Lydney Park and Pagans Hill, two-thirds (apparently) in London Bridge and Ratcliffe-on-Soar 2—has not been found in Iberia. But then, although well attested in Britain, it has not been found at Bath.

3. res: in references to '(stolen) property', see note to Emerita l. 8.

demando is repeated in l. 6; cf. Baelo: *conmendo* and Saguntum 1: *mandat* / *mando* [my readings], while Saguntum 5, which is not a 'prayer for justice', uses *commendo* with its cognate *manudatum*; cf. the iterated *do dono* in Salacia, 7 (with note). The only British parallel is Uley 78 (unpublished): *t[i]bi commendo*, and *do* or *dono* is usual (Tomlin 1988, 63f. s.v. *dono*). This is surprising, since the intensive forms are not just Iberian, but widely attested: e.g. in Italy: *Sol, tibi commendo* (Rome), *hunc… demando devoveo desacrifico* (Arezzo); in Austria: *Secundina Mercurio et Moltino mandat* (Veldidena); and in Germany: *commendo deabus iniurium* (Groß-Gerau).[18]

quiscunque: cf. Saguntum 2: *quisquis* (perhaps twice); Kelvedon: *quicumque res Vareni involaverit, si mulier si mascel*, and similarly in Bath 11, 94 and 98; for the form *quiscumque*, cf. Bath 45: *si servus si liber, si quiscumque erit*.

4–5. caligas meas…et solias: the 'two' things stolen (see above, 2) are two pairs of shoes, not two shoes described in two ways; *caligae* and *soleae* are carefully distinguished in Diocletian's Prices Edict (§ 9), like 'boot-nails' and 'pairs of sandals' at Vindolanda, *clavos caligares* and *duo solearum paria*.[19] Clothes, but not footware, went missing at Bath; the only British instance is *galliculas* at Caerleon.

telluit: for *tolluit*, Vulgar Latin perfect for Classical *tulit* (which in Late Latin replaces *sustulit* in the sense of 'steal'); cf. Saguntum 2: *tunica(m) tulit* [my tentative reading]; Baelo: *autulit aute(m) res* [my reading]. In Britain, *involavit* is usual, but cf. Caerleon, *qui tulit*; Bath 47: *[si servu]s si liber hoc tulerit*; Weeting: *[qu]i [f]uravit su[s]tulit*.

7. ad(cep)tor: thus Canto; Gil and Luzón read ABOITOR, which they recognise as corrupt. In this hand, it is difficult to distinguish D from B, but ADIITOR is the better reading. The context requires a word meaning 'thief' rather than 'receiver', since it is the subject of

---

[18] Respectively *CIL* VI 14098, 14099; *DTAud* no. 129; *AE* 1961:181; Scholz and Kropp 2004, 34 = Versnel no. 3.1.2.1, p. 300 below.

[19] *Prices Edict* 9.1, *de formis caligaribus* (with examples); 9.12, *de soleis et gallicis* (with examples). *Tab. Vindol.* II, 186, 7–8, and 346.i.5 respectively.

involavit (9), but as alternatives to *ad(cep)tor*, perhaps *adiutor* ('accomplice'), or even **ade(p)tor*<*adeptus* ('receiver' of stolen goods) or **abditor*<*abditus* ('concealer', by analogy with *absconditor*<*absconditus*).

7–9. si quis | puel(l)a, si mulier sive | [ho]mo: the only Iberian instance of mutually exclusive alternatives being used to define a thief, a formulation typical of British tablets with many variations (Tomlin 1988, 67f. s.v. *si…si*); it is so familiar in Britain that two texts even reduce it to initial letters.[20] *Sive* for *si* occurs only once, in Bath 61. The formula is 'quasi-legal', but also typical of prayers (Tomlin 1988, 68). A British altar (*RIB* 2071) is dedicated *[s]ive deo sive d[e]ae*, for example, and Macrobius (*Sat.* 3.9.6–8) quotes a formula of evocation which begins: *si deus, si dea est*.[21] A Bath tablet (98) even introduces the pairing, 'whether pagan or Christian'.

There are three instances of *si quis* from Bath, e.g. 63, *si quis balniarem Cantissen(a)e inv[o]la[v]erit, si s(e)r(v)us si liber*. But the indefinite pronoun *quis* followed by the noun *puel(l)a* is difficult; likewise its masculine gender (instead of *si qua*). Gil and Luzón suggest it anticipates *[ho]mo*, but in Britain these alternatives fall into pairs, and the loss of 'boy' required by 'girl' is much more likely.[22] The scribe's eye must have slipped from PVIIR to the almost identical PVIILA, but he meant to write *si quis si puer sive puela, si mulier sive homo*.[23]

9. involavit: see note to Emerita l. 7.

10. [..]illos persequaris: this line was written overleaf, and the editors do not illustrate their reading with a drawing or photograph. The masculine plural is difficult in view of *duas res* (etc.), and perhaps *[tu] illas persequaris* should be read, cf. *tu persequaris* (2) with *illas* (7). In this hand, A could be mistaken for O without the rightward curl of the first stroke: compare the O of DOMNA, where it is almost invisible in the photograph. Preceding *ut* may have been physically lost from the end of 9, or omitted there by the scribe because of its visual similarity to the end of *involavit*.

---

[20] Ratcliffe-on-Soar 1: *si m(ulier) au[t] si b(aro)*; Uley 75 (unpublished): *SB SM SP SP*.

[21] The copious epigraphic and literary evidence is collected with full commentary by Alvar 1985.

[22] There are two exceptions to these pairings, but only because they cite three possibilities, all servile: Bath 31: *si servus si liber si libertinus*; Brandon: *si servus si ancela si liberta*.

[23] *si qui puer sive puela, si mulier sive homo* would have been neater, but he is more likely to have written *si quis* and then stuck to the formula.

Translation:

> Lady Spring, I entrust two things to your spring that you exact them, whoever stole my boots and sandals. I entrust them to you, Goddess, that you exact them, whoever the thief that stole them, whether boy or girl, woman or man.

Just as the writer of a Pagans Hill tablet renewed his prayers (*iteratis precibus*), so the Italica text is a fine example in small compass of the repetition and variation typical of prayers for justice (Tomlin 1988, 72). They are easily tabulated.

dom(i)na dea (1), vocative	*dea* (6), vocative
font[i] (1)	*tibi* (5)
ut tu (2)	*ut tu* (6), written VT VT in error
persequaris (2)	*persequaris* (10)
duas res (2–3)	*illas* (6, repeated in 10)
demando (3)	*demando* (6)
quiscunque… telluit (3–5)	*ad(cep)tor si quis… involavit* (7–9)

3. *Baelo Claudia, Baetica*

In 1988 I published the Bath tablets, which by coincidence was the year when the Baelo tablet was published:

> *Isis Muromem [i.e. Myrionyma], | tibi conmendo | furtu(m) meu(m). mi(hi) fac | tuto numini ma(i)es|*[5]*tati exsemplaria, | ut tu evide(s) immedi|o qui fecit, autulit, | aut (h)eres: opertor(i)u(m) | albu(m) nov(um), stragulu(m) nov(um), lodices duas me(o) |*[10] *uso. rogo, domina, | per maiestate(m) tua(m), | ut (h)oc furtu(m) repri|ndas.*

Notes:

2. tibi conmendo: cf. Italica l. 3: *demando* (with note).

3. furtu(m) meu(m): cf. Emerita l. 5 (with note), where *mihi* is equivalent to the possessive pronoun here, 'my' act of theft being the *furtum* suffered by me. It should be understood as the object of *fecit* in l. 7 (see below).

4. tuto numini: the photograph confirms this reading, and the editors understand the participial adjective *tutus* ('watched-over', i.e. 'safe') in the extended sense of 'giving safety', but not surprisingly they cite no parallel. It is more easily understood as a slip (by repeating T) for *tuo*; cf. Bath 32: *dono numini tuo maiestati paxsa(m) ba(ln)earem*

et [pal]leum; Bath 34: *dono numini tuo pecuniam*; Uley 76: *conqueror numini tuo*.[24]

maiestati is coupled with *numen* in Bath 32 (just quoted), again with ellipse of *et*. Appeals to 'majesty' are typical of petitions: see note to Emerita l. 3.

5. exsemplaria: the deity's power is 'proved' by punishment of the guilty, a concept noted by the editors as typical of 'prayers for justice' and the Phrygian 'confession' cults. It is implicit in Britain (Tomlin 1988, 101–5), but there is no verbal parallel.

6. evide(s): the editors identify this as *evites* ('make lifeless'); for the Vulgar form, cf. Emerita l. 7: *imudes* (with note). There is no British instance of the verb, but wordier pleas for the thief's death are commonplace, e.g. Bath 54: *sanitatem… quantocius consumas*; Hamble estuary: *qui hoc involavit sanguem ei<i>us consumas et decipias*.

immedio: the editors understand this as *in medio*, 'in public', and must be right. 'Prayers for justice' do not often insist on a 'public' answer, but instances can be found, and *exsemplaria* (5) implies it. There is no British parallel (*medius* in Bath 97 is used in a different sense), and the idea is never explicit.

7. autulit: Vulgar Latin for Classical *abstulit*, a variant of *tulit* (see note to Italica l. 4f.).

8. aut (h)eres: thus the editors, for the reading AVTIIRIIS, but the idea of a thief's 'heir' being cursed is difficult; rather, as in Bath 10, he would be cursed with childlessness, i.e. he will have no heir at all.[25] So a better word-division is *aute(m) res*, with the typical omission of unsounded final *-m* found elsewhere in this text, and *res* meaning '(stolen) property', cf. Emerita 8 (with note) and Italica 3. The colourless *furtu(m)…fecit* is reinforced by *autulit* introduced by *aute(m)*.

opertor(i)u(m) albu(m) nov(um) (etc): another list of stolen clothes briefly described, as in Emerita l. 9f. (with note).

9. stragulu(m) nov(um): cf. Bath 6: *stragulum q(u)em (p)erdidi*.

10. lodices duas: cf. *Tab. Vindol.* II 196 l. 2, *lodicum pa[r]*.

de uso is seen by the editors as a confusion for *(m)e(o) usu* (*uso* being Vulgar Latin for *usu*), 'for my own use', but I prefer their suggestion that *de uso* contrasts with *nov(um)* (9 and 10), and thus means

[24] Published as *Britannia* 23 (1992) 310 no. 5 = *AE* 1992: 1127.

[25] Thus Bath 10: *nec natos nec nascentes*; and perhaps Pagans Hill: *[nec nat]os sanos*. But *orbitatem* in Bath 45 is more likely to mean 'blindness'.

'used'. This may be inferred by analogy with *de novo* (always written *denuo*) meaning '(re)newed', but is apparently unattested.

11–12. rogo domina per maiestate(m) tua(m): for *domina*, cf. Italica l. 1 (with note); and for the appeal 'to your majesty', 4–5 above, and Emerita (with note).

13–14. ut (h)oc furtu(m) reprindas: there is no British instance of this verb, which is equivalent to *vindices* in Emerita l. 5 (with note).

Translation:

> Isis Myrionyma, I entrust you with what has been stolen from me. Make me proofs of your divinity and majesty, so that you publicly take away the life of the man who did this theft, indeed who stole my property: a new white coverlet, a new rug, two used blankets. I ask you, Lady, by your majesty, that you punish this theft.

4. *Salacia/Setúbal (Portugal)*

Baelo illustrates a peculiarity of the Iberian tablets: they ask the deity to kill the thief and punish the theft, but they do not expressly require the thief to return what he has stolen. This requirement is explicit in some British texts, and there is even a 'confession cult' altar from Phrygian Maeonia which illustrates the return of a stolen cloak.[26] The Iberian reticence is not due to any sense of logic (how can a dead man give something back?), but like other British texts simply takes for granted that the one entails the other.[27] Recovering what is lost is implied anyway by 'exaction', the careful listing of the property stolen to tell the deity what to recover, and by the ambiguity of the verb *vindicare*, meaning 'to punish' or 'to recover'. For the author of the next tablet, from Salacia (Text-fig. 8), destruction of the thief entails his own 'finding' of the stolen property:

> *domine Megare* | *invicte, tu qui Attidis* | *corpus accepisti, accipias cor*|*pus eius qui meas sarcinas* |[5] *supstulit, qui me compilavit* | *de domo Hispani illius. corpus* | *tibi et anima(m) do dono ut meas* | *res invenia(m). tunc*

[26] For example Bath 32: cursing the thief with ill-health *nissi… istas s[p]ecies ad [te]mplum tuum detulerit* (with note ad loc. of further instances). The altar is *TAM* V.1.231 = Petzold, *BIWK* no. 3, cf. Tomlin 1988, 104.

[27] Bath 10, for example, invokes death, insomnia and childlessness until(!) the property is returned: *do[ne]c caracallam meam ad templum sui numinis per[t]ulerit.*

Fig. 8. Curse addressed to *Dominus Megarus* (?) and Attis: *AE* 2001: 1135 = d'Encarnaçâo and Faria 2002, 261 (= Tomlin no. 4, Salacia/Setúbal).

tibi (h)ostia(m) | *quadripede(m), do(mi)ne Attis, voveo,* | *si eu(m) fure(m) invenero. dom(i)ne* | *Attis, te rogo per tu(u)m Nocturnum* | *ut me quam primu(m) compote(m) facias.*[28]

Notes:

1. domine: cf. *dom(i)ne Attis* in 10–11, and Italica, *dom(i)na fons* (with note).

Megare: in view of Blänsdorf no. 8 l. 3f. *megaro tuo recipias*, the masculine gender, and the word *invicte*, I take this to mean 'Lord Megarus', i.e. Lord of the Megaron, namely Pluto, or possibly the genius of the underground chamber where Attis was buried; but see the considerations advanced by Versnel on his 3.1.1.4, p. 297f. below.

3. accepisti…accipias: not as in Saguntum 1 (see below), but in the sinister sense of Carmona: *dis inferis vos rogo utei recipatis nomen Luxsia* (*AE* 1993: 1008).[29] There is no exact British parallel, but cf. Hamble estuary: *qui decepit…ut eum decipias*. The mythological reminiscence or 'historiola' is typical of protective spells (phylacteries) rather than 'curse-tablets'; there is no British example.

5. supstulit: cf. Italica l. 4f.: *telluit* (with note); cf. Weeting: *[qu]i [f]uravit su[st]ulit…[qui] su[s]tu[l]it*.

compilavit: no British parallel, where *involavit* is usual as in Emerita l. 7 (with note).

6. de domo; no exact British parallel, but cf. Bath 12.i: *[de hosp]itiolio meo*; Bath 99: *de hos<i>pitio suo*; Pagans Hill: *de hospitio m[eo]*.

Hispani illius: the pronoun (equivalent to *istius*) is better taken with *Hispani* than *corpus*; the reference is deliberately offensive in a Lusitanian tablet: only a Spaniard would do a thing like that. The Latin is ambiguous, but by repeating *corpus* it implies that the Spaniard himself is regarded as the thief, and not just a householder who made the theft possible. Racial stereotyping is not found in British 'curse tablets', but note the use of *Brittunculi* at Vindolanda (*Tab. Vindol.* II 164 l. 5).

6–7. corpus…et anima(m): there is no British parallel for *corpus*, but for *anima* cf. Bath 6: *anima(m) [perdat?]*; Bath 31: *ut an[imam] suua(m)*

[28] d'Encarnação and Faria 2002 = *AE* 2001: 1135, improved independently by Guerra 2003 and Marco Simón 2004.

[29] Cf. *in megaro eum rogo te M<a>t<e>r Magna megaro tuo recipias. Et Attis domine te precor ut hu(n)c (h)ostiam acceptum (h)abiatis*: Blänsdorf no. 8 ll. 2–6 (p. 174 above).

in templo deponat; Bath 103: *deus faci(a)t ani(m)am pe(r)d(e)re*. Also cf. Bath 5: *mentes*; Hamble estuary: *animus*(!)… *ut eum decipias*.

7. do dono: these verbs are standard in British texts, especially *dono* at Bath (Tomlin 1988, 63f.), but there is no instance of them together. Here they must have the intensive force of *demando* (etc.): cf. Italica l. 3 (with note). Occasional British synonyms are *devoveo* and *execro*, and the Eccles tablet calls itself a 'donation to the gods'.[30] The object 'given' is usually the stolen property, but sometimes the thief himself, as here; cf. Bath 61: *donat eum qui… involaverit*; Hamble estuary: *d(o)no (h)ominem qui… involav[it]*.

9. voveo: a variant of *do dono* (see note to 7); Bath 10 ll. 5–7: *devoveo eum [q]ui caracellam meam involaverit*, is the closest parallel from Britain.[31] Barchín del Hoyo 'devotes' its named victims to the infernal gods for reasons unstated, so it is not really a 'prayer for justice', but they 'deserve' it: *quos merito devovi*. In a rather different sense, Uley 1 requires the (named) thieves to pay the god the 'devotion' he demands: *devotione[m] qua[m] ipse ab his expostulaverit*.

10. si eu(m) fure(m) invenero: British tablets by contrast credit the *deity* with finding the thief, e.g. Bath 44 ll.2f.: *qui rem ipsam involavit, deus inveniat*; Bath 99 + add.: *quicumque (e)r[it] deus illum inveniat*; Uley 3: *qui fraudem feci[t…] deus inveni[a]t*.[32] On the other hand, Iberian texts only 'give' the thief; in Britain both senses are found, the 'gift' of either thief or property.

11. te rogo per tu(u)m Nocturnum: *rogo* is frequent in British tablets for 'asking' the god to act, but there is no instance of asking 'through' an intermediary, except for *per maiestatem* (Emerita l. 3 with note).

12. me…compote(m) facias: the adjective regularly implies *votum*, and implies the fulfilment of a 'vow' (cf. l. 9, *voveo*). Thus at Vindolanda, Cerialis greets his patron, "whom it is my very special wish to be in good health and master of all your hopes".[33] But *compos* has not yet been found in a British 'curse-tablet', although it occurs with *do* and *mando* in an elaborate curse from Rome which is not explicitly a 'prayer for justice'.[34] Córdoba, without being a 'prayer for justice'

[30] Eccles l. 1: *donatio diebus*(!).

[31] Note also *DTAud* no. 129B (Arezzo), cursing a named victim: *demando devoveo desacrifico* (see also Versnel, p. 350 below).

[32] Cf. Tomlin 1988, 64 s.v. *inveniat*.

[33] *Tab. Vindol.* II 225: *quem salvom esse et omnis spei compotem inter praecipua voti habeo*.

[34] *AE* 1912: 140; Besnier 1920, 19 no. 33.

either, describes itself as a 'vow' which the author asks to 'pay': *ecquod votum feci ut solva(m) rogo*. Versnel (p. 343 below) notes that *votum* is rare in curse-tablets, and there is no British instance, although it is implicit in *devoveo* (Bath 10).

Translation:

> Unconquered Lord Megarus, you who received the body of Attis, may you receive the body of him who who robbed me from the house of that Spaniard. I give and donate his body and soul to you, that I may find my property. I then promise you a four-footed sacrifice, Lord Attis, if I find that thief. Lord Attis, I ask you through your Nocturnus, to make me master of it as soon as possible.

5. *Saguntum 1*

It is intriguing that Salacia, like some of the new tablets from Mainz, should be inspired by the cult of Attis.[35] The British tablets are all addressed to conventional Roman gods like Jupiter, Neptune, Diana/Nemesis, Mercury, if not to their local Celtic counterparts like Sulis Minerva at Bath, and the Uley god variously identified with Mercury, Mars or Silvanus. But in Iberia, Baelo is also addressed to an oriental deity, Isis, while at Saguntum (Text-fig. 9a,b) it comes as almost no surprise to find the god Iao:

> *Cr[y]se (?) ligo auri po[ndo…]II | rogat et a(d) Iau dat pequnia(m) quae a | me accepit Heracla conservus meus | ut ins<t>tetur (h)uius senus o[c]elus et |*[5] *[v]ires q(u)icumqui sunt aride | fiant do pequniam (h)onori sacri|cola(e).*[36]

Notes:

1. The editor tentatively restores a rare feminine personal name, and reads a first-person verb ('I, Chryse, bequeath'), despite the two third-person verbs immediately in l. 2, whose subject is the author of this tablet ('she asks and gives'). His verb *ligo* (not 'I bind', but for *lego*) would be a unique variant of the *do*/*dono* formula, which in the first

[35] Blänsdorf 2004, and see his contribution to this volume (p. 147f. above).

[36] The editor claims (Corell 2000, 242) that this tablet has the outline of an unidentified animal, but this is probably a coincidence. The 'neck' is largely due to the loss of text in line 1; and whereas some British 'curse-tablets' are roughly-trimmed rectangles, others have irregular outlines due to the melting (and sometimes hammering) of the original lump of lead.

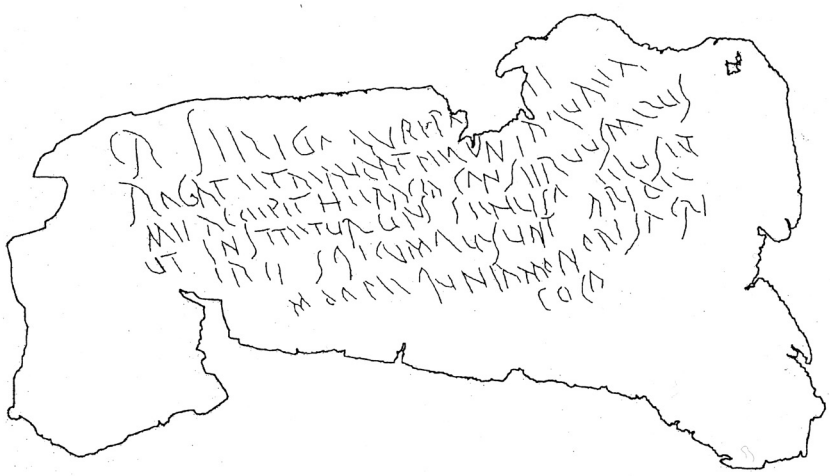

Fig. 9a

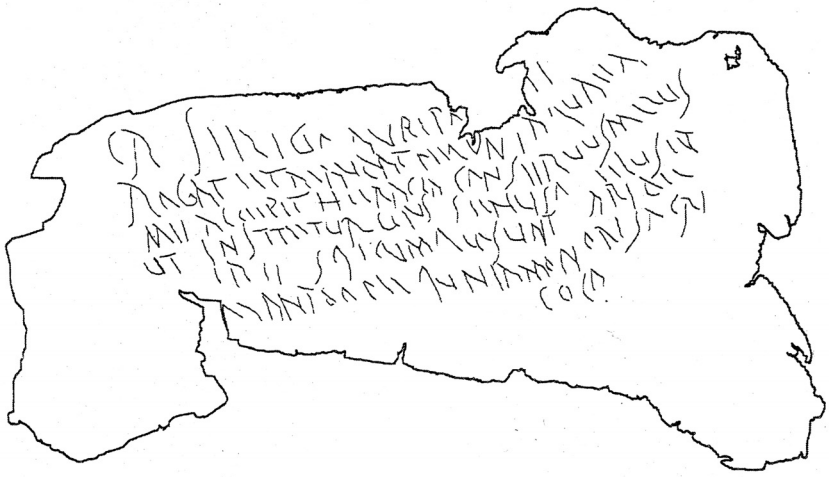

Fig. 9b

Fig. 9a,b. Curse against Heracla: *AE* 2000: 795 = Corell 2002, 68 (= Tomlin no. 5, Saguntum 1). (a) Corell's first version (2000); (b) Corell's second version (2002).

person is not accompanied by the petitioner's name.[37] Then the editor reads a very large sum of money (*pequnia* in 2 and 6), apparently more than two pounds of gold. Women slaves in Saguntum must have been rich, for this is a thousand times the small sums in silver specified at Bath (Tomlin 1988, 80). In view of these difficulties, I conjecture instead a subject for *rogat* (2), the slave's name (note *conservus*, 3) followed by his master's name AVRII[LIAN]I. The common name FIILICIO can be read before this, but would leave CR[ ] unaccounted for. Perhaps the scribe first wrote initial R with a circular flourish (compare the initial R in the line below), intending *rogo* or *rogat*, then changed his mind or noticed his mistake, and leaving a space, wrote the petitioner's name instead.

2. rogat et a(d) Iau dat pequnia(m): "el nombre *Iau* se lee con toda claridad", the editor comments, but in fact his initial I is short and leftward-leaning, unlike any other in this text. Anyone who reads Flavio-Trajanic *stilus*-tablets, which this hand resembles, will know how easy it is to confuse A with part of M, and how the third stroke of M is often ligatured downward from the second. So the editor's *a(d) Iau dat* can be read quite easily as *mandat*, which would remove two difficulties: the ambiguous preposition *a* for *a(d)*, instead of the dative which invariably follows the *do*/*dono* formula; and the invocation of Iao [not 'Iau'], who is usually a deity of protective spells, not 'curse-tablets'.[38]

rogat et mandat together: cf. Saguntum l. 5, apparently *rogat uti manudatum*. For *rogat*, cf. Emerita l. 4 (with note); and for *mandat*, cf. Italica l. 3 *demando* (with note).

3. accepit: the editor understands this as a Vulgarism meaning 'has stolen', but his two parallels from the Itala/Vulgate seem rather forced.[39] Taking the verb in its usual meaning, it looks as if a deposit has been denied: thus *Digest* 16.3.31 refers to the depositor and the receiver as *dantem accipientemque*. The early Christians abjured this

---

[37] Unless preceded by an address to the deity, e.g. Bath 32, *deae Suli Minerv(a)e Solinus*. But a personal name is found with *conqueror* in Bath 54 and 59.

[38] In *DTAud*, which prints 305 items, the exceptions are a stereotyped group of curses from 'Curium' (actually Ayias Tychonas = ancient Amathous) (nos. 22–37), which invoke many powers including Iao 'in heaven' and 'underground'; two curses from Carthage (241, 242), which invoke many powers including Iao; and one from Puteoli (208). They are all in Greek, and none is a 'prayer for justice'. By contrast, 19 of the 68 amulets in Kotansky 1993 invoke Iao, who also figures in a new British amulet (Tomlin 2004b). His name is often found on gemstones.

[39] Corell 2000, 244 n. 20, citing (1) a variant translation of *NT Matth.* 5.40, in the sense of 'take' one's cloak (as the result of a legal decision); (2) *II Corinth.* 11.20, translating the same verb used absolutely in an unspecific context.

very crime, *ne depositum adpellati abnegarent* (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.7), which not only prompted Juvenal, *Sat.* 13, but *DTAud* nos. 2 (Cnidus) and 212 (Bruttium, unlocated); and in Britain, cf. Uley 75 (unpublished): *t[i]bi commendo… qui mihi fraudem fecit de denar[ii]s ill[i]s quos [mih]i debebat*.

4–5. A catalogue of body-parts apparently, as often in 'curse-tablets', but less comprehensive than usual: only the victim's 'bosom' (*senus<sinus*), one 'eye' (*o[c]el(l)us*, a poetic form unlike *oculus*, which occurs in Bath 5 and 45), and his 'strength' (*[v]ires*). *[v]ires* is apparently the antecedent of *q(u)icumqui*, despite being feminine, and although this relative pronoun usually refers to thieves, 'whoever they are' (Tomlin 1988, 66 s.v. *qui* iii). Nor is 'dryness' (*aride<aridae*, but why feminine plural?) appropriate to these body-parts in particular. It is a puzzling curse.

6. fiant do: the tablet must be badly worn here, since the editor first read only *[…]m do*, and the accompanying drawing is correspondingly blank.[40] He then read the first letter(s) as FI, which is not possible in this hand; the revised drawing indicates a damaged or incomplete M, followed by letters which make MANDO an easy reading; it may even be DII|MANDO, if one take DII from the dubious *aride* at the end of the previous line. The phrase *demando pequniam* echoes *mandat pequnia(m)* in 2.

6–7. (h)onori sacricola(e): the editor's reading depends on taking M with *pequnia*, although in 2 the scribe omitted the unsounded *-m* as usual, and also on seeing only four letters in 7, with a wide space to left and right. He also notes that *sacricola* (which he takes to be the priest of 'Iau') should really be in the genitive case.

But having lost 'Iau' (2), we might have expected to find the deity here to whom the embezzled money is 'entrusted'.

Translation:

> Felicio the slave of Aurelianus (?) asks and entrusts the money which Heracla my fellow-slave received from me, that his bosom(?) be attacked, his eye(?) and strength(?), whoever they are […] I entrust the money (?)to the honour of the priest.

If *Felicio Aur[elian]i* can be read in 1, it means that Iberian tablets were not always anonymous. The 'public' nature of Emerita, Italica and Baelo—a marble panel and two ansate tablets—might be thought

[40] Corell 2000, 242 fig. 1, revised in Corell 2002, 68.

to have inhibited their authors from exposing themselves: they had justice on their side, but perhaps they were guarding against a counter-spell. However, these are not 'spells', and reticence would imply a lack of faith. They are written in the first person, like Salacia and part of Saguntum: the author took his own identity for granted, as it were; *he* knew, and the god knew, who was writing; there was no need for anyone else to know. Still, he had nothing to fear; it would have been natural and easy for him to name himself, as in this text from Bath:

> Docilianus son of Brucetus to the most holy goddess Sulis. I give him who has stolen my hooded cloak.[41]

This Bath tablet, I have noted already, was designed as if for 'display'. Many British texts are written in the third-person, which automatically names the author. Thus, for example, again at Bath:

> Louernisca gives him, whether man or woman, whether boy or girl, who has stolen her cape.[42]

6. *Saguntum 2*

The Iberian first-person texts could easily have been cast in this third-person form, as Saguntum seems to have been before reverting to the first person. Was it then a convention of Iberian 'prayers for justice' to use the anonymous first person? The sample is too small to answer this question, but it should be borne in mind. The only other 'prayer', apparently, is this short text from Saguntum (Text-fig. 10a,b):

> *quisquis tunica(m) tol(l)it de Lidia obi eum | vel iam, ite(m) is quis questo <h>habeat | trata.*

Notes:

[41] Bath 10, emended from Uley 43 (published as *Britannia* 20 [1989] 329 no. 3): *Docilianus Bruceri*(!) *deae sanctissim(a)e Suli devoveo eum [q]ui caracellam(!) involaverit si vir si femina si servus si liber ut [e]um dea Sulis maximo letum*(!) *[a]digat nec ei somnum permittat nec natos nec nascentes do[ne]c caracallam meam ad templum sui numinis per[t]ulerit* (see Text-fig. 6, p. 251f.).

[42] Bath 61: *Louernisca d[onat] eum qui sive v[ir] <i>sive femina s[i]ve puer sive puella qui mafortium i[n]volaverit.*

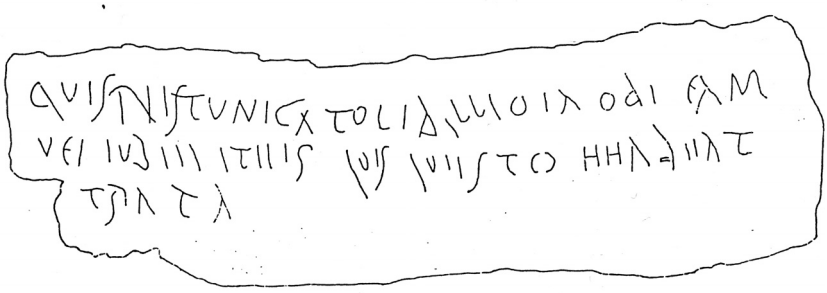

Fig. 10a

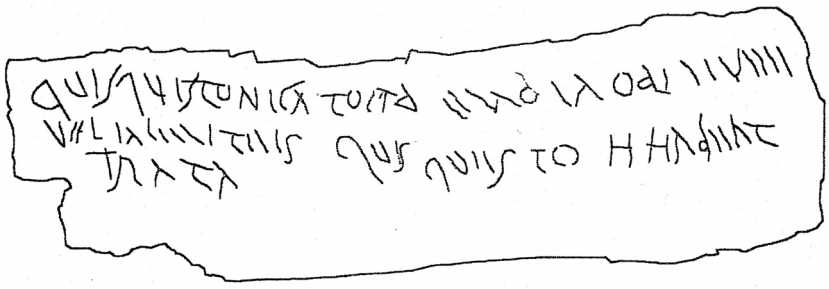

Fig. 10b

Fig. 10a,b. Theft of a tunic: *AE* 1994: 1073 = Corell 2002, 74 (= Tomlin no. 6, Saguntum 2). (a) Corell's first version (1994); (b) Corell's second version (2002).

1. tol(l)it: the editor first read *tulid*, but then adopted this suggestion by P. Le Roux; his two drawings differ accordingly.[43] By collating them, it is tempting to read *tulit*: cf. Italica l. 4f.: *telluit* (with note), and Caerleon: *qui tulit*.

After *tulit*, I am at a loss. The reading of *Lidia* as the victim of theft does not convince in either drawing.

Translation:

Whoever has stolen a tunic…

Instead of concluding with this broken sentence, let me voice two thoughts, geographical and numerical. The British find-spots I have chiefly mentioned, Lydney Park and Caerleon, Bath and Uley, lie just north and south of the Severn estuary respectively; and British 'curse-tablets' are quite localised. Except for the small group found

[43] Corell 2000, 283 fig. 2; Le Roux in *AE* 1994: 1073; Corell 2002 no. 15 (with a different drawing).

at Ratcliffe-on-Soar near Nottingham, they have all been found in southern England and the Welsh Marches. Apart from those I have mentioned, there are just a few from the Midlands, London and East Anglia, one from Kent, and the Hamble estuary tablet from a river-creek near Southampton. Their distribution is almost entirely 'civilian', as I have said, quite unlike the mass of inscriptions on stone and other hard materials from Roman Britain; but like the distribution of writing-*stili*, they remind us that writing was not just a 'military' skill or habit.[44] This epigraphic bias is not a problem in Iberia, but it may be noted that the four most important texts against theft derive from the urbanised south-west, in Baetica and neighbouring Lusitania.

This may be an accident of survival—or of discovery. I have been luckier than the editors of Caerleon: a code can only be broken when a 'critical mass' of intercepts has accumulated.[45] British 'curse-tablets' were still quite rare in 1965: only seven are published in *RIB*, and three of these are 'curses' rather than 'prayers for justice'; another six were found by 1977, when the total was twelve published.[46] In 1993 the Iberian total was thirteen.[47] I sympathise with the editors of Italica, who complained in 1975 that Spain, for all its generosity with epigraphic texts of major importance, has been sparing with *defixiones*.[48] The British total is now more like 250. This twenty-fold increase in less than thirty years is partly due to the use of metal-detectors, but it is largely due to just two archaeological digs, both in 1979, at Bath and Uley. So it is a matter of luck and awareness, and I am sure the same will happen in Spain and Portugal. Like Britain, they will suddenly have more 'curse-tablets' than they can read. When this happens, I hope some kind person will invite me back to Zaragoza.

---

[44] Hanson and Conolly 2002 (see also Blänsdorf above, p. 163f.). The 'Vindolanda'-type wooden leaf tablets from Lechlade noted by Bowman and Thomas 1983, 35 (k), are unpublishable tiny fragments, but they make the same point.

[45] Tomlin 2004a, 14.

[46] *RIB* 6, 7, 154, 221, 243, 306, 323, with Wanborough, Uley 6, Kelvedon, Old Harlow, Ratcliffe-on-Soar 2. See *Tab.Sulis* 60–61. Ratcliffe-on-Soar 1 was not yet published; *RIB* 2349* (Bath) and the two lists of names from Leintwardine had not been recognized as 'curse tablets'.

[47] Corell 1993, 261, n. 1, counts 'at least ten' including 4 from Ampurias, but he notes that Balil 1964 refers to 7 (Latin) tablets from Ampurias [= Almagro 1952, 161–9 nos. 113–9].

[48] Gil and Luzón 1975, 125.

Bibliography

I have cited 'curse-tablets' briefly by their place of discovery, and I now give references to publication, first Iberian, and then British.

1. *Iberian 'curse-tablets'*

(a) *directed against theft ('prayers for justice')*
Emerita: *CIL* II 462; *DTAud* 122; Alvares Sáenez de Buruaga 1955; *ILER* no. 736; *AE* 1959: 30; 1961: 102
Italica: Gil and Luzón 1975 = *AE* 1975: 497; *HEp* 1 (1989) 138 no. 530 (A.M. Canto); *CILA* 2.2: 362
Baelo: Bonneville, Dardaine and Le Roux 1988, 21–24 no. 1 = *AE* 1988: 727
Salacia: d'Encarnaçâo and Faria 2002 = *AE* 2001: 1135; Guerra 2003; Marco Simón 2004
Saguntum 1: Corell 2000 = *AE* 2000: 795; Corell 2002 no. 13
Saguntum 2: Corell 1994, No. 2 = *AE* 1994: 1073; Corell 2002 no. 15

(b) *Other Cause*
Ampurias 1, 2, 3: Almagro 1952 nos. 114, 115, 116 (law-court adversaries)
Ampurias 4: Almagro 1952 no. 117 (*[qui]cumqui mi(hi) facinus inposuit*)
Saguntum 3: Corell 1994 no. 1 = *AE* 1994: 1072; Corell 2002, No. 16 (amatory)
Saguntum 4: Corell 1994 no. 3 (blank, but found folded with Nos. 2 and 3)
Ampurias 5, 6: Almagro 1952 nos. 118, 119 (two small fragments)

(c) *Named Enemies*
Barchín del Hoyo: Curbera, Sierra Delage and Velázquez 1999 = *AE* 1999: 954 a,b (Timê and Nicias *devotos defixos inferis*)
Carmona: Corell 1993 = *AE* 1993: 1008; Maltomini 1995; *HEp* 9 (1999) 166 no. 503 (A.M. Canto) (name of Luxsia received *dis inferis*)
Saguntum 5: Corell 2002 no. 14 (body-parts of Eterio given *dis infe[ris]*)
Córdoba 1: *ILER* no. 5913 (Dionisia devotes Salpina *deibus infereis*)

(d) *Lists of Names*
Ampurias 7: Almagro 1952 no. 113 (*inimeici*)
Córdoba 2: *ILER* no. 5914 (names only)
Córdoba 3: *ILER* no. 5915 (names only)
Saguntum 6: Corell 2002 no. 17 (a lead tag?)

Almost one-third of Latin 'curse-tablets' from Iberia are directed against thieves, but in Britain more than two-thirds.

	Theft	Other Cause	Named Enemy	List of Names
Iberia	6	8	4	4
Bath	44	4		12
Uley	25	2		3
Other British	20		4	5

These figures are not exact, since they exclude British fragments of uncertain type, and the categories overlap. 'Theft' includes the refusal of a deposit, and fragments only identified by characteristic formulas; some also incorporate lists of names (i.e. of

suspects). 'Other Cause' includes acts of malice (at Bath and Uley) which prompt 'prayers for justice', as well as law-suits and sex (at Ampurias). 'Named Enemies' are cursed without a reason being given. 'Lists of Names' are unspecific, except for the 'enemies' in Ampurias 7, and the targets of divine 'vindication' in London Bridge.

2. *British 'curse-tablets' (those cited above)*

The Bath tablets have been published as *Tab.Sulis*, but are cited above as 'Bath' with their sequence-number (e.g. Bath 10); page-references to the thematic chapters in the volume are expressed as Tomlin 1988–. The first five Uley tablets were published in Woodward and Leach 1993, 118–26, the others being noted as Descripta (127–30), but seven have been published since in *Britannia*. There is a check-list of British 'curse-tablets' published before 1988 in Tomlin 1988, 60f., and those published since will be found in the annual survey-chapter 'Roman Britain, II: Inscriptions' in *Britannia*.[49] References follow for tablets neither from Bath nor Uley:

Caerleon: *RIB* 323 + add.
Eccles: *Britannia* 17 (1986) 428 no. 2 = *AE* 1986: 483
Hamble estuary: *Britannia* 28 (1987) 455 no. 1 = *AE* 1997: 977
Kelvedon: *JRS* 48 (1958) 150 no. 3
Leintwardine: *RIB* II.8, 2504. 20 and 21
London Bridge: *Britannia* 18 (1987) 360 no. 1 = *AE* 1987: 738a
London Guildhall Yard: *Britannia* 34 (2003) 362 no. 2 = *AE* 2003: 1021
Lydney Park: *RIB* 306 with *Britannia* 31 (2000) 446, corrigendum (c) = *AE* 2000: 804
Old Harlow: *Britannia* 4 (1973) 325 no. 3 = *AE* 1975: 542
Pagans Hill: *Britannia* 15 (1984) 339 no. 7 = *AE* 1984: 623
Ratcliffe-on-Soar 1: *JRS* 53 (1963) 122–4 = *AE* 1964: 168
Ratcliffe-on-Soar 2: *Britannia* 35 (2004) 336 no. 3 = *AE* 2004: 856; Tomlin 2004c
Towcester: *Britannia* 38 (2007) 361 no. 27
Wanborough: *Britannia* 3 (1972) 363–7 = *AE* 1975: 530
Weeting: *Britannia* 25 (1994) 296 no. 2 = *AE* 1994: 1113a,b

3. *Modern authors*

Almagro Basch, M. 1952. *Las Inscripciones Ampuritanas Griegas, Ibéricas y Latinas* (Barcelona).
Alvar, J. 1985. Matériaux pour l'étude de la formule *sive deus, sive dea*, *Numen* 32, 236–73.
Alvares Sáenez de Buruaga, J. 1955. El hallazgo de la lápida de Proserpina, de Mérida, *Revista de Estudios Extremeños* 11, 325–37.
Balil, A. 1964. Noticiario 24: Defixiones ampuritanas, *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 37, 197.
Bell, H.I., Martin, V., Turner, E.G., and van Berchem, D. 1962. *The Abinnaeus Archive: Papers of a Roman Officer in the Reign of Constantius, 2* (Oxford).
Besnier, M. 1920. Récents travaux sur les *defixionum tabellae* latines, 1904–1914, *Revue de Philologie* 44, 5–30.
Blänsdorf, J. 2004. "Guter, heiliger Atthis": eine Fluchtafel aus dem Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtum (Inv.-Nr 201 B 36), in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 51–8.

[49] Ménard 2000, after interpreting Tomlin 1988 and Versnel 1991 for French readers, contributes an updated check-list (298f.) where No. 43: 'Thrompton', my Ratcliffe-on-Soar 1, is a misprint inherited from *AE* 1964; its numeral '121' [a slip for 122] has strayed from the previous reference to *JRS*, and should be 168.

Bonneville, J.N., Dardaine, S., and Le Roux, P. 1988. *Belo V. L'épigraphie. Les inscriptions romaines de Baelo Claudia* (Madrid).
Bowman, A.K. and Thomas, J.D. 1983. *Vindolanda: the Latin Writing-Tablets* (London).
——. 1994. *The Vindolanda Writing-Tablets: Tabulae Vindolandenses II* (London).
Brodersen, K. and Kropp, A. (eds.) 2004. *Fluchtafeln: Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt am Main).
Corell, J. 1993. Defixionis tabella aus Carmona (Sevilla), *ZPE* 95, 261–8.
——. 1994. Drei *defixionum tabellae* aus Sagunt (Valencia), *ZPE* 101, 280–6.
——. 2000. Invocada la intervención de Iau en una defixio de Sagunto (Valencia), *ZPE* 130, 241–7.
——. 2002. *Inscripciones romanes de Saguntum i el seu territori* (Valencia).
Curbera, J., Sierra Delgado, M., Velázquez, I. 1999. A Bilingual Curse Tablet from Barchín del Hoyo (Cuenca, Spain), *ZPE* 125, 279–283.
d'Encarnaçâo, J. and Faria, J.C.L. 2002. O santuário romano e a *defixio* de Alcacer do Sal, in J. Cardim Riberio (ed.), *Religiôes da Lusitânia. Loquntur saxa* (Lisbon), 259–267.
Egger, R. 1943. Aus der Unterwelt der Festlandkelten, *Wiener Jahreshefte* [= *JÖAI*] 35, 99–137.
Gil. J. and Luzón, M. 1975. Tabella defixionis de Itálica, *Habis* 6, 117–33.
Guerra, A. 2003. Anotaçôes ao texto da *tabella defixionis* de Alcácer do Sal, *Revista Portuguesa de Arqueología* 6, 335–9.
Hanson, W.S. and Conolly, R. 2002. Language and Literacy in Roman Britain: Some Archaeological Considerations, in A.E. Cooley (ed.), *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West* (Portsmouth RI) 151–64.
Kiernan, P. 2004. Did curse-tablets work? in B. Croxford, H. Eckardt, J. Meade, and J. Weekes, *TRAC 2003: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Theoretical Archaeology Conference (Leicester 2003)* (Oxford) 123–34.
King, C.W. (ed.) 1879. W.H. Bathurst, *Roman Antiquities at Lydney Park, Gloucestershire* (London).
Maltomini, F. 1995. Nota alla defixio di Carmona. *ZPE* 107, 297f.
Marco Simón, F. 2004. Magia y cultos orientales: acerca de una *defixio* de Alcácer do Sal (Setúbal) con mención de Attis, *MHNH* 4, 79–94.
Ménard, H. 2000. Le vol dans les tablettes de la Bretagne romaine (*Britannia*), *RHD* 78, 289–99.
Tomlin, R.S.O. 1988. *Tabellae Sulis: Roman Inscribed Tablets of Tin and Lead from the Sacred Spring at Bath* = Part 4 (the curse-tablets) of B. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, II: Finds from the Sacred Spring* (Oxford) 59–277.
——. 1993. The inscribed Lead Tablets: an Interim Report, in Woodward and Leach 1993, 112–30.
——. 2004a. *carta picta perscripta*: Anleitung zum Lesen von Fluchtafeln aus dem römischen Britannien, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 11–29.
——. 2004b. A Bilingual Roman Charm for Health and Victory, *ZPE* 149, 259–66.
——. 2004c. A Roman Inscribed Tablet from Red Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Notts.), *Antiq. J.* 84, 346–52.
Versnel, H.S. 1991. Beyond Cursing: the Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers, in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford) 60–106.
——. 2002. Writing Mortals and Reading Gods: Appeal to the Gods as a Dual Strategy in Social Control, in D. Cohen (ed.), *Demokratie, Recht und soziale Kontrolle im klassischen Athen* (Oldenbourg) 37–76.
Woodward, A. and Leach, P. 1993. *The Uley Shrines: Excavation of a Ritual Complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire: 1977–9*. English Heritage Archaeological Report 17 (London) 113–30.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PRAYERS FOR JUSTICE, EAST AND WEST: NEW FINDS AND PUBLICATIONS SINCE 1990*

Henk S. Versnel

In a number of papers published in the nineteen-eighties and early-nineties, I argued for a distinction between (or within) the general category of Greek and Latin *defixiones*, on the one hand, and a more specific group of curses on the other. I have proposed a variety of names for this group: 'judicial prayers',[1] 'prayers for justice', 'prayers for revenge'. After two brief articles in Dutch and French respectively (Versnel 1986; 1987), a more comprehensive study entitled "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers" (Versnel 1991), which was followed by a number of studies on related subjects,[2] has done much to make the category, and the arguments on which it was based, widely familiar.[3] Term and concept have been adopted, and

* I wish to express my profound gratitude to Richard Gordon, who as general editor accepted the onerous task to thoroughly scrutinize my text on a wide variety of barbarisms, errors and omissions and whose meticulous care went far beyond the limits of what is usually understood by the word 'editing'. Remaining mistakes are solely due to the author's indomitable tendency to continue inserting pieces of text after the editor's interventions.

[1] As this term may provoke confusion with the *defixiones iudicariae*, relating to litigation between human beings, which are also sometimes called "judicial curses", we should handle this expression with care, that is, only after precise definition. Richard Gordon prefers the term "vindicative" (*not* 'vindictive'), as he wrote earlier and most recently in: Social Control in the Lydian and Phrygian 'Confession' texts, in: L. Hernandéz Guerra and J. Alvar Ezquerra (eds.), *Actas del XXVII congreso internacional Girea-Arys IX, Jerarquías religiosas y control social en el mundo antiguo* (Valladolid 2002 [2004]), 198. I have no objection to this except that the term (though itself pertinent) belongs to the semantic field of the verb to *vindicate*, whose meanings are 1) clear of blame, 2) establish the merits or justice of, 3) justify by arguments or evidence. These denotations of the *English* word 'vindicate' do not match the required meaning of "asking a god for justice, vengeance and/or redress for a wrong suffered". In order to prevent confusion and because 'prayer for justice' has become established now I would maintain that expression for future use. The German "Vergeltungsgebet", offered by Graf 2001, 186, equals vindicative prayer but lacks its ambiguity.

[2] Versnel 1994, 1998, 1999, 2002.

[3] I have always expressly drawn attention to the work of earlier scholars that in some ways anticipated mine, especially Björck 1938 (*passim* in Versnel 1991; most

often productively applied in their own work, by such prominent scholars in the field as David Jordan,[4] Chris Faraone (who contributed to its further development by tracing the Canaanitic background of this type of curse in a recent article on curses against thieves),[5] and Angelos Chaniotis,[6] as well as in numerous publications of new texts that display elements at variance with the genre of ordinary *defixiones*.[7] Independently, Roger Tomlin, in his magisterial edition of the Bath tablets, had already pointed out that these are "petitions for justice, not

---

recently: Versnel 2002, 71). It should be noted, however, that Björck focussed his attention on those funerary curses in which the god (often the Sun) was asked to avenge the deceased in cases where the death was believed to have been caused by a person unknown. On this topic, see: F. Cumont, Il sole vindice dei delitti ed il simbolo delle mani alzate, *Mem. Pont. Acc.* ser. III.1 (1923) 65–80; *idem*, Deux monuments des cultes solaires, Appendice, *Syria* 14 (1933) 392–5; and more recently: Versnel 1991, 70–71; 1999, 129–31; Chaniotis 2004, 9–11; Graf 2001; *idem*, Untimely Death, Witchcraft, and Divine Vengeance. A Reasoned Epigraphical Catalogue, *ZPE* 162 (2007) 139–150, a timely and exhaustive survey of the evidence. Add: E. Bernand, *Inscriptions grecques d'Égypte et de Nubie au Musée du Louvre* (Paris 1992) no. 90 and cf. 93 and 98. Roger Tomlin informs me that C.W. King, in W.H. Bathurst, *Roman Antiquities at Lydney Park, Gloucestershire* (London 1879) 45, was the first to compare the British 'prayers for justice' with the Cnidus tablets (see below), "which similarly invoke the wrath of heaven upon certain obnoxious parties". The Cnidus tablets were found in 1859 by (Sir) Charles Newton, the Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum from 1861–96, in the temple of Demeter while he was the British vice-consul in Mitylene (the statue is in the Museum). He published them in 1863.

[4] In many publications of new texts and most explicitly in *SGD* II 5f., where he explains that he uses the term 'curse tablets' rather than *defixiones* in the title (as he had done in *SGD* I) because he is convinced that my 'prayers for justice' should be considered a different category. Note also his remark in: Three Curse Tablets, in Jordan, Montgomery and Thomassen 1999, 115–24 at 115: "Of the greatest help to our understanding of Greek and Latin curse tablets is H.S. Versnel's demonstration (1991) that while many curses express aggressive malice on the part of the curser, certain others, which V. calls 'prayers for justice', are written in the hope of obtaining vengeance for wrongs suffered". Jordan here lays particular emphasis on "borderland curses" (what Ogden 1999, 38 calls "cross-over cases"), which display elements of both categories, aggressively malicious *defixiones* and 'judicial prayers'. For a discussion of this borderland category see below pp. 332–42.

[5] Faraone, Garnand, and López-Ruiz 2005, 162: "Versnel has completely revolutionized our understanding of this special genre of curse, which now seems quite distinct from the so-called binding curses (*defixiones)* and clearly part of a special subset of curses—a subset that he has aptly labeled 'prayers for justice'" (162). In this article Faraone adduces numerous texts I had already discussed in Versnel 1991 and subsequent studies, as well as some of those I treat here. See his Table 1, on p. 173.

[6] In the notices of similar curses in his invaluable EBGR, and most recently in Chaniotis 2004.

[7] See the commentaries on the texts discussed here. I would specifically mention Curbera 1999, 169: "Accanto alle *defixiones* propriamente dette bisogna menzionare dei documenti…che appartengono alla categoria chiamata da Hendrik Versnel 'judicial prayers'".

magical spells".[8] Both J.G. Gager[9] and D. Ogden[10] in their general discussions of *defixiones* single out the 'pleas for justice and revenge', or 'prayers for justice', as a special category alongside, but distinct from, those of the well-known categories (which are, in the order adopted by both authors: 1. competition in theatre and circus; 2. sex, love and marriage; 3. legal and political disputes; 4. business and commerce).[11]

If I unblushingly insist on these positive reactions, I do so for at least two reasons. The first is that there are still some specialists who seem slightly reluctant to adopt this new taxonomy.[12] Others, while accepting the desirability of a distinction, seem reluctant to accept too radical a division between this group and the other types of *defixio*. In this connection, I am aware that there has been some misunderstanding about the inferences I am believed to draw from the new categorisation.

The second reason is that recognition of the new category does not necessarily imply comprehension of its meaning and implications. From a recent collective volume (Brodersen and Kropp 2004), I learn that the term 'prayers for justice', in the form "Gebete um Gerechtigkeit",

---

[8] Tomlin 1988, 62; idem 2004, 12: "sogenannte 'Gebete um Gerechtigkeit' … Briefe an Götter, die von Personen verfaßt werden, die sich zu einer rechtmäßigen Klage befugt sehen"; also his contribution to the present volume (p. 246f.). Although his 1988 volume appeared one, respectively two years after my own first studies, and he had the opportunity to inspect a draft of my paper of 1991 (see Tomlin 1988, 59 n. 3), his insights over the years, as witness his contributions to *Britannia*, had followed the very same track as mine.

[9] Gager, *CT* 175: "Among the surviving *defixiones*, one distinctive category may be labeled as pleas for justice and revenge. H. Versnel, in a recent treatment, calls them judicial prayers for help from the god and argues that they belong to a category quite different from curses on metal tablets".

[10] Ogden 1999: 37–44. On p. 37 he states: "Prayers for justice constitute the most distinctive category of curse tablets". The same formulation can be found in 2002: 219. Although at 2002, 7 he calls them "the *slightly* distinct prayers for justice", in Chap. 10 he groups "Binding curses: law, competition, and trade" in one section (nos. 168–84), and "Prayers for Justice" in a separate section of their own (nos. 185–91).

[11] Audollent in *DTAud* p. lxxxix distinguished four categories of *defixio* which only partly coincide with this classification: 1. litigation; 2. to obtain the recovery of stolen objects; 3. love-magic of all types; 4. competitions (circus-racing); on the following page, however, evidently under the influence of the Cnidus tablets, he groups (2) with attacks on calumniators and gossips. This is no doubt because at that time very few clear 'judicial prayers' had been successfully read, so there was little reason to assign them to a separate category. Nevertheless on p. xci he seems to revert to his initial classification, observing that *defixiones* against thieves are mainly found in Asia (he was thinking of Tell Sandahanna in Palestine), Britain and Spain.

[12] See my discussion on pp. 324–27 below.

has now gained a solid foothold in German scholarship.[13] That makes it all the more regrettable that some of the authors seem to have little idea of the origin of the term or what it implies,[14] which on occasion leads to a seriously flawed representation of what I understand by it.[15] For both these reasons, then, I welcome the present occasion to clarify matters with the aid of the rich epigraphic harvest of the last fifteen years.

1. *Definition*

I define 'prayers for justice' as pleas addressed to a god or gods to punish a (mostly unknown) person who has wronged the author (by theft, slander, false accusations or magical action), often with the additional

---

[13] E.g. 'Vorwort' to Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 7; Scholz and Kropp 2004, 38; Kropp 2004, 85.

[14] It is also possible to show knowledge of the literature and yet present others' ideas as one's own: for example H. Ménard, Le vol dans les tablettes de la Bretagne romaine, *RHD* 78 (2000) 289–299, first briefly mentions the new interpretation proposed by Tomlin, Gager and myself, then discusses the motif of theft in the British curses (adding almost nothing to the detailed survey of theft, thieves and other topics by Tomlin 1988, 79–81), and finally presents as her own the idea that the "dénomination de *defixiones*, stricto sensu" is to be rejected and "celle de prières juridiques semble dès lors plus appropriée".

[15] Let me take as an example P.-Y. Lambert, Defining Magical Spells and particularly *defixiones* of Roman Antiquity: A Personal Opinion, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 71–80. Although he accepts that my category "offers a completely renewed analysis" (p. 79), he seems to believe that I combine the categories of "judicial spells" and "spells against thieves". In fact, petitions against thieves represent the bulk of the texts in my category 'prayers for justice'. He also singles out "the possibility of atonement and forgiveness" as the main criterion for distinguishing between *defixiones* and 'prayers for justice', an emphasis that fails to do justice to the range of distinctions I advanced in 1991 (cf. pp. 279f.). Nor is this feature present in all such prayers. (On his equally misguided classification of the prayers as vows, see the Appendix to the present article). To take a second example, Kropp 2004, 84f. contends that, even acknowledging the special nature of the 'prayers for justice', there is still an element common to *all* these texts ("eine zumindest genetische Einheit"), namely "die sprachliche Reflexion des 'Bindezaubers'—in den Verben wie *ligare* usw.—" and in certain ritual procedures, such as the use of lead-tablets and their manner of deposition, where these can be established. The truth is that the term/notion *ligare* vel sim. is one of the important tests for distinguishing between *defixiones* proper and the 'prayer for justice'. Neither the use of lead nor the mode of deposition is a constant. One of the causes of all this confusion is that, although my major study of 1991 figures in the collective bibliography, the actual references, when given, are all to my earlier essays (Lambert cites Versnel 1985 and 1987 only; Kropp cites no article of mine. But see now her far more nuanced, important exposition in this volume). For that matter the entire book, besides other shortcomings, shows marks of haste and (hence?) of careless and inaccurate references, phrasing and composition.

request to redress the harm suffered by the author (e.g. by forcing a thief to return a stolen object, or to publicly confess guilt).[16] The great majority of *defixiones* as brought together in the standard collections such as *DTAtt, DTAud, SGD* I and II, lack such appeals to divine justice and are clearly of a different nature, most conspicuously in that 1: the submissive and deferential tone of the prayer is lacking, and 2: no explicit motive is advanced in justification. Whenever prayers for justice are found in some concentration, the site is not a grave, as it so often is in the case of *defixiones*, but a sanctuary of a (mostly but not invariably) chthonic deity.[17] A significant part of my evidence comes from two such sanctuaries, the temple of Demeter at Cnidus in Caria (*I.Knidos* nos. 147–159) and the sanctuary with the hot springs of Sulis Minerva at Bath.[18]

At this point, I reproduce from Versnel 1991, 68 the list of formal characteristics that seemed to me typical of the prayer for justice as opposed to the *defixio* proper.[19] The central point is that they are all cases in which the principal has been wronged by someone, or some persons, whose identity is generally unknown. The other typical features are:

1. the principal states his or her name
2. some grounds for the appeal are offered; this statement may be reduced to a single word, or may be enlarged upon
3. the principal requests that the act be excused or that he be spared the possible adverse effects
4. gods other than the usual chthonic deities are often invoked
5. these gods, either because of their superior character, or as an emollient gesture, may be awarded a flattering epithet (e.g. φίλη) or a superior title (e.g. κύριος, κύρια, or δέσποινα)

---

[16] From this point, I cease to place inverted commas round the term prayers for justice.

[17] A spring or well may be involved—as at Bath—but is by no means indispensable, as the cases at Cnidus, Acrocorinth and Mainz demonstrate. Individual prayers for justice have however been discovered in graves.

[18] Due to the prolonged production process of Faraone and Obbink 1991, Tomlin's invaluable edition of the Bath texts (*Tab.Sulis*) reached me only after I had sent in my contribution. In looking over my correspondence with Tomlin on the manuscript of my article, I find that already in April 1987 the editors had strictly disallowed any additions or alterations to the text, even including Tomlin's pertinent and revealing correction of *tuas* into *duas* in the curse from Italica (AE 1975: 497 = Versnel 1991, 60).

[19] For a useful summary of these differences, see now also Faraone, Garnand, and López-Ruiz 2005, 170–175.

6. words expressing supplication (ἱκετεύω, βοήθει μοι, βοήθησον αὐτῷ) are employed as well as direct, personal invocations of the deity
7. use of terms and names referring to (in)justice and punishment (e.g. Praxidike, Dike, ἐκδικέω, ἀδικέω, κολάζω, and κόλασις).

In subsequent papers (Versnel 1998; 2002) I discussed some further features of prayers for justice. In contrast to *defixiones* proper, their tone is often markedly emotional. This may be manifested in harsh terms of abuse, and especially in the cursing of (extended) lists of body parts ("from top to toe")[20] that are to be afflicted, thus causing the target to suffer, waste away and even die.[21] Another recurrent trait of

[20] This feature is practically restricted to this type of prayers. In the *defixiones* we find only one expression that is comparable, namely "the three hundred and sixty-five limbs", which not surprisingly occurs only in curses against foot-racers. There is one from Egypt (*Suppl.Mag.* II 53, 14, with ample commentary on the number 365); one in Coptic in *PGrM* IV 149f.; it is also recognized in a *defixio* from Syria (*DTAud* 15, 18) on which see D. Jordan, Magica Graeca Parvula, *ZPE* 100 (1994) 321–22, and recently in a tablet, again from Egypt (R.S.O. Tomlin, 'Remain Like Stones, Unrunning: Another Greek Spell Against Competitors in a Foot-race, *ZPE* 160 [2007] 161–166), with the formula "Bind their feet, sinews, legs, spirit, excellence, the three hundred and fifty-five (*sic*) limbs of their bodies and souls, that they may not be able to proceed in the stadium, but remain like stones, unmoving, un-running." A small number of prayers for justice make mention of the rack as an instrument of torture, a clear testimony of their punishing nature. D. Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Oxford 2008) 85, erroneously assumes that afflicting all the body parts (top to toe) in my view should—like the rack—be an imitation of penal codes or practices as well (and since we do not find such practices in official justice he rejects my thesis). This of course would be as absurd as tracing the roots of magical infliction of illness or fever in our curses (as in Bath or Knidos) back to the practice of penal law. They are personal expressions of the 'legitimate' wish to hurt (= to punish) the target in at times very imaginative ways. Nor is the fact that lists of body parts also appear in spells that serve other purposes than punishment, as for instance in a Coptic (!) spell to protect a woman in childbirth (so Collins *ibid.*), a valid counterargument. Naturally there are other types of spells in which the complete body may be functional. But who would contest that 'binding' is the most specific characteristic of the malevolent *defixio* on the ground that we find the same notion in benevolent spells for the healing of a bone fracture? My point is that *within the category of malevolent curses* (with the—understandable—exception of the athletic curse just mentioned in this footnote), it is only the category of the 'anatomical curse' that displays also other features typical of the 'prayer for justice'.

[21] These "anatomical curses" are also typical of erotic spells of the "Herbeirufungszauber" type. I therefore argued that the latter also belong to the category of prayers for justice. Ivana Petrovic, Φαρμακεύτρια ohne φάρμακον. Überlegungen zur Komposition des zweiten Idylls, *Mnemosyne* 57 (2004) 421–444, has applied this insight to Theocritus' second Idyll and succeeded in explaining some aspects of the poem that have so far not been properly understood.

prayers for justice is that they often seem happy to publicise both the complaint or accusation and the intervention requested on the part of the divinity.[22]

Needless to say, not all these seven features occur in every prayer for justice. Some may even be found in what otherwise seems to be a straight *defixio*. I have always insisted that there is a border-area where the prayer for justice overlaps with the straight or typical *defixio* (Versnel 1991, 64–68, and see below).

In contrast to prayers for justice, conventional 'competitive' (Faraone) or 'binding' *defixiones* are intended to neutralise (= paralyse) competitors' ability to worst the principal (or his interests) in some subjectively important competitive situation, as we can see in the curses concerning athletic or circus competitions, litigation, business/commerce, and in the context of so-called 'Trennungszauber', intended to knock out a rival in love. Whenever they mention body parts, these almost always list a selection of *specific* limbs and physical/intellectual functions appropriate to the occasion. The neutralisation (= paralysis) of these bodily and/or psychological functions is purely instrumental,

[22] There is reason to believe that prayers for justice were sometimes publicly displayed in the sanctuaries. Some of them were not rolled up (Cnidus) or have holes obviously intended for suspending the tablet. The fact, for instance, that a curse from Emerita (see n. 38 below) was written on marble may indicate that it was meant for publication. The one round hole in the top centre of the bronze tablet cited on p. 285 below may indicate the same. In relation to curses against thieves, Faraone, Garnand, and López-Ruiz 2005, 171, urge: "The formal language of consecration and dedication in all of these Greek curses suggests that these tablets were publicly displayed in a sanctuary like other dedicatory inscriptions". Recently Chaniotis 2004, on the basis of my comparison of the πιττάκιον delivered to the sanctuary of Men Axiottenos (*BIWK* 6) by Artemidoros (in his defence against slander) with the Cnidian prayers for justice, emphasized that, by contrast with the secret manipulation of curse tablets, the whole ritual of the *pittakia* and the priestly assistance in the confession texts is demonstrably an entirely public affair. It is however certain that, at any rate in the West, these prayers were not always intended to be displayed: the Bath curses were thrown into the crevasses where the hot spring water emerges; those from Mainz (cf. below no. 3.1.2.2) were supposed to be ritually melted in the sacrificial fire; a few stray finds were found in wells or in graves. I have discussed the range of possibilities in Versnel 1991, 81; more extensively in 2002, 68–72, with earlier literature on this much-debated issue; see also Tomlin's remark earlier in this volume: "They were not intended for the thief to read, but for the deity" (p. 250); specifically on the Bath tablets, idem 1988, 101–5. For the prolonged discussion concerning the status of the Cnidus texts, see *DTAud* p. 5 (noting Newton's self-contradiction on the matter) and *I.Knidos* p. 85. Ogden observes forthrightly: "The Bath tablets were all prayers for justice, to the making of which no shame or danger attached" (1999, 59). Note too his formulation at pp. 83–85 of the contrast between *defixiones* (always secret) and prayers for justice (often publicised).

in rendering the opponent(s) (who, in the case of chariot-curses, include named horses) unable to oppose the principal in the specific area of competition. In these contexts it is rare to find the wish that the opponent suffer (let alone die).[23]

2. *Aims*

The proof of puddings is in the eating. A considerable number of curses that present features of what I call prayers for justice have come to light since my 1991 paper. What is more, among the total amount of new lead tablet texts the category under discussion is strongly represented in both Greek and especially in Latin speaking areas. This offers an ideal opportunity of putting the theory to the test: do these curse-texts, which were unknown to me when I wrote my earlier publications, display the features that I listed above? Do they individually display a representative set of these characteristics?[24] The primary aim of this paper is to answer this question.

A second objective is to show once again that, by recognising an individual curse text as a prayer for justice, we may be able to clarify or explain passages that would otherwise remain obscure. The value of such a recognition is still not always fully appreciated by editors of new texts.

---

[23] With the exception of course of gladiators, whose job it is to die. M.W. Dickie, Magic in Classical and Hellenistic Greece, in: D. Ogden (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Religion* (Malden-Oxford 2007) 357–370, *ad* 362–3, believes that Faraone's widely accepted interpretation of the *defixio* as an instrument of (social) competition can be refuted by a reference to curses that aim to kill the victim, as collected by C. Maggidis, Magikoi Katadesmoi or Binding Curse Tablets: A Journey on the Greek Dark Side, *Miscellanea Mediteranea* 17 (2000) 83–100, espec. 98 (*non vidi*). He tries to smooth over their extreme scarcity *inter alia* by adding a reference to the curse from Pella (below no. 3.3.7), but is unaware that these 'deadly' curses including the one from Pella do *not* belong to the (competitive) *defixiones* but are typical of the prayer for justice and the erotic curses related to this category. In Dickie 2001, too, he ignores the discussion over this new taxonomy.

[24] This implies that *defixiones* that refer to the targets simply as *inimici* or ἐχθροί vel sim., such as one of the curse tablets from Emporiae (*ILER* 5916 = Solin, *Ostia* no. 25 = *IRC* 3: 175 = *HEp* 1994: 447; see J. Curbera, *ZPE* 110 [1996] 292–4, late I^{a}), or contain strong terms of abuse without further details, such as the *defixio* from Tiriolo, Sicily (M.L. Lazzarini *AION*(*filol*) 16 [1994] 163–9 = *SEG* 44 (1994) 844: IV–III^{a}) μυσαρά, ψυχρά, μ[ι]σετά (on which terms see: E. Dettori, Annotazioni sulla *defixio* di Tiriolo, *ZPE* 119 [1997] 132–134), do not qualify for discussion.

My third aim is to caution scholars against proposing an interpretation of Latin curse texts without consistently consulting the relevant Greek evidence (let alone without knowledge of Greek). As Chaniotis 2004, 9, puts it:

> Studies dedicated to a phenomenon in a particular region sometimes tend to overestimate its singularity; these texts (i.e. texts from Greece, Britain and Asia Minor) remind us that despite some particular features.…the ideas concerning divine justice circulated widely in the ancient Mediterranean (and beyond).

I can illustrate the importance of the second and third points by means of a couple of examples taken from my earlier work. First, a curse that was known to me before my 1991 paper, but to which I could then only refer briefly.

2.1. *Curse from Claudia Baelo, southern Baetica (*AE *1988: 727, second half I^{p}–early II^{p})*

This text was found in 1980 and brought to my attention by its later editor P. Le Roux prior to its publication in 1988.[25] Its value for my purposes here lies in the fact that its interpretation greatly profited from the insight that it *was* a prayer for justice and contains elements well known from other texts. As a matter of fact, without knowledge of some distantly related Greek texts, two curious—indeed unique—expressions would not have been correctly understood.[26] I here cite the text substantially as given by the first editors:

Isis Muromem
tibi conmendo
furtu(m) meu(m) mi fac
tu{t}o numini ma(i)es-
tati exsemplaria
ut tu evide(s) immedi-
o qui fecit autulit
aut (h)eres: opertor(i)u(m)
albu(m) nou(um) stragulu(m)
nou(um) lodices duas me(o)?
usu. rogo domina

[25] J.N. Bonneville, S. Dardaine, P. Le Roux, *Fouilles de Belo: Les Inscriptions* (Paris 1988) 21–24, no. 1 (= *IRBaelo* 1); *HEp.* 1991: 227.

[26] For details, I refer to Versnel 1991, 91f. and the work cited in the preceding footnote.

per maiestate(m) tua(m)
ut (h)oc furtu(m) repri-
ndas.[27]

The text invokes the goddess Isis Myrionymos and entrusts "a theft I have suffered (i.e. the stolen objects)" to her (*tibi commendo furtum meum*). The goddess is addressed as "mistress" (*domina*) and asked *per maiestatem tuam* (twice) to punish the theft. The verb is not the common *vindicare*, but *reprindere* (=*reprehendere*), to convict, pass judgement on.[28] All this is clearly consistent with the usual practice and terminology of judicial prayers. Accordingly, the editors declined to call this a *defixio*, preferring the notion *supplicatio*.

There remained, however, two enigmatic expressions that are unparallelled in the Latin texts of this type. First, *fac / tu{t}o numini ma(i)es/ tati exsemplaria* (ll. 3–5). The term *exemplarium* does not occur in any other Latin *defixio* or prayer for justice,[29] but it does occur several times in so-called confession *stelai* from Asia Minor.[30] In these cases it is found as a loanword from Latin in a formulaic expression: "I advise (the reader) not to disdain the gods, for he shall have the *stele* as warning (ἐξενπλάριον)".[31] In this type of religious mentality we often find the wish that the god should make an example of the culprit by

---

[27] Tomlin provides a useful commentary, and translation, elsewhere in this volume (pp. 258–60, no. 3). In l. 4, read *tuo* for *tuto* (accepted by Tomlin). In l. 6, *evide(s)* means *evite(s)*, render lifeless. In l. 8, Tomlin ingeniously reads *aute(m) res* instead of the editors' incomprehensible *aut heres*, and convincingly interprets *me(o) uso* (l. 10f.) as *de uso* = *de usu*, i.e. "used" as opposed to new clothes. The combination of *numen* and *maiestas*, also prevalent in other curse texts, is well-known from the 'devotio' formula in votive inscriptions of the Imperial period. See: H.H. Gundel, *Devotus numini maiestatique eius*. Zur Devotionsformel in Weihinschriften der römischen Kaiserzeit, *Epigraphica* 15 (1953) 128–150. Cf. Á. Sánchez-Ostiz, Notas sobre numen y maiestas en Apuleyo, *Latomus* 62 (2003) 844–865.

[28] OLD sense 5a 'reprehend, censure an action'; 5c 'take adverse cognizance of' (in legal language). There is however also a sense 3, 'detect the commission of (a crime)', for which Vitruv. 9.pr.10, *neque inveniens, qua ratione id furtum reprehenderet* is cited.

[29] One of the late-antique Porta S. Sebastiano texts from Rome (*DTAud* 142 B11f.) has: *ut omnes cog*[*n*]*osc*[*ant*] *exempl*[*um e*]*or*[*um*].

[30] Collected with ample commentary in Petzold, *BIWK*. These inscriptions from Maeonia, Lydia and Phrygia formed an important, in fact indispensable, part of my evidence in Versnel 1991 and 2002; see also Chaniotis 1997 and 2004.

[31] See Petzold, *BIWK* nos. 106 l. 17f.; 111 l. 8f.; 120 l. 8; 121 l. 5. All these come from the same site, the temple of Apollo Lairbenos nr. Motella in SW Phrygia. In 112 l. 9 the unfamiliar word seems to have become deformed into ἐξοπράρειο[ν].

punishing him *in public*. The Greek term is παραδειγματισμός.[32] A parallel thought occurs in the prayer for justice on the well-known tablet from Delos cited on p. 339 below: "punish and give expression to your wondrous power".[33]

The second expression is l. 6f.: *ut tu evide(s) immedi/o qui fecit autulit*, "that you publicly take away the life of the one who did it, who stole it". This recalls the phrase ἐς μέσον ἐνεκκεῖν in a prayer for justice from Asia Minor (I–II^{p}), which I cite *in extenso*:

ἀνατίθημι μητρί {ϛ} θεῶν
χρυσᾶ ἀπ<ώ>λεσ<α> πάντα ὥ-
στε ἀναζητῆσ<α>ι αὐτ-
ὴν[34] καὶ ἐς μέσον ἐνε-
κκεῖν πάντα καὶ τοὺς
ἔχοντες κολάσεσθα-
ι ἀξίως τῆς αὐτῆς δυνά-
με<ω>ς καὶ μήτε αὐτ[ὴν]
καταγέλαστον ἔσεσθ[αι].[35]

[32] See H.W. Pleket, Religious History as the History of Mentality: the 'Believer' as Servant of the Deity in the Greek World, in Versnel 1981, 152–92 at 167; cf. Versnel 1990, 201. Cf. for the emphasis on and 123 humiliation also below n. 106.

[33] = *SGD* I 58; Gager, *CT* 188 no. 88. Note also such expressions as ἵνα βλέπω τὴν δύναμιν (Björck 1938, no. 24), and "Lord, quickly show them your might" (δ[εῖξον] αὐτοῖς ταχεῖαν τὴν δύναμίν σου) (*Pap. Ups.* 8, in: Björck 1938, p. 6). Other examples in Versnel 1990, 203 n. 370. A new, unfortunately very fragmentary, inscription from the Amphiareion at Oropos (B.C. Petrakos, *Οἱ ἐπιγραφὲς τοῦ Ὠρωποῦ* [Athens 1997] no. 301, c. 335–322 BC, [cf. EBGR 1997, no. 296; *Bull. ép* 1998, 187]) in ll. 10–14 provides interesting formulaic parallels: "Lord and king, strongly [---] (ὦ δέσποτ' ἄναξ, ἰσχυρά[---]), you disregarded them, when they were laughing scornfully at you; but you [---] ([παρ]ήκουσας τῶνδε καταγελώντων σου, σὺ δὲ [---]), [---] conspicuously, when there was no other hope [---] ([---]μένου περυφανῶς (for περιφανῶς), οὐδεμίαν ἄλλην ἐλπίδα τ[---]) [---] alone; he demonstrated his might in such a way, that [---] ([---]ενον μόνου, οὕτως ἐνεδείξατο τὴν αὐτοῦ δύ[ναμιν ---]). It is this close analogy to the text under discussion (and other similar ones) that makes me opt for one of the suggestions proposed by Chaniotis, namely that this is an aretalogical praise of a miracle by Amphiaraos.

[34] The same expression with an identical function occurs in one of the manumission inscriptions published in P.M. Petsas—M.B. Hatsopoulos—L. Gounaropoulou, *Inscriptions du sanctuaire de la Mère des Dieux autochtone de Leukopétra (Macédoine)*, Athens, 2000) no. 53. A man has dedicated a lost slave (ἐχαρισόμην κοράσιον…ἀπούλω⟨λ⟩ον) requesting the goddess to look for it for herself (τὸ αὐτὴ ἀτῇ ἀναζητήσεις), in which Chaniotis (*EBGR* 2000, no. 155) recognizes a "prayer for justice", intended "to cede to the god the stolen or lost item."

[35] C. Dunant, "Sus aux voleurs!" Une tablette en bronze à inscription grecque du musée de Genève, *MusHelv* 35 (1978) 241–244 = *SEG* 28 (1978) 1568; see further *Bull. ép*. 1980 no. 45; Versnel 1991, 74; Gager, *CT* 190f. no. 90.

I consecrate to the Mother of the gods the gold pieces which I have lost, all of them, so that the goddess will track them down and bring everything to light and will punish the guilty in accordance with her power and in this way will not be made a laughing-stock.

The Latin *in medio*, like Greek ἐς μέσον, is a possible expression for "in public".[36] The wish that the people *may see* the target of the curse being killed is expressed in two of the new Mainz curses published by Blänsdorf in this volume (nos. 16 l. 14 and 17 l. 35f.).[37]

It was only by comparing parallels in Greek texts that I was able in 1991 to propose interpretations that have since been generally accepted. These features of the text from Baelo thus prove that it, and its congeners in the Iberian peninsula, are related to the texts from Asia Minor or other parts of the eastern and central Mediterranean.[38]

2.2. *Curse text from Caerleon (*RIB *323)*

The benefits of comparing Latin texts with Greek analogies is still more obvious in the case of a supposed *defixio* from Wales that had repeatedly been studied without producing a convincing interpretation. This is a small leaden *tabula ansata* that was found in 1927 in the arena of the amphitheatre at Caerleon (= *Isca Silurum*, winter camp of *legio II Augusta*).[39] The first attempt at a reading was made by R.G. Collingwood:

---

[36] The commoner expression, at any rate in literary contexts, is *in medium (ponere)*; but our expression ocurs already in Cicero, e.g. *cum rem totam in medio posuissem* at *2Verr*. 1.29; cf. *Nat deor*. 1.13.

[37] See pp. 180f. and 183f. above. At 16 l. 16 there even seems to be a reference to a confession of guilt: *et dicat se admisisse*. See also n. 106 below. One of the new curses from Acrocorinth (no. 10B in Stroud's forthcoming edition) reads: [K]ύριε, φανέρωσον αὐτοὺς καὶ (…) [κ]αρδια[τό]μ|ησον [α]ὠτούς, Κύ[ριε, "Lord, *expose them* and (…) cut out their hearts…".

[38] I also compared (1991, 91) the curse on a small slab of marble found bricked into the revetment wall of a cistern near Emerita/Mérida: *dea Ataecina Turi/brig(ensis) Proserpina/ per tuam maiestatem/ te rogo obsecro/ uti vindices quot mihi/ furti factum est; quisquis/ mihi imudavit involavit/ minusve fecit [e]a[s res]/ q(uae) i(nfra) s(criptae) s(unt)/ tunicas VI, [p]aenula / lintea II,in[dus]ium cu/ius I. C…m ignoro/ i…ius /[---*, "Goddess Ataecina Turibrigensis Proserpina, by your majesty I ask, pray and beg that you avenge the theft which has been done to me. Whoever has changed (replaced? = *immutavit*), stolen, pilfered from me the objects which are noted below (*quae infra scriptae sunt*): 6 tunics, 2 linen cloaks, an undergarment…": *CIL* II 462 (with a very daring conjecture by Mommsen) = *DTAud* 122 = *ILER* 736. The terminology shows traces of quasi-legal or bureaucratic language, as Tomlin notes in his commentary elsewhere in this volume (see p. 249 no. 1 above).

[39] Gager, *CT* 197f. no. 100; Tomlin 2004, 14; see also his commentary above (p. 253 no. 2).

Dom(i)na Ne-
mesis do ti-
bi palleum
et galliculas.
Qui tulit non
redimat n[isi fusa] sanguine/
sua.

Virtually all earlier interpretations started from the assumption that it is a conventional *defixio* and must be using some kind of sympathetic magic. The general belief was that the principal was giving an enemy gladiator's clothing to the goddess Nemesis, and that the owner could only redeem them by losing his life.[40] This interpretation involved taking *tulit* to mean "he has worn" or "he has brought", and *redimat* to mean "may he procure the release of", both of which are strained, though not impossible, translations of the Latin.[41] If, however, we take these verbs to mean what they usually do mean in other British lead tablets, that is *tulit* = *abstulit*, "has stolen",[42] and *redimat*, "may he

[40] R.G. Collingwood, *JRS* 17 (1927) 216, and *idem*, *Archaeologia* 78 (1928) 158 no. 10, understood *tulit* as *abstulit*, and *redimat* as 'buy back, redeem', and thought that the thief or the owner was to redeem the objects placed with Nemesis by dying. This is not very logical because the text concerns stolen objects. A. Oxé, *Germania* 15 (1931) 16ff., improved the text by reading *n*[*i vita*] *sanguine suo instead of n*[*isi fusa*] *sanguine sua*. His translation reads: "Wer sie brachte, möge sie wiedererhalten nur mit seinem Leben, mit seinem Blute". He imagined the following sequence of events: someone has left his clothes at the wardrobe of a public bath. In the meantime an enemy buried the tablet with the wish to Nemesis that the owner can get the clothing back only by paying with his blood. Without commenting on the precise situation, Preisendanz suggested "wahrscheinlich handelt es sich um Verfluchung eines Gladiators durch seinen Todfeind, der die Kleider und Schuhe des anderen der Domna Nemesis schenkt unter Bedingung seines Todes" (*APF* 11 (1935) 155). R. Egger, *Wien. Jahresh.* 35 (1943) 99ff. = R. Egger, *Römische Antike und frühes Christentum*, 1 (Klagenfurt 1962/63) 281–283, generally agreed with these suggestions; without knowing of more recent discoveries, but correctly reading *sanguinei sui*, he translated: "Herrin Nemesis! Ich übergebe dir Mantel und Schuhe, wer sie getragen hat, möge sie nur dann zurückerhalten, wenn sein Rotfuchs (!) umkommt". This is the version followed by Solin, *Ostia* no. 20 and R.P. Wright in *RIB* 323. All were sadly misled by the provenance inside the amphitheatre. Even before Egger, H. Volkmann, *ARW* 31 (1934) 64, had made a start towards a better solution by understanding *redimere* as *culpam redimere*, "büssen". The translation "get back, redeem" necessarily assumes some kind of sympathetic magic, such that the consecration of a person's clothing to a deity somehow exercises power over the owner as well.

[41] As Tomlin observes, "Inschriften [werden] falsch gelesen…wenn man immer nur das liest, was man zu lesen erwartet" (2004, 15). As a result, "Eine Fluchtafel kann kaum isoliert gelesen werden…eine 'kritische Masse' [ist] erforderlich" (*ibid.* 28).

[42] See H. Solin, Tabelle plumbee di Concordia, *Aquilea nostra* 48 (1977) 146–63 at 149 for the translation of *tulit* as "has taken away".

atone or make good",[43] we will at once recognise a straightforward prayer for justice. The translation will then be: "Mistress Nemesis, I give you (my) cloak and shoes. May whoever stole them not atone (for the theft) unless with his life, with his blood".

This is in fact a case, common among prayers for justice, of ceding the stolen goods to the goddess: the stolen objects have become her possession, she is therefore responsible for them. *Redimere* is comparable to the Greek verb λύω, in the sense of "to ransom, redeem, buy off, atone for". I was able to offer this interpretation already in 1986, 87, simply on the basis of various types of Greek texts in which the ceding of stolen property to a god is a standard feature of legal or quasi-legal terminology.[44]

The appropriateness of this notion of ceding goods to a divinity is illustrated by a confession text from Kula (176/7 CE).[45] A certain Tatias explains: [Τα]τιας ἀγόρασα [...] καταφρονουμέ[νη] ἐξεχώρησα αὐτὰ [M]ηνὶ Ἀξιοττηνῷ ἄτινα πράξει ὡς ἂν θέλῃ. "I have bought [----], but having been treated disdainfully, I have 'ceded' them to Men Axiottenos, so that he can deal with them as he pleases". The verb ἐκχωρέω used here is, like παραχωρέω, a usual word for legally transferring the ownership of property (LSJ).[46] The significance of this formulation is that it makes explicit an idea that is otherwise generally implicit, namely that goods, or property, once ceded, are the god's to do what he likes with. Taking this as an analogy to our prayers for justice, we can say that 'giving' stolen goods or money to the gods is in fact a sol-

---

[43] So already Tomlin in the first edition of *Tab.Sulis* 99 in *Britannia* 14 (1983) 336 no. 5 "let him recover it with his blood and his life"; at 352 n. 12 ad 5–6, he dismisses Egger's and Wright's *Sanguinei* = 'Blood-red charger'.

[44] I expanded the point in Versnel 1991, 79–81; 83; 86; cf. now also Chaniotis 2004, 16–19. We should of course remember that earlier editors did not have the Uley and Bath texts at their disposal. *RIB*, whose cut-off date for *instrumentum domesticum* vel sim. was 31 Dec. 1956, contains only seven British prayers for justice. The great flow started when the excavation of Uley began in 1977, and those at Bath were resumed in 1979. At the time of my publications I was familiar only with the curses published in *Britannia* up to that date (see n. 18 above; *Tab.Sulis* was published in 1988). On the scale of the recent increase in the corpus of prayers for justice, see also D.R. Jordan, Curses from the Waters of Sulis, *JRA* 3 (1990) 437–41 at 438.

[45] H. Malay, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions from the Manisa Museum*, TAM Ergänzungsband 19 (Vienna 1994), 70 n. 171, quoted by Chaniotis 2004, 15–18. It is not counted as a confession text by Petzl, *BIWK*.

[46] Both are also the terms by which persons (both slaves and free people) were dedicated/consecrated to the god to henceforth function as his *hieroi* in the sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos in Phrygia (II–III$^{p.}$): T. Ritti, C. Simsek and Y. Yildiz, Dediche e καταγραφαί dal santuario frigio di Apollo Lairbenos, *EA* 32 (2000) 1–88.

emn act of transferring ownership—solemn but metaphorical or fictive, since the principal no longer disposes of the goods in question. The principal completely renounces the lost property and the god can do with it what he likes, at any rate *after* punishing the culprit.[47]

3. *The New Texts*

I now turn to discuss the relevant finds that have been published since 1991, insofar as they have come to my attention.[48] I do not imagine that this survey is exhaustive. Many finds, though sometimes announced years ago, have not yet been published. I have tried to retrieve as many texts as I could, but sometimes in vain.[49] I restrict myself to the Greek- and Latin-speaking areas of the Empire. This implies that the Coptic curses of late antiquity are not included, even though many of these curses obviously belong to this category.[50] Nor do I include Celtic texts, although a new curse from Dax (France), according to the editors, seems to be of the prayer for justice type.[51] Curses in the Oscan language are also excluded, although P. Poccetti has detected a prayer for justice in an Oscan *defixio*.[52]

More surprising may be the exclusion of the continuing flow of new tablets from Britannia. Surprising, above all, since the evidence from

---

[47] See Versnel 1991; 2002, 53f. On property-transfer in these texts see also Chaniotis 2004, 15–18.

[48] *SEG, Bull.ép.*, *AE*, EBGR and *SGD* I and II have all of course been invaluable. I wish to express my warm gratitude to David Jordan, Ron Stroud, Angelos Chaniotis, Francisco Marco Simón, and Jürgen Blänsdorf for drawing my attention to new finds and/or sending me copies of their texts and generously permitting me to refer to details. I also thank Blänsdorf and Tomlin for communicating their final drafts to me, and Amina Kropp for putting her bibliography at my disposal. I have not used M[a] del Amor López Jimeno, *Nuevas Tabellae Defixiones Áticas* (Amsterdam 1999) for reasons helpfully summarised in *SEG* 49 (1999) 313. I would be very grateful for references to new curse texts.

[49] I have for example had no success in my attempts to get information about the new curse tablet from Trier, which is announced as being edited by Dr. Lothar Schwinden. On other new but still unpublished texts, see below.

[50] See for example the translations made by M. Meyer and R. Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (New York 1994).

[51] F. Marco Simón and I. Velázquez, Una nueva *defixio* aparecida en Dax (Landes), *Aquitania* 17 (2000) 261–274.

[52] P. Poccetti, L'iscrizione Osca su lamina plumbea VE 6: Maledizione o "preghiera di giustizia"?, in: *I Culti della Campania antica* (Rome 1998) 175–184. At p. 179 he endorses the distinction between prayers for justice (employing "un linguaggio religioso") and malign *defixiones* (employing "un linguaggio magico").

Britain, insofar as it was known to me, formed a substantial part of my original evidence. The reason for not *systematically* listing the new finds regularly published in *Britannia*, is that, however interesting, they are without exception of the same type as those in Tomlin's collection *Tab.Sulis*. They simply confirm our interpretation of these texts as prayers for justice, a conclusion we had arrived at independently of one another.

I propose to take first the Latin, then the Greek texts. The first category is sub-divided into those from the Hispanic provinces and those from the Germanies; the second includes seven texts from a variety of sites in mainland Greece.[53]

3.1. *Curse-texts in Latin*

3.1.1. *The Iberian peninsula*

Over the last 15 years the Hispanic provinces have produced four curse tablets which clearly contain elements of prayers for justice.[54] The editors have usually taken these features into account in their interpretation.[55]

3.1.1.1. Bilingual curse tablet from Barchín del Hoyo (prov. Cuenca, I^a–I^p)

Side A
ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ κα[ὶ] ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐμῶν τοῖς κατὰ Ἅιδην δίδω-
μι, παραδίδωμι Νεικίαν καὶ Τειμὴν
καὶ τοὺς ἄ[λ]λους οἷς δικ-
αίως κατηρασά-
μην.

---

[53] I also include a brief acount of the new texts from *fons Annae Perennae* in Rome, discussed elsewhere in this volume by J. Blänsdorf (Ch. six) and M. Piranomonte (Ch. five).

[54] I therefore omit recent finds or discussions of texts that are clearly straight *defixiones*, such as J. Corell, Drei *defixionum tabellae* aus Sagunt (Valencia), *ZPE* 101 (1994) 281–286. The second of these is a curse against an unknown thief, and the editor rightly concludes that the text "sich dem religiösen Bittgesuch nähert" (286), but there are no relevant details; cf. M.P. de Hoz, Henoteísmo y magia en una inscripción de Hispania, *ZPE* 118 (1997) 291–294. See also n. 24 above.

[55] Those from Salacia and Saguntum are also discussed by Tomlin in this volume (his nos. 4 and 5). Since his focus, and hence his commentary, is different from mine, and as a service to the reader, I have decided to maintain them in my list, while adopting and accounting for the always illuminating new readings and conjectures of Tomlin. I thank Roger Tomlin for his kind consent.

Side B
pro me pro meis devotos defixos inferis,
devotos defixos inferis, Timen et Nici-
am et ceteros quos merito
devovi supr[a. pro] me,
pro mei[s],
Timen,
Nician,
Nicia[n].[56]

Translation of the Greek text:
On behalf of myself and my next of kin I give, I hand over, to those in the underworld, Nicias and Times and the others whom I have justly cursed.[57]

At first sight this seems, apart from the bi-lingualism, to be a conventional *defixio*.[58] Some people are handed over or committed to "those below in Hades" (Gr.)—the *inferi* (Lat).[59] There are, however, two expressions that are never found in ordinary *defixiones*. First, the expression (which is identical in both the Greek and the Latin texts) "for the benefit of/on behalf of me and my family". This formula is typical of innumerable prayers and *vota*, but not of *defixiones*.[60] Secondly,

[56] Curbera, Sierra Delage and Velázquez 1999 = *AE* 1999: 954a,b. Very unusually, the document is written spirally on either face of a lead disc about 7cm in diam., starting from the outer edge and working inwards. The same in Stroud forthcoming, no. 6. For comments on the syntax of the Latin version, see Curbera, Sierra Delage and Velázquez 1999, 282. They suggest that the victims may have been Greek-speaking slaves working in the local mines.

[57] On the correct interpretation of *inferi* and Greek *katachthonioi* see the discussion on a funerary curse from Aquileia in *SEG* 50 (2000) 1036. On the rare expression *Dis Inferis Manibus* in a few Spanish inscriptions, see J. Velaza Frías, *Dis Inferis Manibus*: nuevas testimonios en inscripciones romanas de Hispania, *Anuari di Filologia* (Barcelona) 18 (1995) [*Sylloge epigraphica Barcinonensis* 2] 201–207.

[58] A tablet with a text in one language (here Greek, most probably the original language) on one side and the translation, or rather version (here in Latin), on the reverse is unique. Mixtures of the two languages in a single *defixio* of course do occur (cf. Ogden 1999, 49). A recent example is a judiciary *defixio* from Lilybaion (*SEG* 47: 1442, III–II^{a}), in Greek but with the Roman names in Latin. More curious is a gold amulet, found recently, which begins with magical names in Greek, then has the request: *date salutem et vict{t}oriam*, written in Latin using Greek characters, and finally the (Roman) name of the author in Roman characters. See R.S.O. Tomlin, A Bilingual Roman Charm for Health and Victory, *ZPE* 149 (2004) 259–266, who provides more information about this type of bi-lingualism, referring to J.N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge 2003) 43–7.

[59] The verbs used in both the Greek and Latin versions are common in *defixiones*: Curbera, Sierra Delage and Velázquez 1999, 282 n. 12.

[60] Versnel 1981, 17–21.

there is an emphasis in both texts on the fact that the curse has been pronounced "justly", "deservedly". These expressions and the train of thought they attest are alien to the language of conventional binding-curses and are characteristic of prayers for justice. The editors therefore rightly classified this text as a hybrid between a curse and a prayer.[61] It thus belongs to what I have called "the border-area".

3.1.1.2. Tablet from Saguntum (prov. Valencia, second half I^{p}–early II^{p}) I first give the text and translation by the editor, with my translation into English:

Cr[y]se (?) ligo auri po[ndo --]II.
Rogat et a(d) Iau dat pequnia(m) quae a
me accepit Heracla conservus meus
ut ins{t}tetur (h)uius senus, o[c]elus et
5 [v]ires q(u)icumqui sunt aride
----]m do pequniam (h)onori sacri-
cola.

Yo, Crise (?) doy…libras de oro. Pide y hace donación a Iau del dinero que le ha sustraído Heracla, su compañero de esclavitud, para que se vea afectado en el pecho y en los ojos; y que todas sus facultades queden atrofiadas. Así mismo doy dinero al ministro del culto por su servicio.[62]

I, Crise, bequeath (amount uncertain) of gold. (S)he(?)[63] asks and donates/legates to Iau the money that Heracla, my fellow slave, took from me, in order that his breast (*sinus*), his eyes be afflicted; may all his body functions become (*sunt* = *sint*) dry (viz. sick, powerless). I donate the money to the priest(ess) in return for her services.

---

[61] Curbera, Sierra Delage and Velázquez 1999, 282. More or less the same may be true for the slightly surprising *supra*. The editors suggest that it is an example of the use of legal language "well documented in magical texts" (p. 283 n. 15). For some examples of these expressions, e.g. γεγραμμένα and *supra/infra scripta*, see D.R. Jordan, The Inscribed Gold Tablet from the Vigna Codini, *AJA* 89 (1985) 162–167 at 164f.; *idem*, Defixiones from a Well near the south-west Corner of the Athenian Agora, *Hesperia* 54 (1985) 205–55 at 252; Tomlin 1988, 64.

[62] J. Corell, Invocada la intervención de Iau en una *defixio* de Sagunto (Valencia), *ZPE* 130 (2000) 241–247 = *AE* 2000: 795. The object is in a private collection (metal detector). Corell grants that the reading is in many places conjectural. He was unfortunately unable to provide a photograph. For the first word in l. 6 he later suggested *fiant*: *Inscripciones romanas de Saguntum i el su territorio* (Valencia 2002) 68.

[63] Alternation of first and third person, both referring to the author, is quite common in curse tablets.

Corell argued that, although the first line is enigmatic, it appears to concern a donation (legacy). He therefore took *ligo* not as "I bind" but as *lego* in the sense "give". The donation or legacy seems to be to the god Iao (written Iau). The sum of gold mentioned might be the principal's *peculium*, which has been stolen by a fellow slave; he adduces parallels for the verb *accipere* in the sense of "take away", but they are hardly convincing.[64] In his excellent discussion of this text (pp. 264–68 above), Tomlin rightly doubts Corell's reading of l. 1, and suggests that it contains the principal's name. Instead of *rogat et (a)d Iau dat* in l. 2, he attractively proposes *rogat et mandat*. He offers a similar solution for the last line. I reprint his translation here to give a sense of what all this amounts to:

> Felicio the slave of Aurelianus (?) asks and entrusts the money which Heracla my fellow-slave received from me, that his bosom(?) be attacked, his eye(?) and strength(?), whoever they are […] I entrust the money (?) to the honour of the priest.'

We both arrived independently at the conclusion that the whole affair must concern the deposit or loan of the principal's *peculium* with the temple, through the offices of the fellow-slave, who can therefore be said to have *received* it; the implication may be that the intermediary has failed to pass it on or has denied possession. For such a situation and, more generally, for the importance of retrieving a deposit there are many good parallels, some of which I list here:[65]

a. A text from Cnidus (*I.Knidos* 149):
   I commit to the gods (…) those who have received a deposit (λάβοντας παράθηκαν) from Diokles and do not give it back but persist stubbornly in it (μὴ ἀποδιδόντας ἀλλ' ἀποστεροῦντας).

[64] Moreover, the high value, at least two pounds of gold, surely makes the hypothesis of a *peculium* extremely unlikely.

[65] In his presentation of new material at the symposium, David Jordan mentioned a new tablet from the Athenian Agora concerning a money-lender who did not get his money back and curses the culprit; cf. also *SGD* I 21. Mainz no. 12, ll. 2f. *ut mandata exagatis* (see pp. 178f. above) may also refer to the embezzlement of a deposit, if Blänsdorf's interpretation "that you require the return of the goods that have been entrusted to them" is correct. That *mandata* may indeed denote "deposit" receives support from Firm. Mat. 2.63.12: *perfidos et qui res commendatas obstinatio mentis furore et avaris cupiditatibus abnegent*. Sometimes the principal curses someone who has accused him falsely of borrowing a sum without returning it, even though he has just repaid his debt (e.g. *DTAud* 42a, from Megara).

b. An imprecation in an epitaph from Myrikion (Galatia, II–III^{p}):[66]
Statilia gave, while alive and sane, to someone as a deposit (παραθήκην ἔδωκ[ε]) a green garment (?) and two silver armbands. If he does not return it, Hosios and Dikaios and you, Lord Helios, avenge (ἐκ[δ]ικήσατε) the dead (Statilia) and her living children.

c. Inscription from Kula (Maeonia):[67]
Menogenes son of Lakios (fulfilled his) vow to goddes Aliane. After having given a deposit he received it back (Μηνογένης Λακίου θεᾷ Ἀλιανῇ εὐχὴν δοὺς παραθήκην καὶ ἀπολαβών).

d. An inscription from Delos (*ID* 2531):
Accusation by Theogenes against a woman who has cheated him concerning a deposit (αὐτὴ δὲ λαβούσα παρακα[τα]θήκην). Now he prays that she will not escape the power of the goddess (Ἁγνὴ θεά, the Dea Syria) and demands all *therapeutai* (no doubt the group of those devoted to the goddess, including the sacred personnel of the temple) to slander/calumniate (βλασφημεῖν) her καθ' ὥραν.[68]

Perhaps the closest parallel, however, is a curse from Bruttium in S. Italy (*DTAud* 212, III^{a} ?) which has often been adduced in the discussion on prayer for justice.[69] I quote a translation of a section of the second part (ll. 9–14):

> Kollura consecrates (ἀνιαρίζει) to the servants (προσπόλοις) of the goddess the three gold pieces which Melitta received but continues not to return (ἔλαβε καὶ οὐκ ἀποδίδωτι). Let her (Melitta) dedicate (ἀνθείη) to the goddess twelve times the amount together with a *medimne* of incense according to the measure valid in the city. And let her not breathe freely until she has dedicated (ἀνθείη) it to the Goddess.

The similarity with the Saguntum text in both situation and phrasing is striking. In each case the sum in question has not been stolen, but taken on deposit (for safe-keeping or as a pledge); in each the depositary refuses to give it up. I would particularly stress that, although the culprit is supposed to return the sum to the goddess, in each case the ultimate beneficiary is the goddess' servant(s).[70] The cult personnel

---

[66] Björck 1938, no. 13; M. Ricl, Hosios kai Dikaios, 1. Catalogue des inscriptions, *EA* 18 (1991) 40f., no. 88, quoted and discussed by Chaniotis 2004, 15f.

[67] *TAM* V.1 258, with Chaniotis 2004, 19.

[68] Björck 1938, no. 14. F. Durrbach's reading καθ' ὥραν (*BCH* 28 [1904] 152), which Roussel adopts in *ID*, is no doubt correct, although the force of "at the right time(?)" is not entirely clear in the context.

[69] Versnel 1991, 73f.; Gager, *CT* 192 no. 92.

[70] The "servants of the goddess" doubtless include, or are, the cult personnel. Tomlin however is inclined to doubt Corell's *sacrificula* in l. 7: "We might have expected to find the deity here" (p. 267).

was also involved at Delos (text d).[71] Such references to problems with deposits could easily be multiplied.[72]

We may now return to the Saguntum text. The suggestion that the money was a deposit would avoid our having to understand *accipere* (1.3) in the sense of "steal". The god is to afflict (*instare*) or pursue the culprit with bodily afflictions.[73] In the last line—if it has been correctly read—one might prefer to explain *honori* as an honorary gift/legacy with the dative, as in the formulaic expression *dono dare*.

Corell rightly concludes that this is not a normal *defixio* ("execración") but a prayer for justice ("plegaria judicial") according to my definition. Indeed, this is the type of private, quasi-legal cession of goods or money so characteristic of the English texts from Bath and Uley, as well as of Greek texts.[74]

3.1.1.3. Curse tablet from Carmona (Seville, II–I^{a})
Text and translation by the editor:

Dis imferis, vos rogo utei recipiates nomen
Luxsia A(uli) Antesti filia. Caput cor co(n)s[i]l io(m) valetudine(m)
vita(m) membra omnia accedat morbo cotidea et
4 sei faciatis votum quod faccio solva(m) vostris meritis.

---

[71] This is also the case in an interesting Latin votive inscription from Brigetio: *Terrae Matri et M(inistrae) Priscillae ob commendatum et restitutam fidem Ael(ius) Stratonicus vslm* (*CIL* III 11009). P. Veyne, La bonne foi de la Terre-Mère (Pétrone, 117.3), *Latomus* 23 (1964) 30–32, has shown that here *fides* = *depositum*, and that Terra Mater, like Mater Magna, specialised in banking activities, including looking after deposits; and that this was the reason for addressing the *voti solutio* to both the goddess and her priestess: "Confier de l'argent à un dieu, c'était en fait le confier à son desservant" (with other examples).

[72] F. Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues* (Bruxelles 1937) 137 n. 2, presents testimonia from astrological texts. R. Herzog, *Die Wunderheilungen von Epidauros*. Philologus Supplementband 22.3 (Leipzig 1931), 118 *ad* no. W 63 (which concerns the reclamation of a deposit), collects a number of literary parallels with complications, accusations and divine interventions with respect to deposits.

[73] This must be the general sense, even if Tomlin be right in his criticism of particular details of these body parts. For a possible parallel to *ocelus* (l. 4), see Anna Perenna no. 7 in this volume (p. 240), where there may also be a parallel to Saguntum's *vires* in the *virtus* of the target person. *Sinus* may be used in the sense of 'the seat of the thoughts or emotions' (OLD sense 5). As for *instare* (l. 4), *persequi* is more usual in this type of text, followed by an object (either the culprit or the thing stolen/withheld): Versnel 1991, 83.

[74] "What the authors of such prayers for justice expected was not (or not primarily) material gain, but moral satisfaction and revenge" (Chaniotis 2000, 15; his pp. 15–21 offer an excellent discussion of the whole problem). Cf. Ogden 1999, 41: "The original owner effectively despaired of recovering the goods for himself, and therefore wrote the curse primarily out of a wish for revenge upon the thief".

An die Unterweltsgötter; ich beschwöre euch, dass Ihr meinem Gesuch gegen Luxia, Tochter des Aulus Antestius stattgebt, dass die Krankheit ihren Kopf, Herz, Verstand, Gesundheit, Leben und alle ihre Körperteile jeden Tag angreift. Und wenn Ihr die Bitte, die ich mache, erhört, werde ich euch für eure Gunst belohnen.[75]

At least four features of this curse are commonly found in prayers for justice. The most obvious are the verb *rogo*, "I implore", and *recipiatis nomen*, "accept the accusation", a technical term used by a presiding magistrate to anounce that he would hear the case against a defendant, the *nomen* being one of those on a written list of cases brought.[76] I have already pointed out that anatomical curses with lists of body parts are characteristic of such prayers. The desire that one's target shall suffer, and suffer intensely, is alien to the normal *defixio* but usual in prayers for justice.[77] There may even be a fifth clue, namely the holes on either side of the tablet.[78] Moreover, Maltomini has rightly pointed out that the final phrase *et sei faciatis votum quod faccio solvam vostris meritis* (l. 4) does not mean "I will reward you as you deserve", as Corell thought, but: "and if you do (this), I will redeem the vow (*votum*) that I now make, in accordance with your merits" (Maltomini 1995). This phrase makes clear that we are dealing with a regular *votum*: *vostris meritis* actually alludes to the stereotyped formula *votum solvi(t) libens merito*. As Corell himself remarks, it is

[75] Corell 1993 = *AE* 1993: 1008. Corell 1993, 261 n. 1 lists all the Iberian *defixiones* known up to that date. On the linguistic aspects of this *defixio*, see R. Marina Saéz, Notas linguisticas a una *tabella defixionis* hallada en Carmona, *ZPE* 128 (1999) 293–300.

[76] Duly noted by Corell 1993, 264, citing Versnel 1991. Note however that the evocation of such legal terminology is more or less confined to prayers for justice; it occurs only sporadically in other categories of *defixio*.

[77] Cf. Versnel 1998. A new *defixio* from Cos (IV^{p}) published by C. Kantzia in: A.P. Christidis and D.R. Jordan (eds.) *Γλώσσα καὶ μαγεία. Κείμενα ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχαιότητα* (Athens 1997) 170–92 = *SEG* 47: 1291 = EBGR 1997 no. 195, is particularly nasty. It is however an erotic curse, and thus not relevant to the present discussion, except insofar as the target is to suffer exquisitely. The *defigens* of the curse from Oropos (3.3.5 below) prays that the victim shall be punished with tortures that are (uniquely) qualified as ἐξαίρετα ("exquisite").

[78] Their significance is however uncertain. Normally such holes would indicate that the tablet had been pinned up so that the text, by contrast with those of straight *defixiones*, could be read (Versnel 2002, 56–9, and above n. 22). In this case, however, the borders of the holes bend towards the written side, which may mean that the tablet was displayed, but in such a manner that its text could not be read.

highly unusual for straight *defixiones* to make a conditional promise of this kind.[79]

3.1.1.4. Curse-text from Salacia (Alcácer do Sal [Setúbal], Portugal, I^{P}) The tablet was found in 1995 in a "ritual pool". It is one of a number of recently-published prayers for justice, most notably those from Mainz (see 3.1.2.2 below), that invoke Attis and the Magna Mater. Many of them contain remarkable similes based on elements from the myth and ritual of the cult of Attis. I adopt the text as given by F. Marco Simón (Marco Simón 2004), with the emendations by Tomlin (pp. 262–64 no. 4 above), and adapt my own translation to his new readings.

Domine Megare
invicte, tu qui Attidis
corpus accepisti, accipias cor-
pus eius qui meas sarcinas
supstulit, qui me compilavit
de domo Hispani. Illius corpus
tibi et anima(m) do dono ut meas
res inveniam. Tunc tibi (h)ostia(m)
quadrupede(m) do(mi)ne, Attis, voveo,
si eu(m) fure(m) invenero. Dom(i)ne
Attis, te rogo per tuum Nocturnum
ut me quam primu(m) compote(m) facias.

Marco Simón notes that "this *tabella* belongs to the category of the 'prayers for justice' ". The writing is clear; there are the usual omissions of initial *h* and acc. m. endings. Provisional readings such as *inveniat* and *done* in ll. 8 and 9, which could only be explained as miswritings of *inveniam* and *dono*, as well as some others, have been ingeniously and convincingly emended by Tomlin.

In l. 1, the word MEGARE requires discussion. The first editor took it to be the name of the daughter of Creon, king of Thebes, i.e. Megaira.[80] On the assumption that it is in fact a version of μεγάλε, "great" (nom. fem.), Marco Simón offered two possible interpretations.[81] On the one hand, *Domine Megale invicte* might be an invocation of Cybele,

[79] "Es ist höchst ungewöhnlich, dass der defigens Bedingungen stellt", Corell 1993, 266. For *vota* in curse texts see the appendix to this chapter.

[80] J.C.L. Faria, *Alcácer do Sal ao Tempo dos Romanos* (Alcácer do Sal 2000).

[81] Greek terms sometimes occur in curses connected with the cult of Attis (e.g. 3.1.2.1–2 below).

who is so closely connected in the cult with Attis. On the other, the consistent use of the masculine form in the vocatives, as well as in the subsequent relative *qui*, clearly implies a male god. Marco Simón suggests this must be Hades/Pluto, the god of the Underworld. I find this convincing. Tomlin, however, offers "Lord Megarus" (i.e. Lord of the Megaron, a term that occurs in one or two of the Mainz curses), which also merits serious consideration. In l. 6 I hesitantly follow the earlier editors in interpuncting between *Hispani* and *illius*, taking Hispanus as a personal name or as a descriptive adjective, "the Spaniard", i.e. the owner of the house where it all happened, and *illius* as referring to the thief.[82] I therefore translate:

> Lord, great and invincible, you who have received the body of Attis, please receive the body of the one who took away my baggage, who robbed me (by stealing it)[83] from the house of Hispanus (or 'the Spaniard'). His body (viz. the thief's) and his soul I give (you), I confer on you in order that I may find my possessions. Then I vow to give you a four-footed sacrificial victim, Lord Attis, if I find that thief. Lord Attis, I implore you by your Nocturnus, that you make me obtain my wish as soon as possible.

Of the many interesting points here, I mention only those of immediate relevance to my subject.[84] It is Attis' descent into the underworld that provides the analogy for what the thief is to undergo. In my view, the text clearly differentiates between the act of ceding the thief to the god and the vow to offer a sizeable victim.[85] The thief is 'given' body and soul to the great god of the Underworld, who is asked to

---

[82] Tomlin *ad loc*. however suggests taking *Hispani* with *illius*, i.e. the body and soul "of that (wretched) Spaniard".

[83] I believe this to be the meaning, since "to steal from a dwelling" is a common expression in this type of curse, e.g. *…quod illi de hospitio Lon[… invol]averint* (*AE* 1984: 623 = *Britannia* 15 (1984) 336 no. 7, Pagan's Hill, Somerset); *qui Deomorix de hos{i}pitio suo perdiderit* (*Tab.Sulis* 99 l. 2f.); *me perdidisse rotas duas…de hospitiolo meo* (*AE* 1992: 1127 = *Britannia* 23 [1992] 310f. no. 5, Uley); *quicumqu(e) illam involasit* [sic] *(….) de hospitio…* (*AE* 1993: 1087 = *Britannia* 24 [1993] 311–314 no. 2, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Notts.).

[84] Marco offers several suggestions for the enigmatic *per tuum Nocturnum*: the link between the Megalensia and night-time; Attis' connection with the moon (Menotyrannus), and with the Underworld (which is anyway thematised here). He inclines to take Nocturnus as a netherworld demon (rather than Pluto) who is lower in the subterranean hierarchy then Attis himself. See also p. 307 below. I wonder whether Nocturnus might not be the same as the great God of the dead invoked at the beginning of the text?

[85] I discuss this distinction at greater length in the Appendix.

"receive /accept/take" the body just as he once received that of the dead Attis. This comes very close to the notions behind πέμπω δῶρον and the requests that the gift be accepted (δέξασθε etc.), that I discuss in the Appendix; indeed they may be taken as one more argument for taking πέμπω δῶρον in the sense proposed there. The δῶρον is the victim.[86] In a parallel move, Attis himself is promised a sacrificial animal if he make it possible for the principal to find the thief. This idea is expressed in a regular votive formula (*voveo… me compotem [voti] facias*).[87] The target is first "given, donated" to one god, and then—quite independently—a second gift is promised to a different deity. The latter is explicitly a *sacrificial animal* (*victima, hostia*) of some size and therefore value (a quadruped as opposed to a chicken vel sim.).

Something similar seems to be implied by one of the new curses from Mainz. Unfortunately the crucial passage is less explicit: (….) *in megaro eum rogo te, M(a)t(e)r Magna, megaro tuo recipias, et Attis domine, te precor, ut hu(n)c (h)ostiam acceptum abiatis et quit aget aginat, sal et aqua illi fiat*.[88] The pattern seems to be the same, but it is not quite clear whether the *hostia* for Attis refers to the target or to a separate animal-sacrifice. In favour of the latter hypothesis is the division of tasks between the deities involved, which is the same as in the Setúbal and the Johns Hopkins curses; and perhaps also the pronoun *hunc*, which is perhaps more likely to refer to a victim at hand rather than to an absent human target. On the other hand, the first option finds support in the fact that immediately after the *hostia*-phrase the text speaks of the fate of the human victim. Another argument might be that *hunc* ought to refer to the (male) target: Blänsdorf stresses this point in his interpretation elsewhere in this volume: "The petitioner then asks Attis to receive Adiutor as a victim, just as he accepts the sacrificial victim that accompanies the curse: *te precor ut hu(n)c (h-) ostiam* (not *hanc*!) *acceptum habiatis* (ll. 4–6)". We are confronted with the same problem in a late first-century BCE text from Rome: *Danae ancilla no<v>icia / Capitonis. Hanc hostiam / acceptam habeas /*

[86] As Marco Simón points out (2004, 83 n. 7).

[87] The same sequence is found in the Johns Hopkins curse discussed in the Appendix (Text 5): first, the target of the curse is "given" to Proserpina and then three victims are vowed to Cerberus. They are also specificied as quadruped.

[88] No. 8 in Blänsdorf's paper in this volume (p. 174) = no. 20, inv. nr. 111,53 in Blänsdorf 2009.

et consumas Danae/ne(m). Habes Eutychiam, / Soterichi uxorem.[89] Here too we cannot quite exclude the possibility that *hanc hostiam* and *Danaene(m)* are not identical.

We thus end up with a *non liquet.* Even so, it is worth noting that in the two texts (Setúbal and Johns Hopkins) where the distinction between the human target and the *hostia* as a sacrificial animal is beyond doubt, the latter is described as a *votum* for the future, whereas in the other two (Mainz no. 8 and Rome) the *hostia* is described as already in the hands of the god. Given that the idea of offering a *hostia/victima* to a deity is formulaic, it is perfectly possible that different principals had different practices, or different interpretations of similar practices.

3.1.2. *Germania Superior*

We now turn to the new curse-texts from the Rhine-Main area.

3.1.2.1. Curse-text from Groß-Gerau, a castellum-vicus S-E. of Mainz (late I^{p}–early II^{p})

The tablet was found, folded up five times, in a shallow depression of uncertain purpose below or in what seems to have been a half-timbered Roman house.

I first give the text and translation offered by the editors:[90]

Side A

Deum Maxsime Atthis Tyranne
totumque Duodeca Theum, comme-
ndo deabus iniurium fas ut me vindic-
(e)tis a Priscil(l)a Caranti quae nuberi er(r)a-
vit. Pe[r] Matrem Deum vestrae {ut}
[v]indicate sacra pater[na oder-ni?]
P[ri]scil(l)[a]
pere[at]

Side B

Per Matrem Deum intra dies C(?) cito,
vindicate numen vestrum magnum
a Priscilla quae detegit sacra, Pris-
cillam (n)usqu(a)m, nullam numero, nu[p]-

---

[89] *CIL* I^{2} 1013 = *DTAud* 138 = *ILS* 8747 = *ILLRP* 1145. The h of *hostiam* was added as an afterthought above the *o*).

[90] Scholz and Kropp 2004 = M. Reuter and M. Scholz, *Geritzt und Entziffert: Schriftzeugnisse der römischen Informationsgesellschaft* (Ausstellung Limesmuseum Aalen) (Stuttgart 2004) 70f. no. 108 = *AE* 2004: 1006a,b.

5 sit gentem tremente Priscilla
quam
er(r)ante.

Side A:
Größter aller Götter,[91] Atthis, Herr, Gesamtheit der zwölf Götter (des Pantheons)! Ich überantworte den Göttinnen mein ungerechtes Schicksal, auf daß Ihr mich an Priscilla, Tochter des Carantus rächt, die den großen Fehler beging zu heiraten. Bei eurer Großen Göttermutter, rächt die altererbten Geheimnisse (*oder*: die Geheimnisse des Paternus). Priscilla soll zugrunde gehen.

Side B:
Bei der Großen Göttermutter, rächt eure grosse Göttlichkeit bald, innerhalb von hundert(?) Tagen, an Priscilla, die meine Geheimnisse verrät! Priscilla erachte ich als absolut null und nichtig. Sie hat einen Nichtsnutz(?) geheiratet, weil Priscilla (ebenso) geil wie irre ist.

Given my aims here, I am (fortunately) excused from discussing all the problems raised by this text, and take only the most relevant points. In A l. 2 we find a transcription of a Greek term in *duodeca theum*, in which we should recognise Greek *dodekatheon*, the Twelve Gods.[92] The editors do not explain their translation of *iniurium fas* ("mein ungerechtes Schicksal"?) in A l. 3. We might consider separating the two words and read *iniuriam* (instead of *iniurium*) as sole object of

[91] The editors comment here: "der als *deus maximus* ausdrücklich mit dem Göttervater Iupiter gleichgesetzt wird". I doubt this is the correct interpretation. In hymns and other cult-texts of this period, especially the Orphic hymns, the marked tendency towards henotheism allows any god to be called "greatest". There need be no presumption of an identification with Jupiter. We might compare an inscription from Rome: Ἄττει ὑψίστῳ καὶ συνέχοντι τὸ πᾶν (*CIL* VI 50), which is not an identification with Zeus, cf. Versnel 1990, 35–7 etc. For Asia Minor see: Chr. Marek, Der höchste, beste, grösste, allmächtigste Gott. Inschriften aus Nordkleinasien, *EA* 32 (2000) 129–146. Cf. also the current discussion on the notion of *hypsistos theos*, prevailing especially, but not only, in Asia Minor. See the survey in: W. Wischmeyer, ΘΕΟΣ ΥΨΙΣΤΟΣ. Neues zu einer alten Debatte, *ZAC* 9 (2005) 149–168, and various contributions to P. Athanassiadi & M. Frede (edd.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1999); Mitchell & Van Nuffelen forthcoming.

[92] Interestingly, two inscriptions from Maeonia (Lydia/Phrygia) present the same term *dodekatheon* in the sense of the divine company of one major god. One is a funeral inscription from Saittai (Strubbe 1997, 46–47, no. 51), the other a votive inscription for Men Axiottenos and "the Dodekatheon which is located next to you" (H. Malay, A Praise of Men Artemidorou Axiottenos, *EA* 36 [2003] 13–17). Chaniotis forthcoming, connects this with two confession inscriptions, which suggest that Men was conceived as a god presiding over a council of gods. I would add that this reminds us of the divine councils accompanying a central great god as we see them in Near Eastern religions (E.T. Mullen, *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* [Cambridge Mass. 1980]) but also in the Cnidian and other curse tablets.

commendo, on the analogy of *tibi conmendo furtum meum* in the curse from Emerita discussed above (p. 286). The expression *fas ut* might then mean "(It is) right, just, according to divine law that you…". However, apart from the fact that this has no parallel in curse texts, *fas ut* is no less idiosyncratic Latin than what the editors propose. Might perhaps *fas* be a writing error for *fac*, thus giving *fac ut me vindicetis*?[93]

The editors also admit that their interpretation of the end of side B is highly doubtful ("Eine zufriedenstellende Interpretation dieser Passage scheint kaum möglich zu sein"): both vocabulary (*gens* as pejorative of "Leute", *tremente* = geil?) and syntax (ablative absolute, which is rarely if ever attested in any other curse text) puzzle them. Unclear, too, are the phrases with *nubere* (l. 4f.) and *errare* (l. 7). These latter terms must contain the burden of the principal's complaint, the act by which Priscilla has roused her anger and which must be avenged by the *Deae*. As the editors say, this is clearly "ein Eifersuchtsdrama", a quarrel over a man. We may note that, as in the previous text from Setúbal, the prayer is addressed to Att(h)is (and the *dodekatheon*), but that the case itself is committed (*commendo*) to "the goddesses" (i.e. avenging deities of the underworld, comparable to the Praxidikai of the Greek curses), who are called upon *per Matrem Deum* to begin their work.[94]

The text thus bristles with problems, but the editors have rendered it more enigmatic than necessary by misunderstanding one central element in it. They do acknowledge that it is a prayer for justice,[95] and argue correctly that the word *commendo* assigns the case "der numinosen Macht", and that the god himself has thereby become the injured

---

[93] *Fac(ias)* is near formulaic in these curses, e.g. *fac<i>atis, ut se plangat*; *fac ut a me(n)sibus exitum illorum.…sit*, in two new Mainz texts (Blänsdorf's nos. 8 l. 8 and 16 l. 18 [pp. 274, 180f. above]; cf. *AE* 1929: 228, and several curses in the present paper. However, this would imply a harsh inconsistency between singular and plural verbal forms. I do not possess a photo of the tablet. Jürgen Blänsdorf, however, after close inspection of the tablet, assures me that this *fas* is the correct reading, which, of course, is not the same as believing that the author wrote correctly what he had in mind.

[94] The editors compare the Erinyes in a *defixio* from Kempten (*AE* 1958: 150): 2004, 38.

[95] E.g. "eine quasi-juristische Bittschrift" (2004, 38); "sie stellt eines der auf dem europäischen Festland selten entdeckten Exemplare der sogenannten 'Gebete um Gerechtigkeit' dar (tatsächlich stehen den über 200 Exemplaren aus Britannien nur etwa 30 aus anderen Provinzen gegenüber)" (2004, 40).

party and now has to take revenge for the injustice done to the principal.[96] However they fail to recognise one of the mechanisms sometimes involved in this type of curse-texts. In the first place, the *sacra paterna* referred to in A ll. 5f.: *pe[r] Matrem Deum vestrae {ut} [v-] indicate sacra pater[na]* have nothing to do with the accusation that Priscilla has done wrong in marrying. They introduce a new accusation, that Priscilla has committed an injustice against the god(s) themselves relating to the sacred objects of the sanctuary. This tallies with the change in the object of *vindicate*. The goddesses(?) are urged "to avenge the ancestral holy objects". This idea is made still clearer in B ll. 2f.: *vindicate numen vestrum magnum / a Priscilla quae detegit sacra*. This can only mean: "avenge your great divine power upon Priscilla, who has uncovered/divulged the *sacra*". Priscilla is alleged to have violated the ritual or the paraphernalia of the sanctuary. One wonders whether these *sacra* might not be related to the *cistas penetrales* in the text from Mainz I deal with below (3.1.2.2).

This allegation, especially the nature of the violation, immediately calls to mind the ritual *diabolai*, "slander-texts", of which there are several examples in the magical papyri, but which also occur in *defixiones*. This is the strategy of launching false allegations of ways in which the target has offended against the deity, especially, as here, blasphemous actions such as divulging ritual secrets and revealing the secrets of the mysteries.[97] I first give a few samples from *PGrMag* as translated in H.D. Betz's edition:

> III 5: Prayer to Helios: "…and behold your form being mistreated by your opponents, so that you may revenge yourself upon them".
> III 113f.: "for these are the people who have mistreated your holy image…".
> IV 2475f.: "For I come to announce the slander of NN, a defiled and unholy woman, for *she has slanderously brought your holy mysteries to the knowledge of men* (…). It is she, NN, who said 'I saw the greatest goddess drinking blood'".

[96] Scholz and Kropp refer to Versnel 1987 (2004, 38), but are not aware of the far more detailed discussion in Versnel 1991. They also quote *AE* 1982: 448 (Mariana, Corsica), where a goddess is invited: *vindica te.*… This curse-text surprised H. Solin, *Arctos* 15 (1981) 121f.: "Die Form des Fluches ist eigenartig. (….) Der Verfluchende identifiziert sich sozusagen mit der Gottheit, die ihm helfen soll. Sein Schaden ist zugleich der Schaden seiner Gottheit, die er auf diese Weise zwingen und überzeugen will". I have explained it simply as an example of cession (e.g. Versnel 1986, 85; 1987, 15).

[97] For the pre-history of this device in Egypt see e.g. *ANET* 327 with note b; Graf 1997, 181–184. The standard paper on the theme in the magical papyri is Eitrem 1924.

IV 2574–2621: Accusations of blasphemous sacrifices to Selene with expressions such as "and this is sacrilege" (2587), and "brand her, NN, the lawless one, with bitter retributions" (2606).
IV 2642–74. A long slander-spell in which an opponent is accused of making a variety of of blasphemous offerings to Selene, and of claiming that she is guilty of murder and eating human flesh.
VII 604–12: "For she said: 'IAO does not have ribs', 'Adonai was cast out because of his violent anger' … 'Michael is by nature a hermaphrodite'. I am not the one who says such things, master, but she, the godless NN. Therefore fetch her for me, her inflamed with passion, submissive. Let her not find sleep until she comes to me" (forcible spell of attraction).

These are all prescriptions from Graeco-Egyptian receptaries, but the same technique is used in *defixiones:*

DTAud 188.7–12 (Rome?): παράλαβε Νεικομήδην διώκων….. τόνδε τὸν ἄνομον καὶ ἀσε[βῆ] ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κ[α]ύσας τὸν παπυρῶνα τοῦ Ὠσείρεως κ[αὶ] ὁ φαγὼν τὰ κρέα τῶν ἰχθύων τῶν ἀλαβήτων, "take Nicomedes … for he it was who burned the papyrus boat (?) of Osiris and ate the flesh of the alabes fishes".[98]

DTAud 140.15–18 (Rome, late-antique), where the divinity is addressed: *et, [si] forte te seducat per aliqua [artifici]a et rideat de te et exsultetur tibi, vince peroccide […] Praeseticium.*

DTAud 295.8–10 (Hadrumetum, ?III^{p}): a rival charioteer with his horses is surrendered to the god: *tibi commendo quoniam malεdixit partourientem*. Eitrem 1924, 57 recognised the phrase as a *diabole*.

A curse from Antioch (III–IV^{p}?):
F. Heintz, Magic Tablets in Antioch, in Chr. Kondoleon (ed.), *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City. Exhibition Catalogue* (Princeton 2000) 163–167, esp. 164 no. 50, describes its contents as: A: Curse against a greengrocer named Babylas. B.: *Diabole* against Babylas, accusing him of impiety and lawlessness; finally, spirits residing in an unused well are asked to 'chill' and 'sink' him. See also D.R. Jordan ap. *SGD* II no. 109.

We should perhaps add:

DTAud 155 A.47–50 (Rome, late-antique): the principal's enemy Cardelus is handed over to the gods: τὸν δυσσεβὴν καὶ ἄνομον καὶ ἐπικατάρατον Κάρδηλον; the similarity of terminology suggests that this may be another *diabole* curse.[99]

---

[98] D.R. Jordan, Magia nilotica sulle rive del Tevere, *Mediterraneo Antico. Economie, Società, Culture* 7 (2004) 693–710, has looked at the original tablet in the British Museum (where it has been since 1878) and provides a new reading and discussion. My thanks to the author for sending me a copy.

[99] Several curses simply call a victim τὸν ἄνομον καὶ ἀσε[βῆ] *vel sim.* without fur-

My suggestion is that the allegation in the curse from Groß-Gerau that Priscilla has divulged the *sacra* is exactly the same type of *diabole* as in the italicised phrase in *PGrM* IV 2475f. The force of the accusation (which we should assume to be false) is to reinforce the demand that the deities avenge themselves on the culprit. An interpretation of this kind surely provides a satisfactory explanation of this section of the text.

The editors note that the curse from Groß-Gera is closely similar—in some respects identical (for instance in the invocation of Atthis Tyrannus)—to some of the curses found in the joint sanctuary of Isis and the Mother of the Gods at Mainz, and presented elsewhere in this volume by Jürgen Blänsdorf. In seven of them the Great Mother is asked to avenge an injustice (in four of them, together with Attis).

One of these very interesting curses was published by Blänsdorf already in 2004.[100] This is one of my reasons for including it in the present collection. For this version of the paper, Blänsdorf has kindly allowed me to use his English translation.[101] I retain my comments from the conference-version, and then comment briefly on some other tablets that are of special interest for my topic (3.1.2.3).

3.1.2.2. Curse found in the sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna (Mainz, late I^{p}–early II^{p})

Like the others from this site, the tablet was found in a large sacrificial ash-pit; the majority do not survive because they had evidently been deliberately melted in the fire.

---

ther details. It is likely, but not certain, that they are *diabolai*. An interesting text in some respects related to the *diabole* appeared on a grave stele of a fifteen year-old boy: Κύριε Παντοκράτωρ, σὺ μὲ ἔκτισες, κακὸς δέ με ἄνθρωπος ἀπώλεσεν· ἐκδίκησον με ἐν τάχι (*SEG* 50, 1233 (Neoklaudiopolis, AD 237). I follow here the discussion by Chaniotis forthcoming. The stele is inscribed with an appeal to divine justice and revenge: "Lord the Almighty, you have made me, but an evil man has destroyed me. Revenge my death fast!" In order to attract the god's personal interest in this affair the author made the god the victim of the offender: the murderer is presented as someone who has destroyed the god's personal creation. Thus his punishment became the god's personal concern. This is related to the technique of the *diabole*, with the difference that here the accusation is not based on a *false* allegation.

[100] Blänsdorf 2004; it appears again in his paper in the present volume (p. 166f., no. 2).

[101] I am deeply grateful to Jürgen Blänsdorf for sending me pictures, texts and his provisional commentaries (to be published in full in Blänsdorf 2009). Other pre-publications include: Cybèle et Attis dans les tablettes de *defixio* inédites de Mayence, *CRAI* 2005, 669–92; Survivances et métamorphoses des cultes orientaux dans l'empire romain, in: H. Duchêne (ed.), *Survivances et métamorphoses* (Dijon 2006) 95–110; *Per benedictum tuum*: Eine versteckte Anrufung des Attis auf einer Mainzer *Defixionis tabella* (*DTM* 2, Inv.-Nr. 182,18), *MHNH* 7 (2007) 293–300.

Latin text:

Recto:
Bone sancte Atthis Tyran-
ne, adsi(s), aduenias Libera-
li iratus. Per omnia te rogo,
domine, per tuum Castorem,
Pollucem, per cistas penetra-
les, des ei malam mentem,
malum exitum, quandius
uita uixerit, ut omni cor-
pore uideat se emori prae-
ter oculos

Verso:
neque se possit redimere
nulla pecunia nullaque re
neq(ue) abs te neque ab ullo deo
nisi ut exitum malum.
Hoc praesta, rogo te per ma-
iestatem tuam.

Translation:
Obverse: Good, holy Att(h)is, Lord, help (me), come to Liberalis in anger. I ask you by everything, Lord, by your Castor (and) Pollux, by the *cistae* in your sanctuary, give him a bad mind, bad death, as long as he lives, so that he may see himself dying all over his body—except his eyes. Reverse: And may he not be able to redeem himself by money or anything else, either from you or from any god --- except a bad death. Grant this, I ask you by your majesty.

I restrict myself to those comments by the editor which are relevant to my own topic, and add a few additional notes. Blänsdorf points out the close resemblance to the curses I have already discussed from Groß-Gerau and Setúbal. There is the same emphasis on the majesty of the addressee, in terms such as *Tyranne, maiestatem* etc.[102] In all three prayers to Attis and his circle he is not only entreated *per maiestatem tuam*, as in the present text, which, as Blänsdorf notes, we find in

[102] I doubt, though, whether the use of the term *tyranne* and the reference to *tuum Castorem, Pollucem*, which is comparable to the equally enigmatic *tuum Nocturnum* in the Setúbal prayer (on which see Marco 2004, 88–91), implies an identification with Jupiter (see n. 91 above on *deum maxsime*).

other prayers and curses,[103] but also—and this is unique—by *his* Nocturnus, by *his* Castorem, Pollucem (both Setúbal), and, *per Matrem Deum* (Groß-Gerau), *per cistas penetrales* (here). Whatever their precise meaning, the appeal to these '*auxilia*' contributes to the majesty of the adressee, to the pressure exercised on his person, and so to his personal involvement in the whole affair. This is quite appropriate to the prayer for justice, which is usually marked by a tone of emotional submissiveness.

Another characteristic of the genre is the flattering and affectionate language exemplified in the opening word here, *Bone*, which is literally Greek φίλε. We might compare *DTAtt* 98 l. 4f.: φίλη Γῆ, βοήθει μοι. ἀδικούμενος γὰρ ὑπὸ Εὐρυπτολέμου καὶ Ξενοφῶντος καταδῶ αὐτούς, "Beloved Earth, help me. It is because I was wronged by Euruptolemos and Xenophon that I curse them", which is a pure prayer for justice.[104]

Another interesting term here is *iratus*, which is by no means common in *defixiones*, and likewise suggests the god's personal involvement.[105] The aim here is no doubt to make the god, as a sort of general supervisor, responsible for the punishment of the culprit. As Faraone has recently put it: "In simple terms, by ceding the stolen goods to the god, the curse retroactively turns a common thief into a blasphemous temple robber" (2005, 170). The two wishes, that 1) the god may show his anger, and 2) there shall be no forgiveness or allaying of the divine anger, as here (verso ll. 1–4), belong closely together.[106] British curses quite often stipulate that the punishment manifested in

---

[103] E.g. the curse from Emerita quoted above (see n. 38); also *Tab.Sulis* no. 35: *rogo [s]anctissimam maiestatem tuam*; 32: *dono numini tuo maiestati*; apparently also in 33, as well as elsewhere in Britain.

[104] See for this and other examples Versnel 1991, 65; cf. now also the curse from Pella (no. 3.3.7 below) δαίμονες φίλ[ο]ι.

[105] Kropp 2004, 85–88, discusses *AE* 1919: 228, a prayer for justice from Carnuntum: *Quomodo ille plumbus pondus habet, sic et Eudemus habeat vos iratos* […]. She comments: "Der Zorn der Götter als gerechte Reaktion auf ein fluchwürdiges Verhalten ist in den übrigen *defixiones* nie thematisiert" (88). This was already noted by the first editor R. Egger, Eine Fluchtafel aus Carnuntum, *Der römische limes in Österreich* 16 (1926) 117–156, republished in his *Römische Antike und frühes Christentum* I (Klagenfurt 1962) 88.

[106] As Blänsdorf points out (p. 161), this stipulation occurs elsewhere in the Mainz curses, sometimes in extenso, e.g. his no. 17 ll. 12–6: *neque au<ro> neque argento rediimere* [sic] *possis a matre deum, nisi ut exitum tuum populus spectet.* The emphasis on the *public* demonstration of the target's guilt (which recurs in Blänsdorf's no. 16 l. 14; see n. 37 above) is typical of prayers for justice, e.g. *I.Knidos*. It reinforces the idea of loss of face (see p. 314 below). Chaniotis 2004, 13 adduces another example of divine punishment in front of an audience: L.R. LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle*

illness shall cease only when the culprit returns the stolen object, but on occasion quite ruthlessly request that the thief shall only be able to 'redeem the gift' with his blood (i.e. life).[107] The wish that the god be angry occurs frequently in funerary and other curses throughout the Greek and Latin speaking regions of the Mediterranean basin: *habebit deos iratos* matches τῶν θεῶν κεχολωμένων τύχοιτο.[108] To find this theme linked with that of inescapable punishment, however, one has to go to the funerary curses from Asia Minor where the expression τῶν θεῶν κεχολωμένων τύχοιτο is sometimes combined with the wish that curses be ἄλυτα.[109] Alternatively, as in the prayers for justice from Cnidus, the goddess is to remain implacably unforgiving (e.g. μὴ γένοιτο εὐειλάτου τυχεῖν Δάματρος). On these and other grounds I infer a fairly strong influence from eastern-Mediterranean religious mentalities in the curses from Mainz, though, as Blänsdorf rightly warns us, this does not necessarily imply that the authors themselves came from that area.[110] All these features can be added to

---

Inscriptions. Text, Translation, and Commentary (Atlanta 1995) 121 ὄχλου πολλοῦ περιστάντος.

[107] This latter is called by Tomlin 'the bogus concession'; on both forms, see the texts listed under Tomlin 1988, 65 s.v. *nisi* and p. 66 *s.v. redemat*; note also idem in *Britannia* 26 (1995) 373 no. 2b, *nec… redemere possit nessi sanguine suo…* (= *AE* 1995: 985b, Uley). Irrevocable punishment is a theme in the Caerleon curse (above. p. 287) and in another from Bath brilliantly interpreted by R.S.O. Tomlin, Vinisius to Nigra: Evidence from Oxford of Christianity in Roman Britain, *ZPE* 100 (1994) 93–108: *non ei remittatur nisi innocentiam* and *non illi dimittatur*, where both verbs, under Christian influence, mean "forgive".

[108] Versnel 1985; Strubbe 1991; 1997.

[109] Anger: Strubbe 1997, Appendix 2 V. Inescapable: ibid 56 no. 67: the god is to be ἀνείλαστος with regard to any violation; also Strubbe 1991, 43 with n. 106. This theme recurs in confession-texts: *BIWK* no. 4 with Petzl's discussion. On the double theme of divine anger and inescapable punishment, see Versnel 1985.

[110] See p. 164f. above. I have cautiously suggested a Near-Eastern origin for the prayer for justice in general, suggested especially by the allusions to royalty and the deferential mode of address in these prayers: Versnel 1991, 90f. David Jordan (*per litteras*, cf. Versnel 1999, n. 107) agrees. Faraone points out that W. Sherwood Fox, Old Testament Parallels to Tabellae Defixionum, *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* 30 (1913–14) 111–124, already undertook a more systematic search for parallels with the Near East, and Faraone himself seeks the origins especially in the Canaanite culture (Faraone, Garnand, and López-Ruiz 2005). He particularly emphasises the gender of the relevant gods: they are nearly all females of the Mother-goddess type, and are accordingly approached in a deferential fashion. I accept the possibility of a Canaanite influence, though this seems to me less obvious in the earliest Greek testimonia of what I have called the border area. For the later curses (British, Iberian and German), in addition to the movement of individuals connected with the army, the vehicle of the oriental elements may have been instructions by priests and other cult personnel. This seems particularly plausible in the case of the curses invoking

those that prompted Blänsdorf to conclude "dieses Mainzer Verfluchungstäfelchen enthält…ein formelles Gebet" (2004, 58). There can be no question that it is a prayer for justice.

3.1.2.3. The remainder of the Mainz curse-texts

For detailed information on the curses from the temple of Isis and Magna Mater in Mainz I refer the reader to Blänsdorf's contribution to this volume, to which the numbers below refer. I simply offer a few general notes on issues relevant to my subject.

Of the total of 34 tablets, almost twenty are either too lacunate to say much of any value about them or merely contain a series of names. Nos. 1, 6 and 10 belong to this category. Of the others, six lack any formal appeal and merely charge that the culprit is (to be) 'given' to the god(s), or express the wish that the target may suffer (nos. 3, 4, 5, 11, 13, 14). There is one text, which I have just discussed (no. 2), with a proper prayer and without any of the features usually associated with the 'competitive' or 'binding' *defixio*. Seven texts begin and/or end with a deferential invocation and plea for help as befits a prayer (nos. 7, 8, 12, 16, 17, 18) or contain some other reference to the active involvement of the god (no. 9) and also contain one or more similes relating to the manner of the suffering to be imposed. They include some hitherto unknown analogies of the usual *similia-similibus* type: "as salt melts in water, just so may…"; "as this lead melts (in fire) just so…"; "as I write this in reverse order, so may…". More interesting, however, are the creative similes connected with the cult of Magna Mater as well as Bellona, such as: "just as the Galli cut themselves so may…", or "just as the Bellonarii spill their blood, so…." In the rhetoric of analogy the simile is a privileged tool, and as such it is a favourite element both in curse-texts and generally in prayers. The mere occurrence of simile cannot be used by itself as an index of the nature of a curse. *Tu qui Attidis corpus accepisti, accipias corpus eius* in the Mainz text just discussed (3.1.2.2) is an (implicit) simile in a genuine prayer. Other characteristic traits of the binding *defixio*, such as retrograde writing, allusions to different types of reversion as instrument of analogy (on which see Faraone and Kropp in this volume), expressions

---

Mater Magna and Attis: the texts are basically formulaic, while allowing for individual variation. See also Ogden 1999, 56 on the Bath curses. Blänsdorf (this volume p. 165) rejects any eastern influence, direct or indirect.

such as *defigo* or *in hac tabula depono aversum* do occur but are less frequent. *Voces magicae* and graphic signs associated with magical practice are absent (which is not surprising, given the relatively early date of these texts).

Another consistent feature of the Mainz curses is that whenever the reason for the complaint or curse is explicitly stated it always concerns fraud or theft. Two other features are consistent with this. First, we never find an explicit statement that the target is to be bound or paralysed in order to prevent him/her from opposing the author in a competitive situation, as in *defixiones* concerned with litigation, athletics, circus or gladiatorial games. Secondly, the harsh and emotional language of these curses suggests that in each case—perhaps even where there is no direct invocation of a deity—the principal feels wronged by his target and desires revenge and/or retaliation.

3.2. *The new tablets from the sanctuary of Anna Perenna (Rome)*

For the fascinating new texts found in the well of Anna Perenna I again refer to the relevant contribution by Jürgen Blänsdorf in this volume (pp. 215–44). They were found in a late-Roman archaeological context, and the majority of the texts themselves are demonstrably late as well (late 4th—early 5th c. CE).[111] Blänsdorf's analyses of the eight legible texts lead him to the conclusion that only some can be classified as traditional types of *defixiones* (p. 229f.). Nos. 1–4 (partially mutilated) and 6 consist mainly of personal names. No. 5 perhaps contains forms of the verb *rogare* (*rogat; ro<go> vo*[*s*] *bon* <…>), which may, according to the editor, indicate a prayer to a good god (as in several of the texts referred to above). Much the same is true of no. 8, which is more extensive but very hard to decipher and interpret. No. 7 is by far the most intelligible and interesting text. Blänsdorf interprets it as a prayer to the Nymphs of Anna Perenna and their *angili* (angels, divine messengers), who are invoked by their *virtus* (ll. 2 and 7–9: *rogo et peto magnam virtutem vestram* [twice]), to take away both of Sura's eyes, in order that the *virtus* of the *arbiter* may not persist (*ne possit durare virtus arbitri*).[112] The target was evidently the assistant of a judge. Blänsdorf is certainly correct to say that it contains some

[111] Blänsdorf dates no. 8 at any rate to II–III^{p}.

[112] Not, I think, the classic Latin concept 'moral virtue' but, as often in curse-texts, 'physical strength/potency/efficacy', cf. *OLD* sense 5c.

features that suggest it is a *tabula iudiciaria* in Audollent's sense, and others (especially in that it takes the form of a prayer to the nymphs to take revenge for a failure in a law-suit) that point to the prayer for justice.

3.3. *Greek Curse-texts*

3.3.1. *Curse tablet from the sanctuary of Palaimon Pankrates (Athens, IV[a])*

Jordan announced his imminent publication of this tablet in *SGD* II no. 14 but it has still not appeared, so far as I can tell.[113] I quote his summary, which mentions most of the details relevant to our present issue.

> Victims bound down (καταδῶ) πρὸς τ[ὸν Π]αλαίμονα, who is to become their punisher (καὶ δέομαί σου, ὦ Παλαῖμον, τιμωρὸς γένοιο), that they should seem[114] to judges to speak unjustly (δικασταῖ<ς> ἄδικα δοκωῖεν λέγειν)…For they both do and say unjust things (Ἄδικα γὰρ καὶ ποιοῦσιν καὶ λέγουσι)…

The term δέομαι, evoking the sphere of prayer, is one indication that this text belongs in the 'border-area', in Jordan's words: "the grey area between forceful operation—the piercing with the nail, the 'binding down', backward spelling—and the pious appeal for justice".[115] I note in passing that the term τιμωρὸς γένοιο, "become their punisher", is as new in Greek prayers for justice as is the expression *ut…ultionem requirat*, "that he demand vengeance" in a curse from Uley (AE 1996: 936).[116] The phrase ἄδικα γὰρ καὶ ποιοῦσιν καὶ λέγουσι is a more explicit variant of expressions such as ἀδικοῦμαι γάρ in the prayer for justice (Versnel 1991, 65).

---

[113] D.R. Jordan, A Curse Tablet Addressing Palaimon, in: A. Kalyeropoulou (ed.), *Το Ιερόν του Παγκράτου* (Athens). I am glad to be able to summarise his interpretations from a draft he was kind enough to send me some years ago, and add just one suggestion.

[114] Probably not in the sense of "making a false impression (although actually they may speak the truth)", but rather in the sense of δοκεῖ μοι, "I have the impression, I come to the conclusion, I decide that". *SEG* 36: 1575, after *Bull.ép.* 1987, no. 400, mentions Christian funerary curses of the well-known type of δώσει λόγον θεῷ or ἕξει πρὸς τὸν θεόν, but with one curious expression κακὸς λόγος, which means that the violator will not be able to justify himself before God. This may be distantly related to the expression in the Palaimon curse.

[115] Pointing out that δέομαι is a frequent feature of *enteuxeis* (petitions).

[116] The closest parallel to 'punisher', as Jordan notes, is ὅπως τιμωρηθεῖ in my 3.3.6 (p. 317 below). Uley: see R. Tomlin in *Britannia* 27 (1996) 439–441 no. 1.

The curse ends with the line: Ἀδικῶν οὖν {Ἀριστ·} ΕΥΟΥΣΥΜΟΥ σου τυχεῖν, in which Jordan recognises an idea found in several of the Cnidian curses: "and let the culprit not find Demeter forgiving" (μὴ γένοιτο εὐειλάτου τυχεῖν Δάματρος). He takes the meaning to be something like: so may Aristophanes find you punitive, vengeful *vel sim.* because he has been unjust. Since "something must have gone wrong with the writer's spelling" and the reading is desperately doubtful, Jordan attractively suggests a word like εὔθυνος "corrector, examiner". An alternative conjecture that I would propose is a form of ἐνθύμιος/ἐνθυμεῖσθαι, meaning 'lay to heart, ponder', 'think much or deeply about', 'take to heart, be concerned or angry at' (LSJ). It sometimes occurs with ὀργίζεσθαι. This conjecture receives support from the fact that the word ἐνθύμιον figures in one of the Cnidian curses (*I.Knidos* no. 150 B 7). An object is lost and the owner 'dedicates' it to the goddess. If the finder returns it everything will be fine. But if he does not, or if the object has been sold, then ἐνθύμιον ἔστω Δάματρος καὶ Κούρας. The interpretation of Blümel, "dann soll (den unehrlichen Finder) das schlechte Gewissen vor Damater und Kura quälen", is implausible for both syntactical and semantic reasons. The correct meaning to my mind is "let it be the concern of Demeter and Kore" (cf. *LXX* Psalm 75 l. 11, where ἐνθύμιον means 'wrath').[117]

The Palaimon text has some characteristics of a litigation-*defixio*. The only purely formal feature of the *defixio* is the verb καταδῶ. For the rest stereotyped features of prayers for divine justice predominate. The major difference from the usual legal *defixiones* is that the author clearly feels that he is justified in addressing his prayer to Palaimon the Hero and asking him to punish his opponents because they are playing a dirty game. This accords with the fact that this is the only curse-text from Athens that has yet been found in a sanctuary, generally the preferred depository for prayers for justice.[118]

---

[117] And as such it is a good analogue of the final line of the sacred law that Xenophon (*Anab.* 5.3.13) put up by the temple that he had founded at his estate with instructions to any future owner: ΑΝ ΔΕ ΤΙΣ ΜΗ ΙΠΟΙΗΙ ΤΑΥΤΑ ΤΗΙ ΘΕΩΙ ΜΕΛΗΣΕΙ. For the negative connotation of μέλει cf. Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.30 where he uses the verb to express the coming anger of the god Apollo in an oracle: ἀποκρίνασθαι τὸν θεὸν ὅτι αὐτῷ μελήσει, with following disaster. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 1.73.4, *deorum iniurias dis curae.*

[118] Besides Selinus, Cnidus, Morgantina and Corinth, some of whose tablets I discuss in the present paper, Jordan, *Hesperia* 69 (2000) 95, also mentions Mytilene (three curse tablets: D.R. Jordan and J.B. Curbera, Curse Tablets from Mytilene, *Phoenix* 52 [1998] 31–41) and Rhodes (unpublished). Cf. Ogden 1999, 23. In F.J. Bliss

3.3.2. *Curse-tablets from the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth (Roman period)*

In 1994 Ron Stroud was kind enough to send me the texts of 18 largely fragmentary lead tablets found in the sanctuary.[119] It thus parallels the groups known from Cnidus, Bath and Uley. Here again, detailed knowledge of the prayer for justice improves our understanding of the texts.

Several of the unpublished texts commit one or more individuals to the gods of the Underworld (once called κύριοι[120] θεοὶ καταχθόνιοι, once θεοῖς ἀλειτηρίοι[ς] καὶ θεα<ῖ>ς ἀλειτηρίαις (avenging gods and goddesses) "to destruction" (ἰς κατεργασίαν). In an amatory curse (no. 1) a woman is "bound" (καταδεσμεύω) in relation to one man *and* all men. A list of her body parts is cursed. In the longest, most legible, and most interesting curse (nos. 8/9) a woman 'deposits' (παρατίθεμαι καὶ κατατίθεμαι) another woman, a garland weaver by name of Karpime Babia to the Moirai Praxidikai ὅπως ἐγδείκ[κ]ωσι τὰς ὕβρ{ι}εις, "so that they may exact vengeance for her insolent behaviour".[121] The author asks Hermes Chthonios and other chthonic gods "by the mighty names of Ananke to destroy her opponent ἀπὸ

& R.A.S. Macalister, *Excavations in Palestine during the Years 1898–1900* (London 1902) 158–187, R. Wünsch published 35 Greek curse-texts written on limestone from Tell Sandahannah (West of Hebron) dating to the second century CE. Though most are too fragmentary to allow interpretation, some are very clear and of particular relevance here, since they are, as Wünsch aptly put it, "imprecations of persons who considered themselves undeservedly wronged, against their enemies, containing invocations of a god, with the intent to bring punishment on the head of the offending person" (p. 184). Wünsch also noticed the close relationship with the Cnidian tablets. They contain words such as: βασα[νίσαι], [τιμω]ρίαν γείνεσθαι. This series has not been included in any of the great corpora and I am grateful to Richard Gordon for having drawn my attention to it years ago. One of them, an unmistakable prayer for justice, can be found in translation in Gager, *CT* 203f. no. 107, and thence in Ogden 1999, 52.

[119] The find was briefly announced by R.S. Stroud, Curses from Corinth, *AJA* 77 (1973) 228f. I am grateful to Ron Stroud for sending me the draft of his final publication, with copious commentary (Stroud, forthcoming). The numbers of the tablets used here refer to this draft.

[120] On *Kyrioi theoi*, see the literature cited in Stroud, forthcoming *ad* no. 10.

[121] A translation of this text was published by N. Bookidis and R.S. Stroud, *Demeter and Persephone in Ancient Corinth.* American Excavations in Old Corinth (Corinth Notes 2) (Princeton 1987) 30f., and can also be found in Gager, *CT* 37 n. 92. On the text, see recently: B.W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth* (Grand Rapids 2001) 168f.; N. Bookidis, in R. Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Archaeological Evidence. Proceedings of the Fourth international Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, 22–24 Oct. 1993. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen in-8º* 15 (Stockholm 1998) 229–231.

κεφαλῆς μέχρι ἰχνέων. She twice asks Hermes to make her able to conceive (καρπίσαι με). This reveals the kernel of the conflict: the garland weaver may have thrown the principal's childlessness in her teeth.[122] Ridicule and loss of face are central themes in ancient society and are thus very much at issue in curses.[123]

Of the eighteen tablets, eight (2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18) are too fragmentary or for various reasons too enigmatic to permit reliable interpretation. One (no. 5) seems to belong to the *defixiones iudiciariae* in Audollent's sense, since the word συνίστωρ (witness for the opposite party?), followed by three names, can be read. Eight texts (1, 6, 7, 8/9, 10, 13, 14, 16) display one or more features typical of prayers for divine justice: lists of body parts, total destruction of the target rather than binding, avenging gods, humble addresses to gods as "mistresses/masters" or to a 'righteous' god, a request to "expose" the culprit. The minimum inference is that all of these concern cases in which the authors considered themselves unjustly treated and have come to ask the god(s) to do justice, punish or exert pressure on the person or persons responsible. Stroud rightly concludes that on Acrocorinth, just as at Cnidus and Amorgos (see p. 334f. below), Demeter was considered a goddess who could be appealed to in prayers for justice.

These texts are also important as one more example of the local differences in the otherwise rather standardised vocabulary. The expression ἰς κατεργασίαν is only known from one other site, the Athenian Agora (see 3.3.4 below). More significantly, whereas all the prayers from Cnidus address the goddesses of the temple where they were deposited, i.e. Demeter and Kore (and other gods *with* Demeter), as do those in the sanctuary of Dea Sulis Minerva at Bath, those from Acrocorinth, despite their location (the sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone), address the gods of the Underworld, the Moirai Praxidikai,

---

[122] On ancient attitudes toward reproductive failure among women: S. Iles Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley 1999) 161–199. On the central place of fertility and its opposite in relation to women (and land) in Greek culture, see: S. Guettel Cole, *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space* (Berkeley 2004) 146–177, esp. 146–158.

[123] Versnel 1999, 152–156; Chaniotis 2004, esp. the section Saving Face: Defence against Imputation, Vows for Justice and Prayers for Revenge, pp. 11–22. To the evidence collected in these studies now add a few very interesting papyri with official complaints against people who have falsely and *publicly* denounced or abused the plaintiffs: J.M.S. Cowey and Kl. Maresch, *Urkunden des Politeuma der Juden von Herakleopolis (144/3–133/2 v.Chr.). P.Polit.Iud.* Papyrologica Coloniensia 29 (Cologne 2000 [2001]) nos. 1, 10, 11, 12. (a reference given me by A. Chaniotis).

Hermes Chthonios, Ge, the children of Ge, and the avenging gods and goddesses. We might compare the fact that the curses I have discussed connected with the cult of Attis, at Setúbal, Groß-Gerau and the temple of Isis and Mater Magna Mater at Mainz, betray a variety of divine adressees. Setúbal first invokes the Great God of the Underworld and then switches to Attis; Groß-Gerau first invokes the "Greatest Attis" but then addresses the appeal itself to the "Goddesses"; that from Mainz addresses Attis alone. An analogous variation occurs within the group from Mainz.

In 1997 David Jordan sent me the texts of three unpublished *defixiones*, two from the Athenian Agora and one, no doubt Attic, in the Ashmolean. Two of them were in his view prayers for justice. With his consent, I reproduce his notes on the terms and features of these texts that are most relevant to my theme.[124]

3.3.3. *Curse against a thief from the Athenian Agora (II–III^{p})*

> τὸν κλέψαντα δέκα ν[ε]ηνάρεια (= δηνάρια). That he may burn in fire. There follows an extended list of body parts. The same wish for the one who took part in the crime. Kill the thief and punish (κόλασον) him, requite (?) me (ἄμιψον [ἐ]μαυτόν). Avenge the one who wrote this (ἐκδίκησον τὸν γρ[ά]ψαντα καὶ καταγράφαντα).

Occasion and terminology obviously justify the qualification prayer for justice.

3.3.4. *Curse against a woman from the Athenian Agora (IV^{a}?)*

> On a separate piece of lead: Mistresses Nymphai, punish (κυρίαι Νύμφαι κολάσασθε)…
> The main text begins: Κ[υρίαι] Νύμφαι ἀνατίθω ὑμῖν—there follows the name of a woman—ἐπὶ κατεργασίαν. (The same line recurs at the end of the text).

---

[124] The third was published by Jordan in: Jordan, Montgomery and Thomassen 1999, 115–117: "Whoever put a binding spell on me, whether woman or man or slave or free or foreigner or citizen or domestic(?) or alien, whether for spite towards my work or my deeds, whoever put a curse on me before Hermes Eriounios or Katochos or Dolios or anywhere else, I put a reciprocal binding-spell on all my enemies". This is clearly an example of magic and counter magic. During our symposium in Zaragoza, Jordan informed us about an interesting new prayer for justice from the cemetery of ancient Corinth with a number of new features.

(Destroy?) her strength, her body, her eyesight, her "exit", all the parts of her body.
At the end, in a mutilated passage, we read the letters δικα.

κολάσασθε and δικα as well as the reverent address to the avenging Nymphai and the enumeration of body-parts allow us to count this text as a prayer for justice. Note that this curse from Athens contains the expression ἐπὶ κατεργασίαν, which re-appears in the (much later) curses from Acrocorinth.

3.3.5. *A fragmentary* defixio *of 50 lines, from Oropos (III–II[a])*
The true nature of this text was first recognised by Angelos Chaniotis ap. EBGR 1997, no. 296.[125] The full text is re-printed in *SEG* 47 (1997) 510. As the curse is too long to copy here, I give a literal, though slightly abbreviated, form of Chaniotis' discussion, which sets out the features directly relevant to our issue.[126]

Someone curses a series of persons (ll. 1, 23, 40, 42, 46: καταγράφω; l. 16: καταγέγραφα; l. 18f.: καταδεσμεύ[ω γεγρ]αμμένου[ς καὶ α]ὐτοὺς καὶ [τὰ] ἐκεί[νων]; ll. 44, 47f.: καταδεσμεύω), willing them to be delivered to Plouton and Mounogenes, i.e., Persephone (ll. 2f., 41f.). The curser binds the bed [marriage-bed?], the tongue, and the actions of his enemies (ll. 20–22: καταδεσμεύω δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν κοίτην αὐτῶν καὶ τὴ[ν] γλῶτταν καὶ τὴν πρᾶξιν), wishing them death and misery (l. 9f.: ἐξολέσειεν πάντας; l. 11f.: ἐκτρῖψαι κακούς, μελέου[ς]; l. 12: τόν τε βίον αὐ[τῶν]; ll. 14f.: οἰκτρο<ύς>, μελέους; l. 30: ἐκ[τρῖ]ψαι τε αὐτούς; ll. 32–35: κακοὺς καὶ μελέους δέξαισθε αὐτοὺς πάντας καὶ μ[ὴ γένοιτο]-αὐτοῖς μηθὲν ἀγαθό, ἀλλὰ κακούς, μελέους; ll. 39f.: δοῖμεν οἰκτρούς, μελέους, ἐπιπόνους, ἀώρο[υς] θανάτους). P(etrakos) suggests that the context is a conflict, which re-appears in these documents, between the principal and various persons connected with the sanctuary concerning the melting down of dedications. The most interesting feature of the text is the justification employed by the principal: "I demand that my request be heard, because I have been wronged" (ll. 15f.: [ἀδικο-]ύμενος ἀξ[ιῶ πάντα] ἐπήκοα γενέσ[θαι]); "having been wronged, and not having wronged first, I demand that what I have written down and deposited to you be accomplished" (ll. 25–29: ἀξιῶι οὖν ἀδικούμενος καὶ οὐκ ἀδικῶν πρότερος ἐπιτελ[ῆ] γενέσθα<ι> ἃ καταγράφω καὶ ἃ παρατίθεμαι ὑμῖν;[127] cf. l. 10: ἀξιῶ; l. 45: ἀδικούμενος ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν). This

[125] The first editor, B.C. Petrakos, *Οἱ ἐπιγραφὲς τοῦ Ὠρωποῦ* (Athens, 1997) (= *I.Oropos*) no. 745a, did not recognise its true nature.
[126] Also in Chaniotis 2004, 8.
[127] Unsurprisingly in a prayer for justice, "(not) being the first to have committed injustice" seems to be an important argument. For parallels see *PGrMag* LXII 105: αὔτη

is an excellent example of a prayer for justice, a group of defixiones studied by H.S. Versnel 1991 [cf. EBGR 1991, 261].

3.3.6. *Curse from the Kerameikos, Athens (317–307 BCE)*[128]

Γλυκέραν τὴ<ν> Δίωνος
γυναῖκα κατωδῶμεν
πρὸς τοὺς χθονίους
ὅπως τιμωρηθεῖ
καὶ [ἀ]τε[λ]ὴς γάμο

Voutiras 1998, 40 n. 91 and 55f. n. 130 reads in l. 2 κατὼ δ<οῦ>μεν, but it can hardly be anything else than a form of καταδέω with proleptic attraction of the following ω. As Voutiras saw, the expression [ἀ]τε[λ]ὴς γάμου also occurs in the following curse from Pella (3.3.7 below). In his opinion it should be understood as "devoid of sexual intercourse". Unlike the majority of the texts listed here, this is not a pure prayer for justice. It is a borderline case, in that it contains typical *defixio* language in κατωδῶμεν πρὸς τοὺς χθονίους. The words ὅπως τιμωρηθεῖ, on the other hand, implies that the author(s) feel(s) that they/she have/has been wronged and that hence that they are justified in asking the gods of the Underworld to punish Glykera. I allow for the possibility that, despite the plural number of the verb, the author may be a woman acting by herself: we have here surely to do with a case of amatory jealousy.

3.3.7. *Curse from a grave at Pella (mid IV^a)*
This text has been edited with extensive commentary by Voutiras 1998. I reproduce here his text and translation:

1 [Θετί]μας καὶ Διονυσοφῶντος τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸν γάμον καταγράφω καὶ
τᾶν ἀλλᾶν πασᾶν γυ-

με πρώτη ἠδίκησε, "she was the one who first wronged me"; *DTAud* 198 (Cumae II–III^p), where the gods of the Netherworld are invoked:…ὑ]ποκατέχετε ὑμεῖς [αὐτὴν ταῖς ἐ]σχ[άτ]αις τειμωρίαις.…ὅτι πρώτη ἠθέτησ[ε τὴν πίστιν πρὸς Φ]ήλικα τὸν ἑαυτῆς ἄνδρα, "subject her to the ultimate penalties…because she was the first to break her loyalty [or love, or friendship] to her husband Felix." D. Jordan, Remedium amoris, a Curse from Cumae, *Mnemosyne* 56 (2003) 666–679 presents with detailed commentary an improved edition. His new readings do not affect the general tenor of the relevant parts of the curse.

[128] F. Willemsen, Die Fluchtafeln, in W.K. Kovacsovics, *Die Eckterrasse an der Gräberstrasse des Kerameikos.* Kerameikos. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen XIV (Berlin and New York 1990) 142–151 at 145–147.

2 [ναικ]ῶν καὶ χηρᾶν καὶ παρθένων, μάλιστα δὲ Θετίμας, καὶ παρκαττίθεμαι Μάκρωνι καὶ
3 [τοῖς] δαίμοσι. καὶ ὁπόκα ἐγὼ ταῦτα διελ<ί>ξαιμι καὶ ἀναγνοίην πάλ(λ)ιν ἀνορ<ύ>ξασα,
4 [τόκα] γᾶμαι Διονυσοφῶντα, πρότερον δὲ μή· μὴ γὰρ λάβοι ἄλλαν γυναῖκα ἀλλ' ἢ ἐμέ,
5 [ἐμὲ δ]ὲ συνκαταγηρᾶσαι Διονυσοφῶντι καὶ μηδεμίαν ἄλλαν. ἱκέτις ὑμῶ<ν> γίνο-
6 [μαι· Φίλ]αν οἰκτίρετε δαίμονες φίλ[ο]ι, ΔΑΓΙΝΑΓΑΡΙΜΕ φίλων πάντων καὶ ἐρήμα· ἀλλὰ
7 [.....]α φυλάσσετε ἐμὶν ὅ[π]ως μὴ γίνηται τα[ῦ]τα καὶ κακὰ κακῶς Θετίμα ἀπόληται.
8 [.....].ΑΛ [---].ΥΝΜ..ΕΣΠΙΛΗΝ ἐμός, ἐμὲ δὲ [ε]ὐ[δ]αίμονα καὶ μακαρίαν γενέσται.
9 [---]ΤΟ[.].[---].[..]..Ε.ΕΩ[.]Α.[.]Ε..ΜΕΓΕ[---]

Of Thetima and Dionysophon the ritual fulfilment (of the wedding) and the marriage I bind by a written spell, as well as (the marriage) of all other women (to him), both widows and maidens, but above all of Thetima; and I entrust (this spell) to Makron and to the *daimones*. And if I ever unfold and read this (tablet) again after digging it up, only then should Dionysophon marry, not before; may he indeed not take another woman than myself, but let me alone grow old by the side of Dionysophon and no one else. I implore you: have pity[129] for [Phila(?)], friendly *daimones*, [for I am indeed bereft?] of all my dear ones and abandoned. But please keep this [piece of writing] for my sake so that these events do not happen and wretched Thetima perishes miserably. [---] but let me become happy and blessed. [---]

Voutiras 1998, 37–48 notes that the curse consists of two different elements, first a pure *defixio* (κατάδεσμος) followed by a pure prayer for justice, as indicated by terms such as "have pity", "friendly daimones", and the self-justification in "for I am bereft" (all in l. 6).[130] There may, however, be room for qualification here. As I shall discuss more fully below, the verbs καταγράφω and παρκαττίθεμαι mean *inter alia* "register, record, enrol" and in that sense belong to legal or quasi-legal language, typical of the prayer for justice. The hard, vindicative language against the target is also typical of this category of curses. It is

[129] This (isolated) occurrence of the term "have pity" (οἰκτίρετε) in a prayer for justice may qualify the argument against an early occurrence of the notion "pity" in official and less official petitions for justice as put forward by D. Konstan, *Pity Transformed* (London 2001) 116–118.

[130] He hesitates however to accept the conjecture ταπεινὰ γὰρ εἰμαι, suggested independently by L. Dubois and myself and now generally accepted.

only l. 3 that may evoke an association with the *defixio*, where we do find comparable expressions.

3.3.8. *Curse from a chamber tomb at Kenchreai, eastern port of Corinth (III^{p})*
Text and translation by the editors:[131]

1 κάτω Βία Μοῖρα Ἀνάνκε· καταγράφω
2 τ]ὸν ἅραντα μοὶ φακάριν{εα}. σκιάσδω
3 ἐκ τρίχος ἐκ κεφαλ<ο>ῦ το<ῦ> ἐκ [2]Ε μετώπου
4 ἐξ{ξ} ἐνκεφάλου Φλ[5–6]οφ[ω]να, ΜΙΣΟΥΣ, <ὰ>κοάς,
5 ῥεῖνος{υς}, ὀδόντας στό[μα]τος, τράχη[λ]ον, μασ-
6 τούς, κοιλίαν, πλευ[ράς], θ[ορ]ούς, πυγήδ{α}ια,
7 ὀπισθομήρο<υ>, γόνατα, κερκίδας, πόδας,
8 δακτύλους, ὅσον καὶ εἴκοσι ἔχει. εἰ μή, ἐκ-
9 <δ>είκησαν καὶ ἐξεθέρεισον τὸν Καική-
10 λ<ι>ου, ἄναξ Χαν Σηρειρα Ἀβρασαχ

1 To Violence, Fate and Necessity below: I enroll
2 the one who stole my headscarf (or "turban"). I obscure,
3 from his hair, from his head, from his.… forehead
4 from his brain, Fl[5–6]oph[ô]n, his MISOI(?), his ears,
5 his nostrils, the teeth of his mouth, his neck, his brea-
6 sts, his belly, his sides, his testicles (?), the little buns
7 of the back of his thigh, his knees, his shins, his feet,
8 his toes, how ever many, even twenty(?), he has. If not,
9 then take revenge and completely mow down the son of Cae-
10 cil(i)us, O Lord Chan Sêreira Abrasax!

The principal 'registers before' three divine judges of the underworld the person who has stolen his headscarf. The gods are mentioned either in the vocative or in the nominative like adressees of a letter. Next, it is first the principal himself who takes the initiative. He "darkens" the culprit's various body-parts, from top to toe, either as an act of punishment and revenge, just to torment his target, or in an attempt to thus force the culprit to return the stolen object, two strategies that we have met in the prayers for justice from Bath and especially the ones from Knidos, which the editors rightly and revealingly adduce as parallels. The second motive is the most likely. That becomes apparent if, like the editors, one accepts my suggestion to read the last words of

[131] Chr.A. Faraone and J.L. Rife, A Greek Curse against a Thief from the Koutsongila Cemetery at Roman Kenchreai, *ZPE* 160 (2007) 141–155. I thank Chris Faraone for having sent me the text before publication.

line 8 and the first (mutilated) word of line 9 εἰ μὴ ἐκείκησαν as: εἰ μή, <ἐ>κδείκησον. The expression εἰ (δὲ) μή is common in the meaning: "but otherwise," "but if this does not work…." This is exactly the procedure of some Cnidian curses, where the divine judge is asked to force by torture the culprit to confess guilt and redress the harm done, but 'if not', that 'he will not find the goddess merciful."

One difference from the Cnidian curses is that, the first part of the present curse is addressed to the gods Violence, Fate and Necessity, all of whom occur in other curses, and who all boasted a temple on the Acrocorinth (Paus. 2.4.6–7), while the final and more definitively destructive part is consigned to Lord Chan Sereira Abraxas. Similar shifts between divine addressees, however, do occur in the Setúbal curse (above no. 3.1.1.4) as well as in others. Even more comparable to the present curse is the one from Acrocrinth from Stroud's collection no. 8/9 (above p. 313), where the culprit is assigned to the Moirai Praxidikai, "to exact vengeance from her," and where, in the next line Hermes Chthonios and Ge and the Children of Ge, and in the end Hermes alone is asked "by the mighty names of Ananke to destroy her opponent from head to feet".

Another difference is that the first long curse section is phrased as an initiative of the principal himself ("I darken…"), which, as the editors note, may evoke an association with the *defixio* strategy, even if they admit that "our curse…displays a number of the important earmarks of a prayer for justice." The editors put some emphasis on the human contribution, since the gods come into action only if the human curse does not work.

Although strictly speaking there is nothing against this interpretation, from a contextual point of view its stringency may be questioned. I suggest three reasons for qualification. First, the total frame of the text is that of the genuine plea for justice: it begins with the registration (καταγράφω is characteristic of this, see below p. 339) of the accused before divine judges, and ends with a prayer for revenge. Secondly, the cursing of a list of body parts, is exclusively restricted to prayers for justice as we have seen. And thirdly, we have seen several prayers for justice in which specific wishes and curses, very much including this anatomical one, are inserted by way of 'suggestion' to the avenging deity. After registering the complaint and consigning the culprit to the god, you can continue: "god, may you/see to it that…" (nos. 3.1.1.4 [Salacia]; 3.1.2.2 [Mainz]), or "may the culprit/the culprit must…" (no. 2.2; 3.1.1.2 [Saguntum]; 3.1.1.3 [Carmona]; 3.1.2.1 [Groß-Gerau]; 3.1.2.2 [Mainz]); many more Mainz curses); or "I give the culprit/the

culprit's body parts…." (no. 3.1.1.4 [Salacia]). I here take examples from the present collection but all these variants are quite common. Particularly illustrative is a famous curse from Amorgos (cited below p. 334f.) where the 'suggestion' in the curse part gradually changes from a request to the god into a private wish in the form of a genuine curse or imprecation.[132]

Even more relevant is an equally famous prayer for justice inscribed on two sides of a lead tablet from Delos. Already in 1991 I selected it as one of my major testimonies for what I proposed to call the borderline-curse. In my discussion below pp. 332–42, however, I will revise my earlier assessment and give my arguments for taking it as a pure prayer for justice. The editors of the Kenchreai text aptly adduce this Delos tablet as a parallel, and note that its structure tallies with the present one. There, too, we find a deferential prayer for justice to the god on one side, repeated on the other, but followed here by the cursing of a very full list of body parts, introduced, just like the accused himself, with the verb καταγράφω, 'I enroll'.

For the reasons mentioned and in view of the close analogy with the Delos tablet I doubt whether the 'private initiative' in the expression "I darken" alone suffices to associate this part of the present curse with the *defixio*, as opposed to "I register/enroll" (in the Delos curse), which is part of the pure prayer for justice. In my view we may range this text among the prayers for justice.

4. *Conclusions and Further Reflections*

4.1. *Conclusions to be drawn from the New Evidence*

My main objective in this paper has been to establish whether these fourteen curse texts,[133] selected on the basis of occasion (e.g. theft),

[132] These 'suggestions' belong to what Amina Kropp in this volume labels 'indirect speech act', typical samples of which are "hints, insinuations, irony, and metaphor". These linguistic strategies are usually employed when what is intended conflicts with social convention or the "ordinary conversational requirements of politeness". In our texts, such speech acts in the request take the form of a wish-clause expressing the negative consequences for the victim. She concludes: "I consider the indirect speech act simply one among several alternative means of formulating the request (Table 1, III.3)", which is directly relevant to my argument.

[133] That is, those singled out for discussion above. If we count the many new curses from Britain, Mainz and Rome (esp. the Anna Perenna sanctuary) which also display such features, we could easily double or triple the total of prayers for justice published over the last fifteen years.

aim (e.g. *vindica*) and/or mode of address to the god (e.g. *Domine Megare invicte*; the use of respectful verbs such as *rogo*; procedures such as making a vow), reveal a representative set of the features listed in Versnel 1991 as typical of prayers for justice. The reply must be differentiated. When the occasion for the curse is mentioned, we find: fraud/theft (Saguntum, Setúbal, Athenian Agora 1, Kenchreae), ὕβρις (Acrocorinth), *iniuria* in connection with marriage (Groß-Gerau), jealousy in love (Kerameikos [?], Pella) or more vaguely ἀδικία (Palaimon, Athenian Agora 2, Oropus). In all fourteen curses we find either explicitly or implicitly some reference to the idea that the deity is to exact revenge or punishment, or persecute the target.[134] Formally speaking, eight of them (3.1.1.2 [Saguntum]; 3.1.1.3 [Carmona]; 3.1.1.4 [Setúbal]; 3.1.2.1 [Groß-Gerau]; 3.1.2.2 [Mainz]; 3.3.2 [Acrocorinth]; 3.3.3 [Athenian Agora 1]; 3.3.4 [Athenian Agora 2]) may be called true prayers or pleas for justice, since they possess several of the prescriptive features and lack those that are generally regarded as typical of the competitive/binding *defixio*, often referred to as 'magical'.[135] The same, not surprisingly, applies to all the curses that have been found at Bath since the publication of *Tab.Sulis*, as well as those from Uley and elsewhere in Britain. The remaining six cases, as well as some others from Mainz and from the Anna Perenna sanctuary in Rome (especially Blänsdorf's no. 7) according to their editors fall into the 'border area', that is, the class of texts that contain features characteristic both of prayers for justice and straight *defixiones*.

The term 'border area' has proved useful, and will doubtless continue to be so. But I would remark that it is becoming rather too capacious for my liking: the more texts that can be assigned to it, the more we risk losing sight of possibly valuable distinctions and sub-categories. The danger is that it may simply become a convenient dust-bin to save further thought. In three of our 'border'-texts there is only one word (καταδῶ [3.3.1]; καταδεσμεύω [3.3.5]; κατωδῶμεν [3.3.6]) that evokes the notion of *defixio*, while in all other respects they are pure prayers for justice. Of two of the 'border'-texts (3.3.7 and 3.3.8) I have argued that there hardly remains any sufficient reason to range them among

[134] In 3.1.1.1 (Barchín de Hoyo) this can be inferred from the words δικαίως/*merito*.

[135] This includes those curses that are basically phrased as a juridical indictment in which the target or the offence is 'commended' to the jurisdiction of the god with verbs such as παραδίδωμι, *do, dono, commendo*, παρατίθεμαι καὶ κατατίθεμαι, ἀνατίθω, καταγράφω. Cf. also below pp. 337–40.

this category, if we realize that the terms καταγράφω and παρατίθεμαι followed by a dative are technical terms for commending a person to the care of a god by way of enrolment in a judicial procedure. I shall say something about this issue at the end of this chapter.

My second objective was to show that, by recognising an individual curse text as a prayer for justice, we might be able to clarify or explain passages that would otherwise remain obscure. This is indeed the case: difficult aspects of the texts from Groß-Gerau, Mainz, the shrine of Palaimon, Acrocorinth, Oropus, Pella and Kenchreae can be better explained in the light of this distinction.

My third goal was to demonstrate the value of consistently comparing Latin and Greek evidence. The editors of several Latin texts have been able to propose solutions to problems by invoking our knowledge of related Greek evidence. See my discussions of the texts from Saguntum, Setúbal, Groß-Gerau and Mainz, that of the *diabolai* and the appendix on *vota*.

Gratifyingly, then, the specific pattern of the prayer for justice seems to have been validated by the new evidence. It serves to reinforce the claim that the major or specific feature of this type of curse-text is that they are deferential prayers to great gods, to the extent that, if they were not written on lead tablets, many of them would never have been classified as *defixiones*. As Gudmund Björck observed seventy years ago: "Man möchte sagen, daß der Begriff der Tabella Defixionis nicht so sehr in der Wirklichkeit verankert ist wie vielmehr in Audollents Sammlung" (1938, 112). Prayers for justice are presented as legitimate actions, and justified by the fact that the principal has been wronged. For that reason, they were often put up where they could be seen or read, and were sometimes even "signed" by the author. All these features are conspicuously absent from the characteristic 'binding' *defixiones*. Another fundamental feature is that while the latter, as Faraone puts it, "are aimed in a pre-emptive fashion at restraining the victim from competitive or hostile action in the future", these "prayers for justice" ask the gods to punish someone for a crime or abuse they have committed in the past".[136] While strategies typical of *defixiones* may be applied in any situation, the strategies of the prayer for justice are strictly—and exclusively—employed by victims of theft, fraud, crime or abuse. We might call the *defixio* manipulative or even coercive, the

[136] Faraone, Garnand and López-Ruiz 2005, 170.

prayers for justice supplicatory.[137] Such a formulation closely parallels David Jordan's distinction between "forceful operation—the piercing with the nail, the binding down, backward spelling—and the pious appeal for justice" (see p. 311 above).

4.2. *Appraising the distinction*

So much by way of reiteration. The question is now, what do we gain from this relatively sharp distinction between curse-texts? There are a number of issues here, which I take in order. To begin with: is the difference truly significant? Let me return for a moment to the position of those who prefer to maintain the traditional idea that all *defixiones*, including the prayers for justice, belong to a single grand class, and are therefore inclined to minimise the distinctions I listed on p. 279f. above. As far as I know, only two recent scholars have explicitly argued in favour of this position, namely Fritz Graf and Daniel Ogden.[138] I summarise their arguments briefly, together with my rejoinder.

Though he acknowledges the differences between (other) *defixiones* and prayers for justice type, Graf offers four reasons for thinking that they all in fact belong to a class we may call *defixiones*. These are: 1. They are written on the same type of material (lead, metal); 2. They are deposited in similar places, namely sanctuaries, pits or wells; 3. They were written for much the same reasons, namely a crisis produced by lack of information concerning past or future; 4. Thieves may also be dealt with by strictly magical means.

---

[137] For his claim that the IV[a] Athenian curse tablets are not coercive but "if anything, [adopt] an approach that is prayerful and supplicatory, Dickie 2001, 21 with n. 35, relies entirely on Faraone 1991, 6. However, he misrepresents Faraone's argument. Faraone accepts the expression "prayer formula" for the invocatory section (mostly in the imperative), but correctly reserves the notion of supplication for the category of prayer for justice and the border-area (which I introduced in the same volume). The IV[p] Graeco-Egyptian formularies are a different matter. It would be wise to henceforth follow Amina Kropp (in this volume) to adopt the more general term 'request' (on the basis of Searle's classification of speech acts) for all "attempts to get H [the hearer] to do A [a future act]". The advantage is that "being neutral in character, the semantics of the term has the advantage of not excluding any kind of communicative setting: the speaker may be in a superior or in an inferior position with regard to the addressee, or the relation may not be asymmetrical at all." In the context of curse texts the term 'prayer' should be reserved for those requests that imply a supplicative hierarchical relationship as is the case in the prayer for justice.

[138] See Graf 1997, 160f.; idem, s.v. Malédiction, in *ThesCRA* 3 (2005) 247–70 at 254f.; Ogden 1997, 38f. Dickie 2001, completely ignores both the new taxonomy and the relevant discussion.

In my view, none of these really serves to demonstrate the basic unity of all curse tablets.[139] 1) and 3) are simply too all-encompassing. The first point would equally hold good for certain types of oracles, notably Dodona. More important, as Graf acknowledges (1997, 155), lead was probably used for early *defixiones* because it already was a common material for epistolary communication in general.[140] The third argument (lack of information—crisis) is true of all oracle-consultations[141] and prayers of supplication, indeed of votive religion in general. That is hardly a reason for claiming they are all the same. As to 4), there certainly are magical spells for finding thieves (though the evidence is not abundant), but oracles were appealed to for the same purpose.[142] However, it is difficult to see the force of this argument (if indeed Graf intended it as such). As for 2), no binding-*defixio* is to be found in the two large groups of curses found in regular sanctuaries (Cnidus, Bath), only prayers for justice. As far as is known, the same seems to be true of Acrocorinth (with one exception), and of the few texts from Uley published so far. Pits and wells are not decisive: they may be considered, like tombs, to provide a direct passage to demons of the underworld, and hence appropriate to *defixiones*; but they may equally be thought of as abodes of deities (e.g. Sulis Minerva at Bath; nymphs at various places), and so appropriate to judicial prayers. Which of the two was uppermost in the minds of the authors of curses can only be established—if at all—from the phrasing of the texts. As for tombs, we should not forget that the subterranean realm is both the abode of the dead and the location of supernatural justice and retaliation. That being so, the existence of a border-area should not surprise.

---

[139] I here summarise my counter-arguments from Versnel 1998, 233f. n. 41.

[140] Letters on lead: B. Bravo, Une lettre sur plomb de Berezan: Colonisation et modes de contact dans le Pont, *DHA* 1 (1974) 110–187; more recently: D.R. Jordan, A Personal Letter Found in the Athenian Agora, *Hesperia* 69 (2000) 91–103. The fact that this letter was written by a slave (as shown by E.M. Harris, Notes on a Lead Letter from the Athenian Agora, *TAPhA* 102 [2004] 157–170 = *idem*, *Democracy and the Rule of Law in Athens* [Cambridge 2006] 271–279; cf. F.D. Harvey, "Help! I'm Dying here": A Letter from a Slave, *ZPE* 163 [2007] 49–50) is another strong argument for its use as a very common writing material.

[141] See most recently on this common background of curses and oracles: E. Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford 2007).

[142] E.g. *Epeirotika Chronika* 10 (1935) 259 no. 32: ἔκλεψε Θωπίων τὸ ἀργύριον; and other texts from Dodona. Eidinow 2007, 117f. collects the Dodonean oracles on stolen or lost property.

Ogden's survey of arguments and counter-arguments is fuller and more balanced. He lists four similarities, of which two are the same as Graf's first two points. The two others are: 3, that both types of curses correspond to Jordan's definition of *defixiones* as "intended to influence, by supernatural means, the actions or welfare of persons or animals against their will"; and 4, the very existence of 'mixed' (i.e. border-area) curses. He adds that there are about as many of the latter as there are 'pure' prayers for justice (at that time, 20 and 18 respectively). The first of these arguments (no. 3) is disputable, the second mistaken. As to 3), I would note that the central issue is not so much the principal's conscious intentions,[143] as the motives behind these intentions, the types of strategies employed, and the reasons for the choice. It was precisely considerations of this type that induced Jordan to embrace the new taxonomy, his own definition notwithstanding. The second part of Ogden's fourth point is based on a simple misunderstanding, since he bases his figures solely on the texts adduced in Versnel 1991. Although I did include most of the border-area texts then known, I presented only a small selection of pure prayers for justice, and made no claim to provide an exhaustive corpus. Some two hundred and seventy prayers for justice have been found in Britain alone.[144]

Moreover, it seems that despite these reservations Ogden in practice accepts my classification, since he goes on to list the criteria that "may be employed towards the construction of a syndrome for prayers of justice" (1999: 38f.):

---

[143] This part of Jordan's definition would equally well fit funerary curses and curses used in oaths, yet we do not include these among *defixiones*. Moreover, the attempt to equate prayers for justice with *defixiones* on the implicit grounds that both have negative aims, suffers from a modern High-Church Christian bias, which is supposed to censure such un-Christian behaviour. Ancient practice, including ancient Christian practice, was different, as a glance at Coptic Christian curse-prayers reveals. On justified prayers against opponents in official religion, see: T.S. Scheer, Die Götter anrufen, in: K. Brodersen (ed.), *Gebet und Fluch, Zeichen und Traum. Aspekte religiöser Kommunikation in der Antike*. Antike Kultur und Geschichte, 1 (Münster 2001) 47–48; on 'Gebetsegoismus' including wishing bad luck to the neighbour or enemy: Versnel 1981, 17–21. Significantly, Greek ἀρά can designate both a positive prayer and a negative-malicious one, in which case it is often translated as 'curse': W. Burkert, *Greek Religion. Archaic and Classical* (Oxford 1985) 73–74; Aubriot-Sévin 1992, 295–401; S. Pulleyn, *Prayer in Greek Religion* (Oxford 1997) 70–76.

[144] In view of the fact that all new finds at Bath are also of this type, it would surely be pyrrhonist to claim that the unpublished items from Uley might be different.

1. Not binding language, *voces magicae* etc., but prayer language
2. Generally addressed to major or 'respectable' deities, albeit with a preference for chthonic deities
3. Humility and deference towards the powers invoked
4. The target is generally unknown, while the principal usually gives his or her name
5. Whereas other curses are supposed to be permanently effective, prayers for justice tend to be conditional and of finite duration.

These five arguments largely overlap with the features listed in Versnel 1991 (cf. p. 279f.). Consequently, I am in full agreement with his statement "many of the prayers for justice seem to have more in common with ordinary pious religious practice than 'magic'" (Ogden 1999, 39). In the end, he leaves the issue unresolved, but constantly resorts thereafter to the distinction between prayer for justice and binding *defixio*.[145]

4.3. *The Border-area: preliminary considerations*

There remains however Ogden's point concerning the existence of 'hybrid' texts, which share elements of both *defixiones* and prayers for justice.[146] The argument seems to be that the deployment by a principal in the same text of two strategies indicates, first, that the writers did not see any basic difference between them, and, second, that therefore it is unnecessary for us to do so either. Both inferences, in my view, are misguided, albeit for different reasons.

To begin with the second argument: it shows an odd disregard of one of the principal procedures of scholarship, namely the construction of taxonomies.[147] If a researcher finds one group of texts within a given class that displays a recurrent set of specific features, and another group which lacks these but exhibits another set of regularly co-occurrent features, it is his or her primary task to define and analyse the differences and to devise an appropriate taxonomy, on the basis of which the contrasting patterns may be accounted for. At this

[145] By a slip however he does claim that "a curse from Cnidus uses magic to protect its author (….) against the accusation of it" (1999, 53). Yet he himself has (correctly) said that the Cnidus texts are pure prayers for justice and not magic.

[146] I devoted a long section of Versnel 1991 to precisely this group.

[147] On its fundamental rôle in scholarly endeavour, see the essays in Smith 2004.

stage, it is unnecessary to be distracted by the existence of a hybrid group. Still less should the existence of such hybrids persuade one of the futility of the entire exercise.[148] In the present case the importance of hybrids is that they remind one that 1: this taxonomy is a registration of two contrasting extremes as poles of a continuum; and 2: that such endeavours are both indispensable and unavoidable in the particular academic and epistemological context that we call scholarhip. The late Keith Hopkins made the point many years ago: "as moderns and historians we have no alternative but to use our own concepts and categories to describe and explain other societies".[149] I also subscribe to Snoek's categorical statement: "It should be clear then, that an emic scholarly approach is a contradictio in terminis. Scholarly discourse is always etic and should therefore be conducted in etic terms".[150]

---

[148] Note that without an initial taxonomy we would never even have been aware that there was a 'mixed category': older collections simply jumble all curse-texts together and call them *defixiones*. We may compare the keen scholarly interest in the phenomenon of human deification as exemplified in Hellenistic ruler-cult, which presupposes recognition of the poles man and god. Who would dream of contesting the legitimacy or appropriateness of these categories on the grounds that there appears to have existed a hybrid category in between?

[149] K. Hopkins, Contraception in the Roman Empire, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8 (1965) 124–157.

[150] J.A.M. Snoek, *Initiations: A Methodological Approach to the Application of Classification and Definition Theory in the Study of Rituals* (Diss. Leyden 1987) 7. Cf. also W.J. Goode, *Current Anthropology* 4 (1963) 507, who reproaches the partisans of emic approaches for failing to understand what concepts are for: "If the natives do not 'see' a distinction we believe scientifically important, we do not discard it on that acount" since "we are engaged in precisely that task, to create scientific theory and concepts with which to understand all social processes". I have borrowed these citations from H.S. Versnel, Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion, *Numen* 38 (1991) 177–197 at 185, where these and similar methodological issues are discussed. It is impossible here to go into counter-arguments such as those put forward by Dickie 2001, 19 with nn. 5 and 6, which betray a fundamental failure to understand what my article was about. The same failure is even more apparent in J.N. Bremmer, The Birth of 'Magic,' *ZPE* 126 (1999) 1–12 (which the author re-published twice in an updated version). His p. 10, to give one example, reveals considerable confusion and inconsistency. The second of his five arguments against my thesis concludes: "To oppose magic and religion, then, is to use two terms and concepts which did not exist in antiquity, but are both the product of late- and post-medieval Europe" (the latter point was precisely my point of departure; the first—at least as far as terminology is involved—was the central part of my own thesis). However, this claim is immediately followed by another: "Thirdly, we should take into consideration that the ancients themselves did not oppose magic to religion". Taken together these two assertions imply that Greeks managed to *not* oppose two terms and notions which did *not* exist in their culture! I hope to discuss these and other misapprehensions elsewhere, and meanwhile refer for brief but pointed criticism of Bremmer's arguments to D. Frankfurter's remarks in *BMCR* 2005.05.32. For a serious application of my methodological suggestions in the

That is however not the end of the matter. Having imposed order (*our* order) on the epigraphic material, the next step is to explore the historical, social and cultural contexts of the sub-divisions created by the taxonomy. That means we have to consider the concrete situation of the principals (the 'actors' in an older anthropological jargon). This is what we might call the emic side of the problem: the "native's point of view". How far do their categorisations, insofar as we can discover them, correspond to ours? Here we may ask questions such as: how far are the ideal types generated through textual analysis and thematic classification to be found in actual curses? If so, do they have typically distinct historical, topographical, cultural niches? If the answer is positive, can we further specify their respective socio-religious contexts, their Sitz im Leben? Finally, what are we to make of the co-existence not only of two different major strategies but also of hybrid texts? There is unfortunately no evidence that there ever was a generic term available to the principals for their texts, which would have been the best point of entry for an emic enquiry. I have already pointed out that there is barely any ancient evidence (except in one late-antique text) for the modern term *defixio*: despite its Latin look, it is our term, introduced to denote a category that we regard as coherent and meaningful. As for the prayer for justice, we find a whole range of terms, such as *donatio, devotio, exsecratio, commonitorium*, and once *preces* (in the expression *iteratis precibus*),[151] but they have no claim to be in any sense standard or generally-acknowledged.

As regards the distribution and Sitz im Leben of the two ideal-types, authentic 'binding' *defixiones* have, as I have already observed, been found in large numbers, mainly in tombs and less frequently in pits and wells.[152] Examples of ideal-typical prayers for justice too are not rare. Whenever they have been found in some concentration, the

---

Numen article see the papers by James Rives cited in n. 153 below; for a recent introduction to the problems of etic definitions: J.Z. Smith, Religion, Religions, Religious, in: M. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago 1998) 269–84, and A Twice-told Tale: The History of the History of Religions' History, *Numen* 48 (2001) 131–146, both reprinted in Smith 2004. A concise summary of his (and my) point of view may be found there at 2004, 193f.

[151] *Iteratis [pre]c[i]bus te rogo*, in a curse from Pagan's Hill (*Britannia* 15 [1984] 339).

[152] For general accounts of the specific provenances of *defixiones* see e.g. *DTAud* pp. cx–cxvi; D.R. Jordan, *Hesperia* 54 (1985) 205–210; Ogden 1999, 15–25.

location is not a grave but the sanctuary of a deity with an officially-accepted cult, such as Demeter at Cnidus, Dea Sulis Minerva at Bath, Demeter at Acrocorinth, and Mater Magna at Mainz. As I have pointed out earlier, all the curse-texts found in the first two are pure prayers for justice, and would never have been labelled *defixiones* if they were not written on lead. A number of scattered finds from all over the Mediterranean basin also belong to this category, including the texts of my collection itemised above (p. 322). They are in every respect genuine prayers, distinctive only in their frequent use of, or allusions to, legal or juridical language. The most typical of these locutions is the assignment of a culprit or a stolen object to the jurisdiction or purview of the god, by means of performative terms such as *do, dono, devoveo, mando, commendo, recipere nomen*, ἀνατίθημι, ἀνιερόω, καταγράφω, παρατίθεμαι. To my knowledge, nobody denies this distinction between the two ideal-types. This invites the question of what the meaning or implication of the difference between them might be.

Although Roman legislation against what we tend to call 'black magic', including the straight *defixio*, is more explicit,[153] there is no doubt that in Greece, and especially at Athens, resort to what we call *defixiones* was also strongly disapproved of in official circles. Particular grounds for condemnation were the private and secret nature of the ritual (the combination of privacy and secrecy traditionally invited suspicion and hence persecution),[154] commerce with the ghosts of the

[153] Especially, of course, under the influence of Imperial anxiety. The literature on this topic is immense. On the development of Roman legal attitudes towards magic see now the perceptive and innovative papers by J.B. Rives, Magic in the XII Tables Revisited, *CQ* 52 (2002) 270–290; Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime, *Cl.Ant.* 22 (2003) 313–339; Magic, Religion and Law: The Case of the Lex Cornelia de sicariis and veneficiis, in: C. Ando and J. Rüpke (edd.), *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome* (Stuttgart 2006) 47–67; and his contribution to the present volume.

[154] On the crucial role of these two elements in accusations of magic, see e.g. H. Kippenberg, Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals could be Illegal, in P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (eds.), *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*. Studies in the History of Religions 75 (Leyden 1997) 137–63. On the emphasis on secrecy in magic: H.D. Betz, Secrecy in the Greek Magical Papyri, in: H.G. Kippenberg and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Secrecy and Concealment. Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (Leyden etc. 1995) 153–176. The essential import of secrecy and concealment for the effectiveness of the *defixio* (and other magical materials) becomes apparent from the general feeling of relief when by chance such malign objects are recovered. Cf. an inscription from Tuder (*CIL* XI 4639; Gager *CT* no. 135) erected in gratitude to Iuppiter who had miraculously saved members of the City Council by bringing to light (*eruo*) a *defixio* with their names. Cf. Lib.

dead, violation of tombs, the marginality and negative reputation of the specialists in this art, and the a- or anti-social aims and effects of such practices.[155] Another argument is exemplified in Plato's famous attack on various kinds of magical practice, including the use of curse-tablets. In *Rep*. 364c, he inveighs against begging priests who pretend to have the power of enabling anyone who wishes to injure an enemy, to harm "just and unjust alike" (ὁμοίως δίκαιον ἀδίκῳ) by means of incantations and *defixiones* (ἐπαγωγαῖς τισιν καὶ καταδέσμοις). Here we come to the heart of the matter.

If the 'binding' *defixio* and the prayer for justice have anything in common besides their material base, it is that they are both private, epistolary expressions of a direct, unmediated appeal to supernatural powers. All the contrasts between the two poles of the continuum (difference between the typical sites of deposition, and the typical addressees; secrecy versus availability; justification versus its absence, manipulative praxis versus pious prayer) can be summarised with little loss in terms of the contrast between legitimate and illegitimate, or between (socially, culturally, religiously) sanctioned and unsanctioned action.[156] While competitive 'binding' *defixiones* cannot and do not appeal to divine justice, and therefore make no attempt to justify the action, prayers for justice of their very nature demand justice. Wild justice perhaps, but it is at any rate a form of vindication that bestows on the institution a degree of social and religious acceptability.[157] Several scholars have even proposed that Greek prayer in general was connected with the notion of justice.[158]

Or. 1, 243–250, where the recovery of a dead chameleon, magically applied, puts an end to his illness ("it was a very lucky fortune that what had been buried had now in that moment surfaced above ground to behold for all who wished to").

[155] See for recent surveys: Ogden 1999, 82–85; Dickie 2001, 33–78.

[156] Cf. C.R. Phillips III, Nullum crimen sine lege: Socio-religious Sanctions in Magic, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 260–274. Note that Plato's indignation about the magician's malicious acts against innocent person returns in a rescript of Constantius (*Cod. Theod*. 9.16.5): *Multi magicis artibus ausi elementa turbare, vitas insontium labefactare non dubitant (….) ut quisque suos conficiat malis artibus inimicos.*

[157] I borrow the term 'wild justice' from the book of the same name by J. Mossman (London 1999) on the revenge theme in Euripides' *Hecuba*.

[158] See J.N. Bremmer, Modi di communicazione con il divino: la preghiera, la divinazione e il sacrificio nella civiltà greca, in: S. Settis (ed.), *I Greci* I (Turin 1996) 239–283, espec. 240. Aubriot-Sévin 1992, in her summary pp. 506–508, mentions as one of her major conclusions the close associations of εὔχεσθαι and ἀρᾶσθαι with the principle of Δίκη. Already in Prière et rhétorique en Grèce ancienne, *Metis* 6 (1991) 147–165, she had followed the tracks of a number of earlier scholars who had detected

4.4. *The Border-area: re-considerations and qualifications*

The proper location of the prayer for justice is a sanctuary where the cult of a great god is regularly and legitimately performed. The god will be one who is believed to be able and willing to intervene in human affairs, especially in the area of the administration or enforcement of justice. Whereas we find traditional *defixiones* with their manipulative praxeis from the early fifth century BCE onwards in mainland Greece and marginal areas such as Sicily and the Black Sea, the earliest-known group of prayers for justice, that from Cnidus, dates from the Hellenistic era; and most of the others belong to the Imperial period. By that time—and perhaps already much earlier thanks to Near-Eastern influences—a strongly monarchical flavour is characteristic of religious expression in Asia Minor; for the common man one of the chief duties of the distant king, and his more accessible subordinates, was the administration of justice. The fact that the prayer for justice employed the official language of a royal petition (*enteuxis*) is highly significant. It appears that in these regions people had a choice of options when it came to interacting with the supernatural; the fact that in the case of a justified complaint they so often opted for the deferential judicial prayer instead of the traditional *defixio* speaks volumes about their belief in divine power and its direct involvement in human affairs.[159]

In Classical Greece such centres of divine justice are not attested. On the other hand, this is the region where the earliest examples of the 'border-group' have been found. In my little collection above, there are three 'border-group' curses (Palaimon, Kerameikos, Pella) dating from the 4th century BCE,[160] and one (Oropus) that belongs to the early Hellenistic period. The first two open with the '*defixio*-word'

---

similarities between prayer and judicial plea and even postulated a judicial origin of the verb εὔχεσθαι (149–153).

[159] I do not quite follow Richard Gordon (in his introduction to this volume) in his assertion that the petition was an Empire-wide institution, the prayer for justice not. We know official petitions to high officials, kings and emperors from both Ptolemaic Egypt as well as from the Roman Empire and we find the concomitant language of both in contemporaneous prayers for justice. As for his question "are we then to look for specific local conditions?" and his excursus on specifically British circumstances, I would point out that Bath perfectly fulfilled the preconditions for appeals to divine justice since hot springs were places *par excellence* for staging an ordeal. See Versnel 1994.

[160] As far as we can see, 3.3.4 (Athenian Agora 2) is a true prayer for justice. Since Jordan expresses doubts about its provisional date (IV^{a}?), I would cautiously suggest a later date in view of its phraseology. As I have noted earlier, it contains the expression

καταδῶ(μεν), the third has a 'binding' formula known from *defixio* language. Towards the end the typical elements of supplicatory prayer become more and more apparent. This pattern is also to be found in the early Greek 'border-area' curses that I collected in 1991, 64–68.[161] Some of them open with the variant "I send a letter to Hermes…," which may be modelled on a customary secular petition-letter. Since all these curses (except 3.3.1, Palaimon) were deposited in tombs, I would suggest that this earliest type of border-area curses developed from the traditional binding curse. Just as those who cannot blame their rivals for any wrong-doing except their rivalry (e.g. in the context of amatory, judicial and commercial curses), so the victims of theft, fraud, or violation, could avail themselves of the traditional *defixio*. However, because their objective was different, they began to add a supplicatory or vindic(a)tive tail-piece. The wide variety of expression suggests that these were more or less spontaneous, individual, creations, inspired by the twin convictions of having been wronged and being in the right. The cradle of this type of border-group, then, lay in the *defixio* proper.

The later true or 'pure' prayers for justice, which are closely comparable to the familiar written or inscribed prayers and vows deposited at altars and divine statues in sanctuaries,[162] originated as personal

---

ἐπὶ κατεργασίαν, which is formulaic in the Acrocorinth curses of I-II^{p}, but does not occur earlier (or anywhere else).

[161] This pattern in fact never disappears totally, but I am here concerned with origins.

[162] In *De formulis et solemnibus populi Romani verbis libri VIII* of 1593, B. Brissonius already collected all the evidence known to him pointing out that it was such common usage that special verbs had been created for it: *(in)signare* and *incerare* which verbs practically equal *vota facere*. Cf. Versnel 1981, 32–34, espec. n. 123; P. Veyne, Titulus Praelatus: offrande, solennisation et publicité dans les ex-voto gréco-romains, *RA* (1983) 281–300; M. Beard, Writing and Religion: Ancient Literacy and the Function of the Written Word in Roman Religion, in J. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World*. JRA Suppl. 3 (Ann Arbor 1991) 35–58, espec. 39–48, starting with the famous Plinian description of the temple of Clitumnus with its many personal epigraphic prayers (Plin. *ep*. 8.8.7); Kiernan 2004, 110–112. Even closer to the material form of the prayers for justice under discussion are wax writing tablets found in Greek sanctuaries. See for evidence and discussion: G. Papasavvas, A Writing Tablet from Crete, *MDAI (A)* 118 (2003) [2004] 67–89. This literature (except for Brissonius) all published after my 1981 paper mentioned (but prior to 2001) should satisfy T.S. Scheer, Die Götter anrufen. Die Kontaktaufnahme zwischen Mensch und Gottheit in der griechischen Antike, in K. Brodersen (ed.), *Gebet und Fluch, Zeichen und Traum. Aspekte religiöser Kommunikation in der Antike* (Münster 2001) 41 and n. 46, who, first, objects that the evidence for this practice is not as extensive as I claimed, and, secondly, points out that the testimonia do not go back to classical Greece but all

expressions in the context of temple-religion. They probably began as formulaic prayers—probably prompted by professional clergy or other experts—but allowed for expressions of individual creativity. One of these was the introduction of elements proper to curses, which, as the authors well knew, worked in other areas of the religious spectrum. The fact that it was not necessarily the model of the *defixio* that inspired this development is well illustrated by one of the longest and most frequently-quoted true prayers for justice, a text on lead found in 1899 near Arkesine on Amorgos (*IG* XII.7, p. 1).[163] It was dated to the second century CE by Homolle, first century CE by Bömer, and around 200 BCE by Zingerle. Since the tablet itself has disappeared, linguists and papyrologists have the last word here, for it shows clear analogies to petitions of the ἔντευξις type.[164] I cite a translation of the text, excluding the narrative section describing how a certain Epaphroditos with the help of evil practices incited (συνεπεθέλγετο) the complainant's slaves to run away:

> Side A
> Lady Demeter, O Queen, as your supplicant, your slave, I fall at your feet (Κυρία Δημήτηρ, βασίλισσα, ἱκέτης σου, προσπίπτω δὲ ὁ δοῦλος σου).....Lady Demeter, this is what I have been through. Being bereft I seek refuge in you: be merciful to me and grant me my rights (ἐγὼ ὡ ταῦτα παθὼν ἔρημος ἐὼν ἐπί σε καταφεύγω σοῦ εὐγιλάτου τυχεῖν καὶ

---

stem from the imperial period, what I did not deny at all in that paper with the title "Religious Mentality in *Ancient* Prayer." Why, for that matter, may Scheer herself on the same page justify her statement that *Greek* devotees used to kiss and touch divine statues with the sole testimonia of one text of Cicero and two later sources, including Prudentius?

[163] Th. Homolle, *BCH* 25 (1901) 412–456; R. Wünsch, *BPhW* 25 (1905) 1081; K. Latte, *Heiliges Recht: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der sakralen Rechtsformen in Griechenland* (Tübingen 1920) 81 n. 54; J. Zingerle, Heiliges Recht, *JÖAI* 23 (1926) 67–72; Björck 1938, 129–131; Versnel 1981, 32; 1985, 252–255; 1999, 125–127; *SGD* I 60; Faraone 2005, 168–170.

[164] Zingerle 1926, 67–72 was the first to draw attention to the similarity with the ἔντευξις; he was followed by Björck 1938, 60ff. Indeed, many of the expressions of this prayer (and that of Artemisia) have close parallels in the *enteuxis*: βασιλεῦ; ἐπί σε καταφεύγω; τοῦ δικαίου τύχω; ἱκέτις; προσπίπτω; ἀδικοῦμαι. Later collections and studies confirm this: O. Guéraud, *Enteuxis* (Cairo 1931); Maria T. Cavassini, Exemplum vocis ἔντευξις, in Repertorium Papyrorum Graecarum Quae Documenta Tradant Ptolemaicae Aetatis, *Aegyptus* 35 (1955) 299–334; J.L. White, *The Form and Structure of the Official Petition*, SBL Dissertation Series 5 (Missoula 1972). On ἀδικοῦμαι as a stereotyped element of the ἔντευξις see also W. Schubart, Das hellenistische Königsideal nach Inschriften und Papyri, *APF* 12 (1936/7) 1–26 at 7.

ποῖσαί με τοῦ δικαίου τυχεῖν). Grant that the man who has treated me thus shall have satisfaction neither in rest nor in motion, neither in body nor in soul; that he may not be served by slave or by handmaid, by the great or the small. If he undertakes something, may he be unable to complete it. May his house be stricken by the curse for ever (καταδεσμὸς αὐτοῦ τὴν οἰκίαν λάβοιτο). May no child cry (to him), may he never lay a joyful table; may no dog bark and no cock crow; may he sow but not reap;…(?): may neither earth nor sea bear him any fruit; may he know no blessed joy; may he come to an evil end together with all that belongs to him.

Side B
Lady Demeter, I supplicate you because I have suffered injustice: hear me, O goddess, and pass a just sentence (λίτανεύω σε παθὼν ἄδικα, ἐπάκουσον, θεά, καὶ κρῖναι τὸ δίκαιον). For those who have cherished such thoughts against us and who have joyfully prepared sorrows for my wife Epiktesis and me, and who hate us, prepare the worst and most painful horrors. O Queen, hear us who suffer and punish those who rejoice in our misery (ἐπάκουσον ἡμῖν παθοῦσι, κολάσαι τοὺς ἡμὰς τοιούτους ἡδέως βλέποντες).[165]

This is the most explicit supplication among all these texts from a submissive mortal ("your slave") to a sovereign goddess (here actually "queen"), who is asked to show her "mercy" and (here for the first time) to "hear" the supplicant by taking revenge on his behalf and punishing the guilty ones. In this case, the punishments requested are phrased as curses. However, they are not the curses that we typically encounter in the *defixio*, but rather those that are typical of conditional self-curses but also, in particular, those against possible disturbers of the grave,[166] which, unlike *defixiones* but similar to prayers for justice, wish upon the transgressor death, physical suffering, the wretchedness of being accursed, and post-mortem punishment.[167] In this text the curses, though pronounced by the writer himself, are entrusted to the mediation or sanction of the goddess ("grant that…") upon whose

[165] Compare the translation in Gager, *CT* 166f. no. 75.

[166] Among the many curses of this type collected by J.T. Kakridis, *ARAI* (Athens 1929), A. Parrot, *Malédictions et violations de tombes* (Paris 1939), L. Robert, Malédictions funéraires grecques, *CRAI* (1978) 241–89; Strubbe 1991; 1997, the closest parallel to my knowledge is a sepulchral execration from Salamis in Cyprus (I-II^{P}), *SEG* 6 (1932) 802, cited and discussed by L. Watson, *ARAE: The Curse Poetry of Antiquity*. ARCA 26 (Leeds 1991) 111–13. On the standardisation of curse formulas in general, see *ibid*. 30–38; Strubbe 1997, xvi with appendix II.

[167] As listed and discussed by Strubbe 1997, xvii–xix.

sovereign power the writer makes himself totally dependent—even in wishing that she may cast a καταδεσμός (= *defixio*) on the house of his enemy.[168]

We have detected two different avenues toward amalgamation of the supplicatory elements typical of the prayer for justice on the one hand and the 'magical' features associated with the binding *defixio* on the other. This differentiation, due to the opposed points of departure, may linger on in the pattern of later borderline curses and thus may help us to determine the specific function and meaning of individual curse texts. But this is not all. In the meantime we have made an observation that may invite a qualification of the category 'border-area'.

If the curse section in the text from Amorgos is definitely not of the *defixio* type but is typical of funerary curses, which either take the form of a prayer to gods or that of independent deterrent imprecations (see below p. 341), there is no reason at all to label this cursing part "magical". Urgent wishes, devout prayers do not become magical as a result of their malicious aims. The curse section in the Amorgos text, like many funerary maledictions, can be seen as the principal's own helpful contribution by way of suggesting concrete modalities of divine punishment. As such they may be called curses but cannot meaningfully be described as 'magical'. The same is true of a number of the Mainz curses. There too we have texts which, sometimes blithely co-existing with an opening or closing prayer formula, contain directives about how the culprit is to suffer (cf. above n. 132). In this case, they are mostly phrased as similes, most of which are unattested in *defixiones*; if anything, they, too, resemble formulas known from oath formulas and funerary curses. For instance (numbers refer to Bläns-dorf's contribution):

> Mater Deum, you pursue (your enemies) across land and sea, arid and humid [places], across…(no. 16)
> May their limbs melt, just as this lead is to melt, so that [thereby] death shall come upon them (no. 12, cf. nos. 13, 14)
> Just as salt melts in water, so may he do (no. 7)
> Whatever he does, shall become salt and water for him (no. 8)

---

[168] The phrasing does not allow to identify this *katadesmos* with the tablet on which it is written. The expression "may a (not: "the" or "this") curse take and hold his house" is to be compared with standard wishes in funerary curses "that the violator may be cursed (for ever)", cf. Versnel 1985; Strubbe 1997, xviii.

Comparisons with the self-castration and blood-letting of the Galli and Bellonarii

It must be frankly admitted that at Mainz we also find clear reminiscences of *defixio* strategies, such as explicit references to retrograde writing (e.g. "may you live backwards (*perverse*), as this is written backwards (*perverse*)" [Blänsdorf no. 3]). However, the difference in intention is always perceptible: if in a binding-*defixio* the writer evokes the weight of lead, he or she does so in order to make the victim's tongue as heavy as that metal, so that he cannot speak; if lead is heavy in a prayer for justice, it is as heavy as the wrath of the god who is to punish the target. This difference between binding/paralysing on the one hand, and punishing/torturing/killing on the other, holds good all through the relevant sections of curse-texts. Consequently we should now acknowledge that neither the Amorgos text nor a number of Mainz texts (as well as other curses) should be ranged among the 'borderline curses' on the mere ground that they contain this type of imprecations. If they do not display other—viz. 'magical'—elements they are simply prayers for justice.

I should add here another consideration, of a different nature, that should warn us against inconsiderate use of the label 'border area'. This regards the fact that a prayer for divine intervention need not be written out in full. Many of the more concise or apparently lacunate curse-texts from Acrocorinth and Mainz, such as those that contain not much more than the wish that an opponent suffer, or just a list of parts of the body (which are, as we have seen, typical features of the full prayer for justice, but not of the binding-*defixio*) may in fact be condensed or shorthand forms of what, if expanded, would be a true prayer for justice. This is indeed demonstrably the case in three tablets from Acrocorinth (Stroud nos. 6, 7, and 8/9). The last, which I have summarised above under 3.3.2, displays a number of features typical of the prayer for justice, such as "depositing with" or "giving in charge" (παρατίθεμαι) the target so that the Moirai Praxidikai may exact justice and punish her for her insolent behaviour. No. 7, against the same target, restricts itself to the brief formula "I deposit (παρατίθεμαι again) with the avenging gods and goddesses Karpime Babia for destruction.…". This is clearly a less elaborate version of the first prayer. In no. 6, which is written in the same hand, all but the following words are lost: "and she will be destroyed from this day today.…I beg (?) sinews.…underworld…herself…". Stroud plausibly

suggests that we have here three variants of a prayer for justice against the same person.[169] The latter two may be brief 'reminders' of the earlier, more extended, prayer, parallel to the expression *iteratis precibus* in a British curse (p. 329 above), just as nowadays we might find almost identical "Briefe zum Himmel" by the same person in a church or pilgrimage-site.[170] I would therefore urge that most of the Mainz curses with fractions of or allusions to the prayer for justice should be understood as condensed forms of the fuller type of prayers for justice that we also encounter in that collection.

The phrasing of the Acrocorinth texts, just quoted, leads us to a last reservation with respect to an all too rash use of the notion 'borderline-curse'. It concerns some terminological issues of which I was not aware in my earlier work. The verb παρατίθεμαι occurs together with κατατίθεμαι in two of the three Acrocorinth texts. The verbs deserve some fuller discussion here. Stroud rightly comments on their "common use in *defixiones*". It should be noted, however, that, by contrast with the monosemantic term καταδῶ, the verb παρατίθεμαι has a range of denotations and connotations, as my translation "deposit with, give in charge of" has already suggested. One fairly common meaning is "deposit documents, give in charge, commit or commend (a person) into another's hands" (LSJ s.v. B 2). Another is "dedicate a gift to a god".[171] In each of these denotations it comes very close to the verbs ἀνατίθημι, ἀνιερόω, *do, dono mando, commendo*, used in prayers for justice for "to give" a culprit or a stolen object to the god. At any rate, the verb may just as well be indicative of a prayer for justice as of a binding *defixio*. Actually it better fits the prayer situation and closer investigation must clarify in which of the two categories the term may prevail. It is clear enough, however, that the occurrence of this term itself by no means suffices to range a curse among the class of the *defixio* or the borderland-curses.

---

[169] For four tablets directed against the same person, namely Venusta at Morgantina, see J.B. Curbera, Venusta and her Owner in Four Curse Tablets from Morgantina, *ZPE* 110 (1996) 295–300.

[170] As I once did in the shrine of the Santo Bambino (Ara Coeli): two identical texts from a boy two weeks apart. Cf. the following letter by a little boy: "Dear God. I wrote you before, remember? I have done what I promised to do, but you did not send that horse. What about that? Louis" (in: E. Marshall and S. Hampl, *Children's Letters to God* [New York 1966]).

[171] For this meaning see: EBGR 1992, nos. 81, 199. For its use in curses see: M.L. Lazzarini, ΠΑΡΑΚΑΤΑΤΙΘΕΝΑΙ, *Hespería* (ed. L. Braccesi) 9 (1998) 155–160. On κατατίθημι see: F. Heintz, A Greek Silver Phylactery in the MacDaniel Collection, *ZPE* 112 (1996) 295–300, espec. 299, *ad* ll. 45–6.

Very much the same is true for the term καταγράφω. A reconsideration of its denotations prompts me to withdraw my earlier assessment of a well-known opisthographic text from Delos (first century BCE).[172] Let us first have a look at this text.

Side A begins as follows:

> Lord gods Sykonaioi (…), Lady goddess Syria (…) Sykona, punish and give expression to your wondrous power ([ἐκδικ]ήσετε κὲ <ὰ>ρετὴν γεν<ν> ήσετε). I curse ([κατα]γράφο) the one who took away, who stole my necklace. I curse those who had knowledge of it, those who participated.

The specific parts of the body to be bound "from head to toe" are then listed. Side B is almost identical but instead of [κατα]γράφο τὸν ἄραντα, it has διοργιάσετε τὸν ἄραντα (direct your anger to the one who took away my necklace),[173] and it lacks the list of parts of the body.

In my commentary in 1991, 66f., I stated that in the first text the characteristics of the traditional *defixio* predominate, and that hence

> these two texts on one tablet show in a truly exemplary way the two possible appeals to the supernatural which were available to the victim of an injustice. (…) Despite the fact that the text on side A would (on formal grounds at least) be regarded as a typical *defixio*, the assertions of righteousness seem to diminish if not neutralize the negative connotations which are usually attached to this extreme form of black magic.

Although this interpretation has been accepted by later scholars,[174] I now think I was wrong. First, I did not realise that the verb καταγράφω, like παρατίθεμαι, with which it is sometimes paired, belongs to a different semantic field from καταδέω. It means *inter alia* "register, record, enroll" (LSJ s.v. II.2). David Jordan has pointed out that, as an aspect of legal or quasi-legal language, it is in fact typical of the prayer for justice.[175] Secondly, at that time I had not yet realised that

---

[172] Ph. Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale* (Paris 1970) 649–655; *SGD* I 58; Versnel 1991, 66f.; Gager, *CT* 188 no. 88; Jordan 2002.

[173] The use of the imperative διοργιάσετε is related to the expression θεοὶ κεχυολωμένοι found in many funerary curses, e.g. from Halos in Phthiotis (III^{a}).…ἕξει δὲ ὀργὴν μεγάλην τοῦ μεγάλου Διός.

[174] Most recently Ogden 1999, 38.

[175] "Le mot καταγράφω est le verbe principal dans plusieurs prières de vengeance…La métaphore semble être celle d'un acte judiciaire présenté en tant que plainte auprès des magistrats" (Jordan 2002, 59). The same word is also a *terminus technicus* for the dedication of persons to a god in order to become his *hieros* as part of a *manumissio* ritual, as in the corpus cited in n. 46 above. On the differences

lists of parts of the body are typical not of binding-*defixiones* but of prayers for justice. We should therefore conclude, in the present state of research, that both A and B are true prayers for justice: both are addressed to great gods, but the first takes the form of a regular accusation, as at Cnidus and Bath. As I argued above, practically the same can now be ascertained for the curse texts from Kenchreae (no. 3.3.8) and Pella (3.3.8).

These considerations have served to suggest that as we refine the notion of prayer for justice, the number of 'border-area' cases may be reduced. Nevertheless, as my little group of new texts has reminded us, hybrid forms do undoubtedly occur. The question to which I now return, is: does the existence of such a group detract from the significance of the distinction between the ideal-types at either pole of the continuum? As I argued earlier, my answer is no. Let me add a few additional considerations with the aid of a couple of analogies.

Many narratives of miracles performed by healing gods, especially Asclepius, relate that the patient was given up by the doctors. For example, a confession text from near Kollyda in Maeonia (Petzl, *BIWK* no. 62) tells us that a woman made a vow for her sick son, to the effect that "if her son recovered without money being wasted on doctors", she would write it on a stele (in honour of the god Men Axiottenos). Competition between a god and human doctors for the same clientele seems to underlie the inscription that records a person "who was cured by nobody, but healed by the god".[176] Furthermore, several recipes in *PGrMag* and other late-antique collections promote "wonderful spells" that assure recovery without intervention of gods or physicians. This means that patients regularly had recourse to different strategies,

---

between verbs of "binding" and quasi-legal verbs of "inscribing" and "registering", see also Ogden 1999, 26.

[176] Herrmann and Malay 2007, nos. 84. No. 46 (*ibid.*), so far interpreted as concerning a woman who was punished by the god since "she went up to the god (only) *after* the doctors had come to her (ἐλθόντων αὐτῇ τῶν φυσικῶν)" (so: Herrman and Malay; G. Petzl, God and Physician: Competitors or Colleagues? in: A. Marcone [ed.], *Medicina e Società nel Mondo Antico* [Udine 2006] 55–62), should be translated differently viz.: "after her period had begun", as convincingly argued by R.C.T. Parker, ΤΑ ΦΥΣΙΚΑ in a Confession Inscription from Saittai, *ZPE* 163 (2007) 121f. On doctors and gods in confession texts see also: A. Chaniotis, Illness and Cures in Greek Propitiatory Inscriptions, in: Ph.J. van der Eijk, H.F.P. Horstmanshoff, P.H. Schrijvers (edd.), *Ancient Medicine in its Socio-Cultural Context* (Amsterdam and Atlanta 1995) 323–339 at 330f.

sequentially or simultaneously.[177] Of course, such decisions are reactions to a crisis, they are all attempts at ensuring a positive outcome. Yet as strategies they are all quite different. We can easily distinguish in the realm of concerns about health between 1. paying a doctor for his professional expertise (an appeal to what we might call a secular authority), 2. submissively entreating help from a god (an appeal to a religious/supernatural authority),[178] and 3. having recourse to (secret) powerful spells that are supposed to work *ex opere operato*. The three options may be similar in some respects but they are fundamentally different in others. And so it is with the difference between true binding-*defixiones* and true prayers for justice.

Another case in point regards oath formulas. It has been shown that Greek oaths can be formulated in two different ways. In the case of (self-)imprecation, a conditional curse may be enough to effect compliance.[179] The oath of the people of Thera while they are burning wax images runs: "May he, who does not abide by these oaths but trangresses them, melt away and dissolve like the images—himself, his seed and his property" (*SEG* 9: 4). Since there is no reference here to a deity, Aubriot argues that the operative factor is confidence in the sheer efficacy of the words and ritual acts. The other strategy is to invoke a specific god, who is understood to witness to the oath and guarantee its efficacy. This strategy excludes automatism. Nevertheless, these two modes, though in principle opposed, may be used together, often by adding one to the other. However, only the second type can properly take the form of a prayer.

This seems to me to offer a useful analogy to the relationship between the binding-*defixio* and the prayer for justice. Although they differ in origin, nature and socio-religious setting, they could be combined in many different ways. In an earlier phase, we may suggest, the binding-*defixio* was filled out, or complemented, by taking over familiar techniques of pious prayer, but only when the author could claim to have been wronged by the target. Conversely, at a later stage, true prayers for

---

[177] Similarly, the author of *I.Knidos* no. 150B, after having "dedicated" (= ceded) a lost object to the gods (so that they shall punish the thief and thus get it back for him), nonetheless offers a reward (κόμιστρον) to any person who shall return it.

[178] And sometimes also pay him: Asclepius behaves and heals as a doctor in some *iamata*, but also acts as a superior divine miracle-worker without any reference to the medical instruments of his profession, as do the gods of the confession texts.

[179] D. Aubriot, Formulations possibles du serment et conceptions religieuses en Grèce ancienne, *Kernos* 4 (1991) 91–103.

justice, from the context of temple religion, might acquire additional illocutionary force by introducing typical features of curse-language from a variety of source-contexts, including the binding-*defixio*. This will be thought odd only by those who think that it is the language of the *defixio* that defines its illicit status by contrast with the licit, sanctioned status of the prayer for justice. In fact, however, the difference between them is not primarily linguistic, it is a function of the multiple socio-religious factors I have listed above (pp. 329–36). 'Heterodox' verbal strategies are not the crucial or most telling factor. Judgements about language-use are context-dependent. In the context of unsanctioned, antisocial, malign praxis, the 'language of otherness' serves to reinforce the overall negative intention. In the prayer for justice, on the other hand, its potentially negative connotations are neutralised, as it were, by the intention of restoring justice, so that what remains dominant in the communication is the sheer force of the appeal to the divinity.

Appendix on vota *in curse-texts*

There are two reasons for devoting an appendix to the place of the vow in *defixiones*. The first is that sometimes (most explicitly in some of the essays in Brodersen and Kropp 2004), the notion of vow/*votum* has been invoked as one of the characteristics of the prayer for justice, especially those from Britain. Indeed some scholars have argued that they *are* actually *vota*. I quote here the most explicit expression of this view, by P.-Y. Lambert (2004, 79): "The judicial prayer belongs in fact to the vows: the victim of theft vows the stolen object (or part of it) to the deity, and so does the person in a trial".[180] This is simply an error. As I argued in 1991, such an interpretation implies a misunderstanding of the nature of prayers for justice, which are quasi-judicial accusations, an essential part of whose procedure is to transfer the target, or the stolen object, or the case (or indeed all three), solemnly into god's care. As far as the object is concerned, this means that it

[180] Kiernan 2004 (in the same volume) is entirely devoted to this claim. It is impossible to discuss his arguments at length here. In my view, his main theses are misguided (the British texts are neither 'Magie' nor 'Votivrituale'). Conceptually, indeed, the entire article represents a step backwards. He also discusses the issue of the availability of these texts, on which, however, see the recent literature noted above (n. 22).

is ceded, not vowed. It unfortunately seems necessary to reiterate this basic distinction here.

The second reason is that looking specifically at the place of references to *vota* in these texts offers another means of testing my general taxonomy. The hypothesis to be tested is this: if prayers for justice are closer to true prayers than to 'magical' *defixiones*, we would expect that references to *vota* will be found mainly, if not exclusively, in the former.[181] I here collect the texts that are invariably cited in studies that touch on the issue of votive religion in curse tablets,[182] to which I have added a few others that have come to my notice over the years. Since it makes no pretence at being exhaustive, it cannot provide a decisive test of the hypothesis, merely a strong indication one way or the other.

1. *DTAtt* 109 ll. 5–7 ('Attica': precise provenance unknown): ὑμῖν ἐγὼ Ιπραξιδίκαι καὶ Ἑρμῆ κάτοχε Μένο[υς] κακῶς πράξαντος εὐανγέλια θύσω. Praxidikai, as the name tells us, are deities or demons who work justice.[183] Earlier in this text they are invoked as φίλαι (l. 2).
2. *SEG* 4 (1929) 61 = Curbera 1997, 397f. ll. 2f. (from a grave at Kentoripa/Centuripae):[184] ἂν ἐ<κ>δεικήσσῃς με, ποίσω ἀργύρε[ο]ν σπάδικα. The goddess to whom the prayer is addressed is invoked as Κυρεία.[185]
3. *SEG* 37 (1987) 673 ll. 10–13 = *SGD* I no. 173 (Olbia, III[a]): [ἢ]ν δέ μοι αὐτοὺς κατάσχῃς καὶ κ[ατα]λάβῃς ἐ<γ>ὼ δέ σε τειμήσω καί σο[ι] ἄριστον δ[ῶ]ρον παρασκε[υάσω].[186] Most probably a litigation-*defixio*.

---

[181] It will be noted that I have consistently avoided the word magic in this paper, and use it here only with reference to Kiernan's terminology (Kiernan 2004).

[182] So for instance E.G. Kagarow, *Griechische Fluchtafeln*. Eos Suppl. 4 (Lwow 1929) 40; K. Preisendanz, Fluchtafel (*Defixio*), *RfAC* 8 (1972) 1–29 at 8; D.R. Jordan, *Hesperia* 54 (1985) 243; C.A. Faraone, *ZPE* 100 (1994) 84; Bravo 1987, 192; Maltomini 1995, 297. R.L.M. Heim, Incantamenta magica Graeca Latina, *Jahrbuch für Classische Philologie*, Suppl. 19 (1892) 465–575 no. 35 presents a magico-medical charm with a curious *votum*.

[183] Versnel 1991, 94 n. 18.

[184] Versnel 1991, 64f.; *SGD* I no. 115; Gager, *CT* 192f. no. 93.

[185] No doubt Persephone, as argued by Curbera 1997, 399f.; he also identifies ἀργύρε[ο]ν σπάδικα as a silver palm. He rightly classes this text among the category of "prayers for justice motivated by the hope of revenge for wrongs suffered". Curbera 1999, 182 no. 55 gives a full bibliography.

[186] This is the reading of Bravo 1987, 189. He translates: "Mais si tu les paralyses et les saisis pour moi, je t'honorerai et te procurerai un don excellent". D.R. Jordan,

4. *PGrMag* IV 2094–6: τέλεσον δαῖμον τὰ ἐνθάδε γεγραμμένα. τελέσαντι δέ σοι θυσίαν ἀποδώσω. The relevant phrase is related to a more explicit passage in *Suppl.Mag* 45. 12–15. Both are part of a bipolar formula: "If you, Nekudaimon, do this, I'll do something (good) for you, but if you do not, I'll see to it that you will suffer". This is a typically Egyptian variant of the well-known threat against gods or demons.[187]
5. *AE* 1912: 40 = *CIL* I^2 2520 ll. 9–19 (Via Salaria, Rome, mid-I^a).[188] Five lead tablets with roughly identical texts (the Johns Hopkins *defixiones*). The author prefaces a long list of body parts of the five targets by promising:

   > *Quare hanc victimam tibi trado, Proserpina (…) Me mittas arcessitum canem tricepitem, qui Ploti cor eripiat. Polliciar illi te daturum tres victimas palmas caricas, porcum nigrum, hoc sei perfecerit ante mensem Martium. Haec, Proserpina Salvia, tibi dabo cum compote feceris. Do tibi caput Ploti Avoniae etc.*

   Gager comments: "The idea seems to be that the client will offer the gifts to Proserpina who would in turn convey them to Cerberus" (*CT* 241). The curse has the appearance of an erotic spell, but there is no clear indication of its occasion.
6. *AE* 1934: 23 = *ILER* 5913 = CIL II^2 7, 250 (Cordoba, I^a-I^p): This text, originally published by J. M^a de Ravascués y de Juan, Plomos magicos de Cordoba, *Archivo Espagnol de Arte y Arqueología* 28 (1934) 51–60 at 52, is generally overlooked in the present discussion. It reads:

   > *Dionisia Denatiai/ ancilla rogat deibus ego/ rogo bono bono/ deibus rogo oro bono/ einfereis bono salpina/ rogo oro et bonis inferis/ ut*

Mnemosyne 50 (1997) 212–219 offers some new readings, (rightly) insists on its character as a *defixio*, and defends Bravo's reading of the last lines, translating: "And if you put a spell on them and capture them, I shall indeed honor you and shall prepare for you the best of offerings". S.R. Slings, DE or DH in a defixio from Olbia, *Mnemosyne* 51 (1998) 84–85, argues convincingly for a date in the third century BCE.

[187] B. Olsson, Drohungen an die Götter: Religionsgeschichtliche Streifzüge, *DRAGMA M.P.Nilsson*, Acta Instituti Romani Regni Sueciae 1 (Lund 1939) 374–78. More literature in: D. Martinez, "May she neither eat nor drink": Love Magic and Vows of Abstinence, in: M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (edd.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leyden 1995) esp. 347–351 with n. 51. M. Fantuzzi and F. Maltomini, Ancora magia in Teocrito (VII 103–114), *ZPE* 114 (1996) 27–29, cite many βιαστικαὶ ἀπειλαί from magical papyri, including parallels of *PGM* IV 2094, quoted here.

[188] W. Sherwood Fox, The Johns Hopkins *Tabellae Defixionum*, *AJPh Suppl.* 33 (1912) = Besnier 1920, no. 33.

DIOSO quod fit deibus/ inferabus ut hoc quod sit/ causa et ecquod votum/ feci ut solva(m) rogo/ ut illum ducas rogo/ oro.

The following two curse-texts, which have sometimes been regarded as votives, are for different reasons too doubtful to be included here:

7. E. Gàbrici, *NotSc* 7.2 (1941) 296–9 = *Epigraphica* 5–6 (1942–3) 133 no. 1929 (Lilybaion, ?II[a]). A *defixio* which begins (*recto*) with δέομαί σου invoking Hermes Katochos, and then the Telchines (extremely unusual). It contains the expression πέμπω δῶρον.[189] However, the context leaves little doubt that the δῶρον is not a gift (let alone a votive gift) of some valuable object or sacrifice, but the target herself, who is being consigned to the deities of the underworld.[190] This tallies nicely with expressions containing forms of δέχομαι (ποτίδεξαι/ ποτιδέξεσθε), asking the gods of the Underworld to receive persons mentioned in some lead tablets from a *temenos* near the theatre in Morgantina (*SEG* 29: 927–34).[191]

---

[189] *SGD* I 109 = Curbera 1999, 181 no. 48. It reads in part: (recto, ll. 6–10, corrected spelling): δῶρον τοῦτο πέμπω παιδ[ίσκην]…παιδίσκην καλὴν δοροῦμαι σοι [δῶρον] καλὸν, "the handsome girl (Prima Allia), I give you as a beautiful gift"), after which all her body parts are listed, each qualified by the epithet 'beautiful'. The verso mentions Cerberus (l. 4), who is evidently to receive her, and Persephone (l. 18), (ll. 10–13): "Prima Allia I hand over (παραδείδομι), Hermes, in order that you may hand her over to the Mistress…" (i.e. of the Underworld).

[190] For this reason I also exclude here *SGD* I 54 = R.P. Austin, PBSA 27 (1925–6) 73 and the related *DTAtt* 99, where the same expression πέμπω δῶρον occurs, but cannot be satisfactorily contextualised. However it is in each case clear that the δῶρον in question is a gift, not an εὐχή/*votum*/vow.

[191] Against N. Nabers, *AJA* 70 (1966) 67–68 (who was followed by J. and L. Robert, *Bull.ép*. 1966 no. 518) and ibid. 83 (1979) 463ff., D.R. Jordan, Two Inscribed Lead Tablets from the Kerameikos, *MDAI(A)* 95 (1980) 225–239 at 236–238, convincingly argued that these tablets are *defixiones*. The targets are sent to the underworld (as a gift) where the gods are asked to accept them. That this is the point is made clear by two of the texts, one of which requests Earth, Hermes and the gods of the Underworld ἀπάγετε τὰν Βενούσταν (*SEG* 29: 932), while the other has ποτιδέξεσθε, which is the usual word in the group (SEG 29: 931, cf. J. Curbera, *ZPE* 110 [1996] 295–7, with literature on the question in n. 27). Analogously, the text from Oropos (3.3.5 above) asks the gods (of the Underworld?) κακοὺς καὶ μελέους δέξαισθε αὐτοὺς πάντας (ll. 32–4); see also no. 3.1.1.3 (Carmona). Of course, one can also wish the reverse, e.g. *CIL* VI 36467 = *ILS* 8184 (a funerary curse): *si qui violaverit…opto ei ut cum dolore corporis longo tempore vivat et cum mortuus fuerit inferi eum non recipiant.* Cf. *ibid.* 8190. The last one and a half lines of a funerary text from the Porta Nocera graveyard in Pompeii read: *Qui nostrum mentitur / eum nec Di Penates nec Inferi recipiant* (*AE* 1964: 160, cf. the commentary by M. Elefante, Un caso di *defixio* nella necropoli Pompeiana di Porta Nocera? *PP* 40 (1985) 431–43 at 440f.

8. *CIL* X 8249 = *DTAud* 190 ll. 14ff. (Minturnae). After a long series of parts of the body, we read:

> *Dii i(n)feri si [illam?] vider[o t]abesce(n)te(m) / vobis sa(n)ctu(m) i<l>lud lib<e>ns ob an<n>u/versariu(m) facere dibus par/entibus il<l>ius [….]ta / peculiu(m) tabescas.*

The tablet is unfortunately damaged at the crucial point. Audollent *ad loc.* lists various conjectures which suggest that a *votum* was undertaken. There is however insufficient evidence to support that. The text seems to be an amatory curse, which, at any rate in this respect, I have argued are to be counted prayers for justice.[192]

To this evidence we can also add three passages from texts already discussed above:

9. Carmona (no. 3.1.1.3): *sei faciatis votum quod faccio solva(m) vostris meritis.*
10. Setúbal (no. 3.1.1.4):

> *(H)unc tibi (h)ostia(m) quadrupede(m), do(mi)ne Attis, voveo si eu(m) fure(m) invenero. Dom(i)ne Attis te rogo per tuum Nocturnum ut me quam primu(m) compote(m) facias.*

11. Blänsdorf no. 16 ll. 16–18 (Mainz):

> *D[e]mando tibi rel[igione], ut me uotis condamnes et ut laetus libens ea tibi referam, si de eo exitum malum feceris.*[193]

Although, as I have said, this is not an exhaustive list, the obvious point to make is that references to votive transactions are extremely uncommon among all the many hundreds of extant curse-texts. Secondly, several of those I list here occur in texts that show other oddities or deviations from ideal-typical forms. Text 2 comes from Kentoripe/ Centuripae in far-western Sicily; no. 7, with its idiosyncratic formulae,

---

[192] Another doubtful case is R. Wünsch, *BJ* 99 (1910) 9f. no. 26 = *AE* 1911: 51 = Besnier 1920, 17 no. 27 = *CIL* XIII 11340, no.V: *Si tu (H)ostiliam q(ua)e e Racatia [nata est consumpseris…]/ FRAV q(u)i[a] mihi fraude(m) fe[cit ----],/ deus, nos te q(u)i audis[ti sacrificio colemus?]* (Trier, amphitheatre, ?III^{p}). The conjectures are Wünsch's.

[193] The expression has the same structure as in no. 4: *ut me compotem facias*, and no. 6: *ecquod votum/ feci ut solva(m) rogo/ ut illum ducas rogo/ oro*, i.e. the wish that the god will act in such a way that the principal will have to pay the vow.

comes from the eastern part of the island.[194] This is still more the case with Olbia (no. 3), whose deviant type of *defixiones*, both as regards form (so peculiar that they are often misunderstood as letters between human-beings) and material base (often on ostraka instead of lead) are well-known.[195] Text 4 obviously belongs to a different, Egyptian, tradition. The new curses from shrines of Attis (and Mater Magna), nos.10–11, are also idiosyncratic.

Quite apart from that, it is clear that, where it is mentioned, the gift promised is never the stolen object itself but always something unconnected with the case:

- εὐανγέλια θύσω—(1)
- ποίσω ἀργύρε[ο]ν σπάδικα (2)
- σε τειμήσω καὶ σ[οι] ἄριστον δῶρον παρασκε[υάσω] (3)
- σοι θυσίαν ἀποδώσω (4)
- *Polliciar illi te daturum tres victimas almas caricas, porcum nigrum, hoc sei perfecerit ante mensem Martium*; *Haec, Proserpina Salvia, tibi dabo cum compote feceris* (5)
- *ecquod votum/feci ut solva(m)* (6)
- *sei faciatis votum quod faccio solva(m) vostris meritis* (9)
- *Tunc tibi (h)ostia(m) quadrupede(m), do(mi)ne Attis, voveo si eu(m) fure(m) invenero* (10)

More significant still is the fact that the fulfilment of the promise is understood as something that will take place in the future: θύσω, ποίσω, τειμήσω (καὶ παρασκε[υάσω]), ἀποδώσω, *polliciar illi te daturum*, *dabo, solvam, voveo si eas iure invenero*, *ut laetus libens ea tibi referam*. This is of course perfectly appropriate to the typical votive situation, in which the promise turns into an actual gift (*donum*), i.e. is redeemed, only *after* the god has fulfilled the request. This is quite clear from the standard votive formulas such as: *ex v(oto) d(ono) d(edit)* (e.g. *AE* 1998: 571); *d(onum) d(edit) l(ibens) m(erito)* (e.g. *AE* 1999: 1180), or *u(t) v(overat) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)* (e.g. *AE* 1996:

[194] For a map of Roman-period Sicily, see HAaW map 143B.

[195] See on the deviant forms of Olbia curses: A. Lebedev, The Devotio of Xanthippos. Magic and Mystery Cults in Olbia, *ZPE* 112 (1996) 279–283; B. Bravo, Deux ostraka magiques d'Olbia Pontique et quelques données nouvelles sur les procédés de la magie destructive, *Talanta* 32/33 (2000/2001) 149–164 (on *SEG* 30: 975f. = 34: 770f.).

1018).[196] A still clearer indication, if one were needed, that *donum* in the votive context refers to the *voti solutio* is the odd but revealing formula in *AE* 1999: 1127: *donum solvit v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.[197] Moreover, the promises consistently occur as part of a conditional sentence.[198] Finally, insofar the texts listed permit a firm conclusion, the votive formulas occur only in prayers for justice, as I have defined them on p. 278.

If we now compare the composition and formulas of true or 'pure' prayers for justice, for example the British texts, with those in my list, the differences are quite clear. First, in prayers for justice the verb transferring something (*do/dono*) to the god is never in the future tense but always in either the present or the perfect.[199] Consequently, it is not a promise to give (and hence is not part of a conditional proposition) but a performative present (or past) referring to an action that is now being performed or has already taken place: the object is hereby ceded to the god. Furthermore, in pure prayers for justice the so-called gift is always the stolen or lost object, not any other type of offering. The difference between this and the vow is also demonstrated by the fact that in both the Latin and the Greek evidence (Britain, Spain, Cnidus etc.) not only the object stolen, but also the thief (exceptionally also the entire affair), can be 'given' to the god. The fact that in some British texts only a fraction of the (value of) the stolen object is ceded does not make them vows,[200] because it too is transferred at the

---

[196] The same is true of the conventional Greek formulas such as εὐξάμενος ἀνέθηκεν, or the less common τὴν εὐχήν ἀπέδωκεν/ἀνέθηκεν; cf. L. Robert, *Hellenica* 6 (Paris 1948) 105, 107 n. 3.

[197] "Noter la formule *donum solvere* [qui fait double emploi avec *v(otum) s(olvit)*]" (R. Frei-Stolba and H. Lieb). A related but different kind of contamination appears in the occasional formula: *votum quod promisit dedit*: e.g. *ILAfr.* 348; *RIB* 307; *ArchClass* 24–26 (1973–74) 741, which has its precise equivalent in the Greek expression quoted in the preceding note.

[198] These three features provide an additional argument for excluding no. 7 (Lilybaeum).

[199] See e.g. Tomlin 1988, 63f. Against twelve cases of the present, there are three cases of the perfect *donavi(t)*.

[200] Some British texts have interesting variants. One, from the Guildhall, London (*AE* 2003: 1021 = *Britannia* 34 [2003] 362 no. 2) reads: *[d]eae Dea[na]e dono capitularem et fas[c]iam minus parte tertia*, "I give to the goddess Deana [my] headgear and band, less one-third". As R. Tomlin remarks, "A god's interest is often engaged by the 'gift' of a fraction of the stolen property, but two-thirds is unusually high" (362 n. 8 on ll. 3–4). One of the Uley texts reads: *deo s(upra)dicto* (i.e. Mercury) *tertiam partem donat…Ac a quae perit deo Silvano tertia pars donatur* (*AE* 1979: 384a,b = *Britannia* 10 [1979] 343 = Tomlin 1993, 121 no. 2, with further references to this sort

moment the curse tablet is deposited—the act of depositing the tablet symbolises the transfer to the deity.[201] The object (or the fraction of its value) is from now on in the god's possession. The deity must try to retrieve what has now become his own property by forcing the thief to return it. The means he or she is invited or entreated to use is to send physical suffering upon the guilty party.

As we have seen in discussing the border-area between the true *defixio* and the prayer for justice, contact and contamination between modes occurs frequently in these texts. That the procedure of solemn transfer should occasionally have evoked the notion of *votum* would under these circumstances not be surprising. It is therefore all the more remarkable that confusion between vow and solemn transfer, so far as I know, does not occur at all.[202] We never find the stolen object or the culprit as the object of a form of *voveo* or of a *future* form of verbs like *dare, donare, mandare* etc.

On the other hand, we do find genuine *vota* alongside solemn transfers in these true judicial prayers. A *votum* is essentially a conditional bribe (δῶρα θεοὺς πείθει, Hesiod, frg. 272 R. = 361 M.-W.) intended to induce a god to provide help in a precarious situation—sickness, mishap, failure of crops, deprivation, natural disaster, war.… and not least in cases of theft or fraud. The promise is to be redeemed only after the results of the god's intervention are recognisable. We might then actually have expected the vow to be a frequent additional inducement when gods are invoked to do justice and retrieve a lost or stolen object. But as the list makes clear (even if it is not exhaustive, it gives an accurate idea of the cases that do exist), it is not. The reason, no doubt, is that the authors expect justice and retribution from

---

of arithmetic). In a recent IV^{p} text from Ratcliffe-on-Soar the principal "makes a note (*annoto*) of some utensils and adds *duas partis deo* (two-thirds for the god)" (*AE* 2004: 856 = R. Tomlin, *Britannia* 35 [2004] 336f.).

[201] Note, too, that insofar as curse formulas state a condition, e.g. *(ni)si* or an equivalent, it is never part of the deal with the god but always part of one with the target. The culprits are not to recover "unless" or "before" they return the stolen object: Tomlin 1988, 65 s.v. nisi.

[202] Kiernan 2004, 106 illustrates the notion of a vow in a British curse by means of a well-known text from Kelvedon, Essex: *quicumque res Vareni in/volaverit si mulier si mascel / sangu(i)no suo solvat—erit/ --]et pecunie(m) quam exesu/ Mercurio dona et Virtuti s<emis>* (*AE* 1959: 157 = *JRS* 48 [1958] 150). I presume that he takes *exesuerit* (*erit* and *exesu*, though written on different lines, must be taken together) as a future. But *exesuerit* is exactly parallel to *involaverit* and hence must be a perfect subjunctive. *Dona* equals the formulaic *dono*. That is, half the sum stolen is to go to Mercury and Virtus.

the righteous divine judge[203] and therefore do not feel the need to bribe him.[204]

While, then, *voveo* never occurs as a variant expression of what I have labelled cession of the stolen object or surrender of the culprit to a god, in a few exceptional cases we do find forms of *devoveo*. This usage however does not go to prove that the judicial prayer is in fact a sub-class of the vow, as Lambert and Kiernan believe. The implied argument rests on the false assumption that the composite *devoveo* is future-directed just like the simple form *voveo*. It is true that *devoveo* sometimes has virtually the same meaning as *voveo* (cf. *OLD* sense 1). But it is no less true that, when the action is addressed to gods of the Underworld—with the prefix *de-*, like Greek κατά, in its basic meaning of 'downwards'—or, less specifically, is intended to cause the target to suffer, the verb lacks the reference to the future and becomes the equivalent of *desacro* or *consacro/consecro* (*OLD* sense 3). This development began with the *devotio ducis* in the third century BCE,[205] and retained the illocutionary status of a performative present—as opposed to a votive future—over the centuries, especially in curse texts. An opisthographic tablet addressed to the Nymphs and found in an acidic spring, the Poggio Bagnoli near Arretium, curses a man named Q. Letinius Lupus with the words: *hunc ego aput vostrum numen demando, devoveo, desacrifico*.[206] In such cumulative formulas, which are typical of magical texts as well as of prayer in general,[207] the two or three words of the formula are generally synonyms or varia-

---

[203] In a newly-published confession-text (Herrmann and Malay 2007 no. 51), for the first time, the god is explicitly called "all-seeing judge in heaven" (κριτὴς ἀλάθητος ἐν οὐρανῷ), quite apart from the usual interventions expected of him.

[204] See n. 74 above. However, as I suggested in n. 22 above, prayers for justice were sometimes at least made available for a readership at a shrines. This may have increased the chances of successfully recovering the stolen objects.

[205] In my article Two Types of Roman *Devotio, Mnemosyne* 29 (1976) 365–410, I showed how in the formula *consacro* or *desacro me et mecum devoveo legiones hostium* (*vel sim.*), that the commander uttered as he was voluntarily about to give his own life to the gods of the Underworld, *desacro* was replaced by *devoveo*, which nevertheless retained its status as a performative present. The *devotio* of the general was a *consecratio*, not a vow. This theory has been generally acepted. See most recently: S.P. Oakley, *A Commentary on Livy*, Vol. II, *Books VII–VIII*, pp. 480–483; A. Dyck, Cicero's *Devotio*: The Rôles of *Dux* and Scape-goat in his *Post Reditum* Rhetoric, *HSCPh* 102 (2004) 301–314.

[206] *CIL* XI 1823 = *DTAud* 129b = *ILS* 8748.

[207] H.S. Versnel, The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words, in: P. Mirecki and M. Meyer (eds.), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (Leyden 2002) 105–58 at 130–35.

tions belonging to the same semantic area. The same curse provides an example a little farther on: *uti vos eum interemates, interficiates*, and it would be tedious to list here all the synonyms for mishaps that are to befall enemies, rivals in love or business, gladiators or race horses, such as *deprimite, defigite, perfigite, consumite—cadat, vertat, frangat*—καταδῶ, ἀφανίζω, κατορύττω, καταπατταλεύω.

Their rhetorical form (*ecphrasis* and emphasis through repetition and variation) means that such formulas resist inconsistencies. In particular, they cannot simultaneously be oriented both to the present and the future, as *do/consecro* on the one hand and *voveo* on the other would demand. One cannot logically give an object now and conditionally promise to give the same object at some time in the future. In these contexts *devoveo* practically equals (the rather rare word) *desacro*. It may even have been considered an elevated, more solemn word. Tomlin suggests, for example, that in the phrase *devoveo eum qui caracallam meam involaverit* (*Tab.Sulis* 10), *devoveo* is a "sophisticated" term "instead of the normal *dono*".[208] As we have already seen, *devotos* are equated with *defixos* in the text from Barchín de Hoyo (3.1.1.1).[209] More important however is the fact that the two words are the equivalents of δίδωμι, παραδίδωμι in the parallel Greek text, while οἷς δικαίως κατηρασάμην is paraphrased as *quos merito devovi*, both of which Curbera, Sierra Delage and Velázquez rightly translate as "cursed". That is why the Latin term for what we call curse-tablets (and curses in general), is not *defixio* but *devotio* (*OLD* sense 2).[210]

---

[208] So Tomlin 1988, 122 n. 5, who notes that this is the sole occurrence of the verb in all the Bath curses. In the curse from Ratcliffe-on-Soar cited in n. 83, the principal writes: "In the name of Camulorix and Titocuna I have dedicated in the temple of the god the mule(?) which they have lost" (Tomlin's translation). The verbal form is heavily mutilated (we read DADVSVI). Hence only the *v* and the final *vi* can support Tomlin's conjecture *devovi*. Even allowing this, he must be right to say that it is an equivalent of the "*devoveo* (which) is used instead of the usual *dono* in *Tab.Sulis* no. 10 l. 5 but of the thief, not of the object stolen". He therefore translates: "I have dedicated" (and not "I have vowed").

[209] One of the Mainz curses (p. 174 no. 8) has the same combination: *devotum defictum* (while no. 6 has a form of *devoveo* in two places). The same in [Apuleius] *Herbarium* 7.1 (an herbal antidote to curse tablets) ap. Gager, *CT* 237 no. 131 = Ogden 1999, 53), which opens with the words: *si quis devotatus defixusque fuerit*. Gager writes: "As commonly in Latin texts, they probably designate a single action of being put under the spell by a curse tablet"; cf. Curbera, Sierra Delage and Velázquez 1999, 282: "*devoveo* and *defigo*…are almost synonyms".

[210] On the various possible Latin terms for curse-tablets, see Ogden 1999, 5. Note that *devotus*, whatever its later semantic development, properly means 'accursed', e.g. Horace, *Odes* 3.4.27; Ovid, *Heroides* 9.153.

The conclusion must be that the prayer for justice cannot be considered a special sub-class of the *votum* and that we should resist all arguments that tend in that direction.[211]

Bibliography

Aubriot-Sévin, D. 1992. *Prière et conceptions religieuses en Grèce ancienne jusqu'à la fin du V^e siècle av. J.-C.* (Lyon).
Besnier, M. 1920. Récents travaux sur les *defixionum tabellae* latines (1904–1914), *RPh* 44, 5–30.
Betz, H.D. (ed.) 1986. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago).
Björck, G. 1938. *Der Fluch des Christen Sabinus.* Papyrus Upsalensis 8 (Uppsala).
Blänsdorf, J. 2004. "Guter, heiliger Atthis". Eine Fluchtafel aus dem Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna Heiligtum (Inv.-Nr. 201 B 36), in: Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 51–57.
—— 2009. *Forschungen zum Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtum, 1: Die Defixionum tabellae des Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtums (DTM).* Mainzer Archäologische Schriften, 1 (Mainz).
Bravo, B. 1987. Une tablette magique d'Olbia pontique, les morts, les héros et les démons, in M. Detienne *et al.* (eds.) *Poikilia. Études offertes à Jean-Pierre Vernant* (Paris) 185–218.
Brodersen, K. and Kropp, A. (eds.) 2004. *Fluchtafeln. Neue Deutungen zum Antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt a.M.).
Chaniotis, A. 1997. "Tempeljustiz" im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien: Rechtliche Aspekte der Sühneinschriften Lydiens und Phrygiens, in G. Thür & J. Vélisaropoulos-Karakostas (eds.) *Symposion 1995. Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte (Korfu 1995)* = Akten der Gesellschaft für Griechische und Hellenistische Rechtsgeschichte 11 (Cologna and Vienna) 353–84.
——. 2004. Under the Watchful Eyes of the Gods: Divine Justice in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor, in S. Colvin (ed.) *The Greco-Roman East* (Cambridge) 1–43.
——. Forthcoming. Megatheism: The Search for the Almighty God and the Competition between Cults, in: Mitchell & Van Nuffelen forthcoming.
Corell, J. 1993. Defixionis Tabella aus Carmona (Sevilla), *ZPE* 95, 261–268.
Curbera, J. 1997. Chthonians in Sicily, *GRBS* 38, 397–407.
——. 1999. Defixiones. *ASNP* ser. IV, Quaderni 1 (Pisa 1999) 159–86.
Curbera, J., Sierra Delage, M. and Velázquez, I. 1999. A Bilingual Curse Tablet from Barchín del Hoyo (Cuenca, Spain), *ZPE* 125, 279–283.
Dickie, M.W. 2001. *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London).
Eidinow, E. *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford 2007).
Eitrem, S. 1924. Die rituelle ΔΙΑΒΟΛΗ, *SO* 2, 43–61.
Faraone, C.A. 1991. The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 3–32.
Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D. (eds.) 1991. *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York and Oxford).
Faraone, C.A., Garnand, B., and López-Ruiz, C. 2005. Micah's Mother (*Judg.* 17:1–4) and a Curse from Carthage (*KAI* 89): Canaanite Precedents for Greek and Latin Curses against Thieves? *JNES* 64, 161–186.

[211] Cf. Chaniotis 2004, 19f. stressing the difference in the Greek confession-texts between cession to the god(s) and votive practice. Less explicitly: Ogden 1999, 39–41.

Faraone, C.A., and Rife, J.L. 2007. A Greek Curse against a Thief from the North Cemetery at Roman Cenchreai, *ZPE* 160, 141–57.
Graf, F. 1997. *Magic in the Ancient World*. Tr. F. Philip (Cambridge MA) (First publ. in French, Paris 1994).
——. 2001. Fluch und Segen. Ein Grabepigramm und seine Welt, in S. Buzzi *et al.* (eds.) *Zona Archeologica. Festschrift für H. P. Isler zum 60. Geburtstag*. Antiquitas, Reihe 3, 42 (Bonn) 183–191.
Hägg, R. (ed.) 1994. *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence. Proceedings of the Second international Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, 22–24 Nov. 1991. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Instittutet i Athen in-8°* 13 (Stockholm).
Herrmann, P. and Malay, H. 2007. *New Documents from Lydia*. Ergänzungsbände zu den Tituli Asiae Minoris 24 = Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl. 340 (Vienna).
Jordan, D.R. 2002. Une prière de vengeance sur une tablette de plomb à Délos, *RA* (2002) 55–60.
Jordan, D.R., Montgomery, H., and Thomassen, E. (eds.) 1999. *The World of Ancient Magic. Papers from the first international Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4–8 May 1997*. Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4 (Bergen).
Kiernan, P. 2004. Britische Fluchtafeln und "Gebete um Gerechtigkeit" als öffentliche Magie und Votivrituale, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 99–114.
Kropp, A. 2004. *Defigo Eudemum: necetis eum*: Kommunikationsmuster in den Texten antiker Schadenzauberrituale, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 81–97.
Lambert, P-Y. 2004. Defining Magical Spells and particularly *defixiones* of Roman Antiquity: A Personal Opinion, in Broderson and Kropp 2004, 71–80.
Maltomini, F. 1995. Nota alla defixio di Carmona, *ZPE* 107, 297f.
Marco Simón, F. 2004. Magia y cultos orientales: acerca de una *defixio* de Alcácer do Sal (Setúbal) con mención de Atis, *MHNH* 4, 79–94.
Mitchell, S. and Van Nuffelen, P. (eds.), Forthcoming. *One God. Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge).
Ogden, D. 1999. Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds, in B. Ankarloo and S. Clark, (eds.) *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, vol. 2, V. Flint, R. Gordon, G. Luck and D. Ogden, *Ancient Greece and Rome* (London) 1–90.
——. 2002. *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook* (Oxford).
Scholz, M. and Kropp, A. 2004. "Priscilla die Verräterin": Eine Fluchtafel mit Rachegebet aus Groß-Gerau, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 33–40.
Smith, J.Z. 2004. *Relating Religion: Essay in the Study of Religion* (Chicago).
Solin, H. 1968. Eine neue Fluchtafel aus Ostia. *Comm. Hum. Litt.: Soc. Sc. Fenn.* 42.3 (Helsinki).
Stroud, R.S. Forthcoming. *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*. Corinth XVIII, part ? (Princeton).
Strubbe, J.H.M. 1991. "Cursed be he that moves my bones", in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 33–59.
——. 1997. APAI EIIITYMBIOI. *Imprecations against Desecrators of the Grave in the Greek Epitaphs of Asia Minor. A Catalogue*. IK 52 (Bonn).
Tomlin, R.S.O. 1988. The Curse Tablets: Roman inscribed tablets of tin and lead from the Sacred Spring at Bath, in: B. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath*, 2: *The Finds from the Sacred Spring*. OUCA Monograph 16 (Oxford 1988) 59–265.
——. 1993. The Inscribed Lead Tablets, in A. Woodward and P. Leach, *The Uley Shrines: Excavation of a Ritual Complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire, 1977–9*. English heritage Archaeological Report 17 (London) 113–30.
——. 2004. *carta picta perscripta*: Anleitung zum Lesen von Fluchtafeln, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 11–29.

Versnel, H.S. (ed.) 1981. *Faith, Hope and Worship. Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (Leyden).
——. 1985. "May he not be able to sacrifice". Concerning a curious formula in Greek and Latin Curses, *ZPE* 58, 247–269.
——. 1986. In het grensgebied van magie en religie: het gebed om recht, *Lampas* 19, 68–96.
——. 1987. Les imprécations et le droit, *RHD* 65, 5–22.
——. 1990. *Ter Unus. Isis, Dionysos, Hermes: Three Studies in Henotheism*. Studies in Greek and Roman Religion 6 (Leyden).
——. 1991. Beyond Cursing: The Appeal for Justice in Judicial Prayers, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 60–106.
——. 1994. ΙΙΕΠΡΗΜΕΝΟΣ. The Cnidian Curse Tablets and Ordeal by Fire, in Hägg 1994, 145–54.
——. 1998. καὶ εἴ τι λ[οιπὸν] τῶν μερ[ῶ]ν [ἔσ]ται τοῦ σώματος ὅλ[ο]υ[.. ("and any other part of the entire body there may be…"): An Essay on Anatomical Curses, in F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale. Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert* (Leipzig and Stuttgart) 217–67.
——. 1999. ΚΟΛΑΣΑΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΗΜΑΣ ΤΟΙΟΥΤΟΥΣ ΗΔΕΩΣ ΒΛΕΠΟΝΤΕΣ: "Punish those who rejoice in our misery": On Curse Texts and *Schadenfreude*, in: Jordan, Montgomery and Thomassen 1999, 125–162.
——. 2002. Writing Mortals and Reading Gods: Appeal to the Gods as a Dual Strategy in Social Control, in D. Cohen (ed.) *Demokratie, Recht und soziale Kontrolle im klassischen Athen*. Schriften des Historischen Kollegs: Kolloquien 49 (Munich) 37–76.
Voutiras, E. 1998. ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΦΩΝΤΟΣ ΓΑΜΟΙ. *Marital Life and Magic in Fourth- Century Pella* (Amsterdam).

CHAPTER NINE

HOW DOES MAGICAL LANGUAGE WORK? THE SPELLS AND *FORMULAE* OF THE LATIN *DEFIXIONUM TABELLAE*

Amina Kropp

In this paper I examine the formulas in Latin *defixionum tabellae* from a double perspective, that of pragma-linguistics and ritual performance.[1] The interdisciplinary scope of such an approach to magical language is obvious:

> Linguistic pragmatics studies people's *use of language*, a form of *behaviour* or *social action*. Thus the *dimension* which the pragmatic perspective is intended to give insight into is *the link between language and human life in general*. Hence, pragmatics is also *the* link between linguistics and the rest of humanities and social sciences.[2]

Seen from this perspective, the *defixiones* are an unmediated example of language resources employed in an historical ritual context. Historical pragmatics deals largely with literary sources or meta-linguistic documents such as dictionaries and grammars.[3] This linguistic material, however, does not always offer a transparent window on the use of language (and the language-using human) within an ancient society. By contrast, ancient magical inscriptions lend themselves remarkably well to an analysis from a pragmatic perspective since, as textual archetypes of non-fictional documents, they report the original wording of the curse as direct speech. Moreover, important elements of the ritual context can be reconstructed through the analysis of magical papyri, archeological data, literary and non-literary sources, and other comparable evidence. The study of these linguistic products, in combination with the examination of the historical background, allows us,

---

[1] See now my *Magische Sprachverwendung in vulgärlateinischen Fluchtafeln* (defixiones). ScriptOralia 135 = Reihe A (Altertumswissenschaftliche Reihe) 39 (Tübingen 2008), which contains a CD-Rom with the corpus of 391 texts actually used.

[2] Verschueren 1999, 6f. Also Bax 2003a, 161.

[3] See Cherubim 1980, 13. For this 'new' pragmatic discipline in general, see also *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, esp. vol. 4.2 (2003) devoted to "Ritual Language Behaviour".

therefore, to elucidate two aspects of the language used within a ritual of 'aggressive magic': its different performative dimensions and, in addition, the scope and function of magical language.[4]

Since Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, it has become a truism that saying something does not only mean "to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some facts'", but, rather, that "the uttering of [a] sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action".[5] This is especially true in a ritual context where words can immediately create a new reality: after uttering special words, usually conventional ones, i.e. traditionally fixed formulas, in a more or less ritualised context, things are no longer the way they used to be. The performative character of ritual language use is illustrated by Austin's examples concerning marriage or the declaration of war.[6] With regard to magic rituals the performativity of the verbal elements can be very well described in the words of the anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah: "magical acts, usually compounded of verbal utterance and object manipulation, constitute 'performative' acts".[7] This is exactly the case with the κατάδεσμοι or *defixiones*: the ritual performance consisting of both verbal and non-verbal elements "brings about changes in the extra-linguistic world" by a "'mechanical' and more or less 'automatic' procedure usually associated with magic".[8] I call these verbal elements of such ritual performances 'magic formulas' or 'spells' and examine them here more closely.

My point of departure is the taxonomy of the Greek κατάδεσμοι established by Chris Faraone in his article "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells" (1991) (Table 1, col. II). His approach was in turn based on the studies of Eugen Kagarow, mainly on his monograph *Griechische Fluchtafeln* (1929) (Table 1, col. I). This kind of analysis has never been attempted for the Latin *defixiones*, and I give a brief overview of my results in this paper (Table 1, col. III). Despite

[4] Bonner 1950, 103–122. This corresponds to the term *Angriffszauber* coined by Hopfner 1938, 135. In principle, once I have introduced a concept by means of inverted commas, I drop them thereafter (except in quotations). Self-consciousness in a writer is doubtless a good, but excess rapidly irritates.

[5] Austin 1962, 1; 5. Cf. also Searle's brief summary of this discussion: "that distinction [between constatives and performatives] didn't work, because stating and describing are just as much actions as promising and ordering" (1989, 536).

[6] See Austin 1962, 5–43; Searle 1979a, 17.

[7] Tambiah 1973, 199 = 1985, 60.

[8] Cf. Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 56; Searle 1989, 541; 547f.; Versnel 1991, 61.

their common features, there is one very important difference between Kagarow and Faraone. The former considers spells that use forms of καταδῶ, 'I bind', as describing formulas (Table 1, I.1: T2–T6), i.e. as utterances that "'describe' some state of affairs" and thus merely serve to refer to the extra-linguistic context.[9] Faraone, on the other hand, takes the first step to a pragma-linguistic perspective by introducing the expression 'performative utterance'. This term (also known as 'performative [sentence]' or, more precisely, 'explicit performative') refers to one of the fundamental concepts of Speech Act Theory developed by Austin and, subsequently, built on and extended by his famous disciple John R. Searle, now himself a grand old man.[10]

1. *The Performativity of Ritual Language Use*

What does performative actually mean? The original definition is provided by Austin in his Lectures:

> What are we to call a sentence or an utterance of this type [he refers to utterances such as 'I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*']? I propose to call it a *performative sentence* or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'a performative'… The name is derived, of course, from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action…[11]

Some decades and innumerable treatises later, in their monograph *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (1985), Searle and Vanderveken characterise this 'performative sentence' from a more formal point of view by describing its central linguistic structure, i.e. the 'performative verb':

> These [*performative sentences*] consist of a performative verb used in the first person present tense of the indicative mood… In uttering a performative sentence a speaker performs the illocutionary act [i.e. a statement, question, command or promise]… named by the performative verb by way of representing himself as performing that act. Some

[9] See Kagarow 1929, 29.

[10] For a general overview of this theory see also Levinson 1983, 226–283; Mey 1993, 109–177; Verschueren 1999, 22–25.

[11] Austin 1962, 6.

> examples of performative sentences … are: … "I *promise* that I will come tomorrow" … "I *order* you to report to the commanding officer".[12]

Thus by uttering a performative verb the verbal activity is not only carried out but also explicitly indicated (thus 'explicit performative').[13] Another characteristic is the insertion of the adverb 'hereby', "a useful criterion that the utterance is performative".[14]

As already observed by Faraone, explicit performative utterances are found in many curse-texts in the *defixionum tabellae*. It is worth pointing out that these performatives within a ritual context not only refer explicitly to the action performed, and hence to the circumstances of utterance, but also play an essential role in the performance of the ritual. As mentioned before, the verbal performance of aggressive magic is multidimensional; moreover, spells with a different surface structure can have the same performative content. Differences in the performative value may coincide with differences in the communicative setting: actually, in uttering spells intended to cause the desired effects 'automatically', the *defigens* need not necessarily contact gods, demons or other special addressees. Magic formulas, however, are commonly used to establish a verbal interaction with supernatural powers, usually infernal ones (see below).

2. *The Performative Dimensions of Latin Spells*

What kind of performative dimension does the *defixio* ritual involve? Uttering (or writing down) a magic formula is equivalent to performing an action that can be classified into one of four basic groups.[15] As

---

[12] Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 2–3. Of course, a 'performative sentence' can also have the verb in the second or third person, passive voice, see Austin 1962, 57 ("You are hereby authorised to pay"). For 'illocutionary act' and 'illocution', see also Austin 1962, 98–164, esp. 99 ("the performance of an 'illocutionary' act, i.e. performance of an act *in* saying something"); Searle 1969, 23ff. (with critical remarks). Cf. also Searle's résumé of the "very confusing history" of the notion of 'performatives' (1989, 536f.).

[13] See Searle 1989, 536: "the only performatives are what Austin called 'explicit performatives.' Thus, though every utterance is indeed a *performance*, only a very restricted class are *performatives*".

[14] Austin 1962, 57. See also Searle 1989, 539; 543; 552f.

[15] In this paper I will not take into account the subsidiary formulas, that is, formulas that never occur alone, but only in support of one of the basic formulas discussed above. A typical subsidiary formula is the 'complaint formula' (e.g. *conqueror*), which is part of the legitimation strategy employed by the *defigens*. The complaint formula is usually combined with the request formula. See also Kropp 2008, 160–76.

can be seen in Table 1, the performative categories I propose for the Latin formulas bear more neutral or prototypical labels by comparison with those of Kagarow and Faraone insofar as they refer to more general classes of verbally-realised action. For example, I call the direct binding formula the 'manipulation formula', since the spells of this group are related to the different manipulations of the tablet that take place during the ritual performance. There are Latin examples that correspond exactly to the Greek καταδῶ-type, such as *ligo* or *obligo* (Table 1, III. 1.):

(1) *ligo, obligo linguas illorum*… (*DTAud* 219)[16]

I bind their tongues, I bind them up […].

Moreover, spells in the Latin *defixiones* quite often consist of the performative verb defigo and thus refer to the action of piercing:

(2) *Malchio Niconis: oculos, manus, digitos… defigo*… (*DTAud* 135 = *AE* 1989: 319)

Malchio, son of Nico: his eyes, hands, fingers… I pierce…

As Audollent already noted, Latin lexis seems here to be richer than that of the Greek κατάδεσμοι: "*latino sermone defigere… consueverant, cui verbo par non habent Graeci*".[17] Manipulation formulas also verbalise the actions of writing or submerging the *defixio*: in a tablet from Dax, for example, we find the explicit performative formula *immergo*, 'I submerge':

(3) *Quicumque levavit anulum. Immergo* (*AE* 2000: 925)

Whoever stole my ring. I submerge (him).

The actions to which the manipulation formulas refer are the typical ritual operations performed on the lead tablet (which symbolises the victim), namely the physical and metaphorical acts of piercing, binding, writing down and submerging into bodies of water.[18]

---

[16] Note that the orthography of the formulas has been normalised, and some texts have been reconstructed or modified on the basis of the complete material. In general, unless the text is seriously in doubt, I have not indicated square or round brackets.

[17] *DTAud* p. lvi. This is not quite accurate: the Greek καταπατταλεύω, 'I nail down' does occur twice within a cursing sequence (*DTAud* 49 l. 17f. = Syll. 1261; *Zieb* l. 1); but in each case it seems to be a synonym for καταδῶ.

[18] This manipulation is not always manifest in the archaeological context, but there are a few examples, such as the Republican text from the necropolis outside the Porta

The second significant difference between my approach and the two earlier studies is the creation within their 'binding-formula' group of a new class that I call the committal formula.[19] This modification is related to the distinct semantic values of the performative verbs. Neither Kagarow nor Faraone distinguished this as a special category, although they recognised and described the semantic differences between *verba defigendi* such as καταδῶ on the one hand and παραδίδωμι, 'I consign (to)' *vel sim.,* on the other. Each of these verbs and their semantic equivalents denotes a quite different action: the manipulation (e.g. piercing) of the lead lamella on the one hand, and its committal to supernatural powers on the other. If, furthermore, we take a look at the ritual context, we can see that the committal formula is also connected to another typical operation of the *defixio* ritual: not the metaphorical piercing, binding, etc. of the tablet, but its deposition in a place accessible to the supernatural powers (graves, chthonic sanctuaries etc.).[20] We thus have two different groups of formulas related to two distinct manual operations.

In this context, I would also like to draw attention to the Greek formula καταδῶ τὸν δεῖνα πρὸς τὸν Ἑρμῆν (Table 1, I.1, T5–6). Gudmund Björck regarded this type as a *Kontaminationsprodukt*, the result of contamination. [21] At first sight, it does seems to be a mixture of the manipulation and the committal formulae: the first part, καταδῶ τὸν δεῖνα, refers to the manipulation, the second, the prepositional phrase introduced by πρός, points to the contact established between the *defigens* and the deity. Such contamination might suggest a tension between the *Selbstwirksamkeit des Bindenden*, i.e. the effects directly produced by the *defigens*, and the involvement of deities.[22] Björck himself did not account for the phenomenon, but Faraone gives the following explanation (Table 1, II.1): "The most common elaboration of the direct binding formula is the addition of the name(s) of a deity or deities who appear as witnesses or overseers of the act".[23] However the spells in Latin seem to indicate a different role of the supernatural powers involved, since the corresponding formulas employ

Stabiana, Pompeii (*CIL* I² 2541 + p. 844 = IV 9251 = *ILLRP* 1147 = Solin, *Ostia* no. 39). See Graf 1997, 135ff.; Ogden 1999, 14ff.; 26ff.

[19] I thank Roger Tomlin for the English translation.

[20] See Ogden 1999, 23ff.

[21] Björck 1938, 120.

[22] Björck 1938, 118.

[23] Faraone 1991, 5.

the performative *verba defigendi*, i.e. *deligo* or *defigo*, followed by the dative case (see Table 1, III.2). For example:

(4) *omnes inferis deis deligo* (*DTAud* 199)

I bind all (of them down) to the gods of the underworld.

(5) *tibi, santne Dia* (?), *defigo [Ro?]danum* (*CIL* XIII 11340. I)

I fasten down (= deliver) ?Rodanus to you, holy Diana(?)

These sentences give us an additional piece of information by comparison with the examples in texts 1–3: this morpho-syntactic structure expresses the direction or destination of a movement and thus reflects a dynamic in the semantic value of these verbs. This solution was already suggested by Fritz Graf, who considers the "addition, with the help of a preposition, of a divine name" as an expression that betrays the establishment of a "relationship between the victim and a divinity" and hence translates πρός as 'down to'.[24] Consequently, the *verba defigendi* (*deligo* or *defigo*) no longer denote just the concrete ritual manipulation but also the act of handing over, the prefix *de-* being clearly "associated with the gods of the netherworld".[25] The semantic equivalence is clear in formulas that display the syntactic co-ordination of a *verbum defigendi* and a verb referring e.g. to a special form of vow, the *devotio* (see below):[26]

(6) *devotos, defixos inferis* (*AE* 1999: 954)[27]

Dedicated, fastened down (= delivered) to the gods of the underworld.

Deligo and *defigo* in this syntactic structure do not mean simply 'I bind/I nail' but 'I bind down to/nail down to', and are thus equivalent to 'I hand over/commit/deliver' etc.

The committal formula, which regularly occurs as an explicit performative utterance, can thus be combined with verbs both of manipulation

[24] Graf 1997, 125f. The old reading *dekigo* in Text 5 is an error.

[25] Versnel 1976, 376; see also his paper in this volume, p. 350.

[26] The semantic equivalence of these verbs is also manifest in their literary use. It seems that these verbs assume the abstract meaning of 'curse', i.e. they are no longer related to a special ritual context.

[27] I do not agree with the interpretation of the editors, who equate *devotos, defixos* with the words δίδωμι, παράδιδωμι that appear in the Greek version (side A) (Curbera, Sierra Delage and Velázquez 1999, 282). The use of the perfect indicative (active and passive) recurs within different types of Latin formulas; it would make no sense to understand them all as the transposition of the Greek present tense.

and of giving/bestowing/transferring (in a very general sense) such as *dare, donare, tradere* etc.:

(7) *Dii inferi, vobis commendo… ac trado Tychenem Carisii* (*DTAud* 190)

Gods of the underworld, I commit… and hand over to you Tychene, daughter of Carisius.

As I have already mentioned, the formulas of the committal group may be closer to the wording of official acts of dedication: the performative verb *devoveo* used in (6) also occurs in the formula pronounced by a Roman general prior his self-sacrifice to avert imminent defeat.[28] Other *defixiones* use verbs like *desacrificare*[29] or *dedicare*[30] that are related to the language of official Roman cult:

(8) *Hunc ego apud vestrum numen demando, devoveo, desacrifico* (*DTAud* 129)

This (man) I entrust, vow, sacrifice (down) to your divinity.

(9) *id ded[ico deis…* (CIL I².4, 3129 = *DTAud* 199)

I dedicate it to the gods (?)

If we compare these expressions with e.g. the formulas employed at the public dedication of an altar to Jupiter, we find obvious lexical and syntactic parallels:

(10) *hanc tibi aram, Iuppiter optime maxime, do, dico, dedico*[31]

Jupiter Optimus Maximus, I give, consecrate, dedicate this altar to you.

The same performative verb is used in these last two texts; the predicates are arranged in *tricola* in (8) and (10).[32]

---

[28] For Roman *devotio* see Versnel 1976; the parallels in the formulas used both in the official act and in the private *defixio* are also discussed by Deremetz 1994, 151ff.

[29] I hardly need comment on the interest in this context of the neologism *desacrificare* (see above).

[30] Cf. G. Wissowa, s.v. *dedicatio*, *RE* 4 (1901) 2356–59; idem 1912, 385.

[31] *CIL* III 1933 = *ILJug* 3.2040b = *AE* 1980: 676 = *ILS* 4907 (also *dabo dedicaboque* twice; Salona); XII 4333 = *AE* 1964: 187 = *AE* 1980: 609 = *ILS* 112 (*dabo dedicabo… doque dedicoque uti sies volens propitium*: Narbo). This was the formula of the altar of Diana on the Aventine (Wissowa 1912, 39; 473), and can therefore be fairly safely supplied in *Inscr.It* 4.1, 73 and *AE* 1889: 184; allusions to it in *CIL* XIII 7661 with *AE* 1996: 1177, and *RIB* 2059. *Dico* here is of course the first conj. verb, 'dedicate, make sacred'.

[32] For these structures in curses and on the *defixionum tabellae*, see Speyer 1969, 1199; Pocetti 2002, 31f.; Blänsdorf 2004, 57f.

The next group is Faraone's 'prayer formula', which I call the 'request formula' (Table 1, cols. II.2 and III.3). The change is motivated by several considerations, mainly structural. First of all, the concept of prayer usually implies spoken not written language-use.[33] Moreover, one of the remarkable features, especially of Roman prayer, is a strict formalism, which can be represented in a fixed, usually tripartite, scheme.[34] This *Gebetsformalismus* is not characteristic of *defixiones*, which in general consist merely of the *preces*.[35] Finally, from a pragma-linguistic point of view, the term 'prayer' implies a hierarchical relationship between orant and addressee, with the latter occupying the dominant position. I adopt the more general term 'request' on the basis of Searle's classification of speech acts. He defines it as the "attempt to get H [the hearer] to do A [a future act]".[36] Being neutral in character, the semantics of the term has the advantage of not excluding any kind of communicative setting: the speaker may be in a superior or in an inferior position with regard to the addressee, or the relation may not be asymmetrical at all.

With regard to its formal realisation, the request can be verbalised within different structures. Just as in the manipulation and committal formulas, it appears as performative utterance. This form is regularly expressed with *verba rogandi* (see Table 2, col. III. 3):

(11) *vos rogo, uti recipiatis nomen Luxiae* (*AE* 1993: 1008 = *HEp* 9 [1999] no. 503)

I beg you to take (into your power) the name of Luxia.

[33] "Ancient prayers were spoken aloud or silently or murmured under the breath, depending primarily on the purpose of the speaker" (Hickson 1993, 6). See also Wissowa 1912, 397ff.; Burkert 1977, 126–29 = 1985, 73–75; Rüpke 2001, 9f.; 19f.; 105f. = 2007, 3f.; 13f.; 103f.; Scheid 2003, 97f.

[34] Such formal, even schematic, rules apply to Roman public cult (see Wissowa 1912, 396ff.; Latte 1960, 62; 260ff.; Muth 1988, 307ff.); Greek prayer seems to have been much more variable: cf. Burkert 1977, 128 = 1985, 74 ("variable Grundform"); Pulleyn 1997, 5ff.; 96f.; 133ff. ("minimal combination" of invocation and request); Beard, North and Price 1998, 35f.; Scheer 2001, 34; 38, criticising Ausfeld 1903. A different point of view is put forward by Graf 1991, 188–213, esp. 189ff.

[35] This is probably also due to their written character, since the invocation must have been performed orally. An interesting exception is Mainz no. 2 (see p. 166 above; also Blänsdorf 2004, 57f.).

[36] Searle 1969, 66.

Interestingly enough, verbs expressing commands, such as *iubere* or *imperare*, never occur in relation to the gods.[37] Apart from explicit request-forms, there are partly-explicit or so-called hedged performatives.[38] In general the use of these 'meta-pragmatic' formulations indicates the speaker's (or writer's) awareness of norms and rules of communication and thus can be a mark of politeness or respect. In English or German, these formulations can be rendered by a modal or passive structure which is typical of polite or diplomatic expressions (e.g. "could you please pass me the salt" instead of "pass me the salt"; or "passengers are kindly requested…" instead of "we request our passengers…").

Hedged performatives may form part of a protective strategy employed by a speaker who does not want to expose himself too much *vis-à-vis* a communication-partner regarded as more powerful or somehow dangerous. Interaction between human-beings and supernatural powers, especially infernal ones, invites such strategies—we may recall that prayers to the gods of the underworld were not spoken aloud.[39] The only partly-explicit request on a *defixionum tabella*, though, can be found in a tablet from Uley addressed not to an underworld deity but to the god Mercury:

(12) *Rogaverim… ut ei… sanitatem… non permittas…* (*AE* 1992: 1197)

I would ask…that you (Mercury) do not allow him…health.

Since linguistic choices depend on relationships of dependence and authority, by using a 'hedged performative' the *defigens* articulates his awareness of the status difference between him and the god invoked, insofar as he gives his request a non-peremptory character and, at the same time, qualifies his own position as dependent and inferior. Protective strategies are typical of prayers for justice, where they are not limited to the request and are in fact even more common in the com-

[37] The only exception is the well-known *defixio* from Chagnon, Charente Inférieure (*CIL* XIII 11069f. = *DTAud* 111f. = *ILS* 8752 = *ILAquit. Santones* 104a,b), which uses the verb *denuntio*, a technical term meaning 'to order'. This command, though, is directed not to the gods but to the targets, *Lentinus* and *Tasgillus*.

[38] For the term 'hedges' see Lakoff 1973, 471, defining them as "words whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness—words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy"; cf. Verschueren 1999, 193. For 'meta-pragmatics' see also Mey 1993, 269–85.

[39] See e.g. Sudhaus 1906, 187ff.; Bremmer 1994, 39; Van der Horst 1994, 7ff.; Scheer 2001, 49 cites Burkert 1977, 127 = 1985, 73: "in Ausnahmefällen, im Kult unheimlicher, unterweltlicher Gottheiten, ist das stille Gebet vorgeschrieben".

mittal formula.[40] In such prayers the hedged is expressed by a noun or passive verbal form denoting gift or giving:

(13) *Donatio deis* (*AE* 1986: 483)

Gift for the gods.

(14) *Donatur deo isto decima pars eius pecuniae, quam solverit* (*AE* 1964: 168)

The above-named god is given a tenth part of the money after he (the target) has repaid it.[41]

Besides the explicit performative utterance the formulas of the request group can also be direct speech acts. Such utterances are characterised by a standard correlation between the sentence type (e.g. interrogative clause) and its pragmatic function (e.g. question). In the *defixionum tabellae* the request is then formulated as an imperative, by means of which the *defigens* gives his instructions to the addressees (the deities invoked):

(15) *Interficite eum, occidite, enecate, praefocate Porcellum* (*Ol*)[42]

Kill him, strike down, do away with, throttle Porcellus.

Sometimes the verbs used within the imperative are true *verba defigendi* (see p. 363 above). In this case, they never occur together with the manipulation formula or committal formulas.

(16) *defigite, perfigite, consumite…Maurussum* (*DTAud* 250)

Pierce Marussus, pierce him through and through, consume…him.

The imperative use of *defigere* or *perfigere* indicates that the responsibility for the act of piercing (i.e. the consequences of the ritual action for the victim) is shifted to the divine sphere.[43]

The final possible means of expressing a request is an 'indirect speech act', where "the speaker's utterance meaning and the sentence meaning [i.e. what is said and what is meant] come apart in various

[40] For this term, see Versnel 1987; 1991, and his contribution to this volume. Björck 1938 used the term 'Rachegebet'.

[41] Translation: Turner 1963, 123; Versnel 1991, 104 n. 124.

[42] *enecate* is Audollent's suggestion for the word *enite* read by Olivieri (*praefocate* is written *profucate*). The words are written on a drawing of a bound male figure. Olivieri suggested a late-antique date.

[43] Cf. Faraone 1991, 5.

ways".[44] Typical indirect speech acts are "hints, insinuations, irony, and metaphor".[45] These linguistic strategies are usually employed when what is intended conflicts with social convention or the "ordinary conversational requirements of politeness".[46] In our texts, such speech acts in the request take the form of a wish-clause expressing the negative consequences for the victim:

(17) *Uratur Successa, aduratur* (*DTAud* 227)

May Successa burn, burn away.

(18) *Quintula cum Fortunali sit semel et numquam* (AE 1994: 1072)

May Quintula be together with Fortunalis once and never (again).

Whereas Kagarow and Faraone considered such wishes to form a separate sub-section within the overall structure of curses (Table 1, I.3; II.3), I consider the indirect speech act simply one among several alternative means of formulating the request (Table 1, III.3). We may note that the agent charged with fulfilling the request is not identified in this syntactic structure. There might be several explanations for this lack of specificity. Most obviously, the addressee may already have been mentioned in an invocation formula. Or the god might have been invoked orally and so does not appear in the written text at all. It is also possible that the *defigens*, conscious of the possible consequences of a wrong choice of divine addressee, was simply be unsure to whom he ought to address his request.[47]

Quite often the request is formulated as a comparison or analogy. In this case, the indicative subordinate clause beginning with *quomodo* refers to the ritual situation, while the main clause, with an imperative or equivalent subjunctive form, elucidates the consequences for the victim (Table 1, III.3):

(19) *ut muta sunt ossa quae?] sunt ibi, mutos et metu plenos facias, quorum nomina hic habes* (*DTAud* 220b)[48]

---

[44] See Searle 1979, 30–57 (quotation p. 30). See also Levinson 1983, 163–176; Mey 1993, 142–148; Verschueren 1999, 43f.

[45] Searle 1979, 30.

[46] Searle 1979, 36.

[47] The 'invocation formula' is also a 'subsidiary' formula (see above) and usually occurs in combination with the 'request' formula.

[48] This is Audollent's explication of an incomplete and badly-spelled text.

Just as the bones there are mute, make mute and full of fear whose names you have here.

(20) *Quomodo hoc plumbum non paret et decidit, sic decidat aetas, membra, vita…* (*AE* 1981: 621)

Just as this lead is not visible but sinks down, so may the youth, limbs, life of…sink down.

Such a structure is called 'persuasive analogy' (Table 1, col. II.4).[49] Whereas the aim of empirical analogy is to predict or calculate future facts on the basis of observable similarities, the purpose of 'persuasive analogy' is to model future actions or events in accordance with a stated prototype. In the case of the *defixiones*, it is normally the ritual situation that provides the prototype. The analogy is, thus, a general strategy of reinforcement and not an independent performative act. For this reason I do not include as a separate heading in my taxonomy (Table 1, col. III.3). In fact, as we can see from the following example, the analogy occurs in combination both with the request and with e.g. the manipulation formula:

(21) *Sic quomodo plumbum subsidit, sic Sintonem…defero ad inferos* (*DTAud* 98)

Just as the lead sinks/is sinking, so I drive Sinto down…to the gods of the underworld.[50]

There is only one example of a performative verb denoting the act of cursing. This is a prayer for justice where the formula refers not to the ritual action but to the act of malediction itself (cf. Table, III; col.4):[51]

(22) *Execror qui involaverit…* (*Tab.Sulis* 99)

I curse (the person) who stole…

[49] For this term, see also Tambiah 1973, 212 = 1985, 71f.

[50] K. Zangemeister in *CIL* XIII 7554 comments: "quomodo plumbum subsidet sic Sinto et ceteri subsideant .. at scriptum est: sic Sintonem ceterosque defero ad inferos"; Marichal 1981, 47 offers: "De même que le plombe tombe au fond, que de même Sinto ne puisse agir contre moi". Neither seems to understand the thought.

[51] Cf. e.g. Seneca, *Hippolytus* 566: *detestor omnes, horreo fugio execror*, and the passages cited by *OLD*, sense 1.

Table 1. Comparative table of performative categories in binding-curses according to Kagarow, Faraone and Kropp.

I. Kagarow (1929)	II. Faraone (1991)	III. Kropp
1. Beschreibende Formeln	**1. Direct Binding Formula**	**1. Manipulation Formula**
"Hinweis auf die Handlung des Fluchenden" (p. 29) *verb*: 1st pers. sing. pres. ind.	"first-person singular verb" (p. 5) "a *performative utterance*, that is, a form of incantation by which the defigens hopes to manipulate his victim in an automatic way" (p. 10)	Manual ritual action (piercing, binding, submerging etc.).
T2: καταδῶ τὸν δεῖνα, 'I bind NN' T3: καταδῶ, 'I bind' T4: ὁ δεῖνα καταδῶ τὸν δεῖνα 'I, NN, bind NN'	καταδῶ τὸν δεῖνα, 'I bind NN'	performative utterance *ligo, obligo linguas illorum…* 'I bind their tongues, I bind them up…'
		2. Committal Formula
T5: καταδῶ τὸν δεῖνα πρός, 'I bind NN (down) to' T6: ὁ δεῖνα καταδῶ τὸν δεῖνα πρός, 'I, NN, bind NN (down) to'	"The most common elaboration of the direct binding formula is the addition of the name(s) of a deitiy or deities who appear as witnesses or overseers of the act" (p. 5) παραδίδωμι τὸν δεῖνα, 'I assign NN'	Committing the victim(s) to deity • performative utterance a. manipulation verbs *omnes inferis deis deligo*, 'I bind them all (down) to the gods of the underworld' b. verbs of giving *Dii inferi, vobis commendo…ac trado Tychenem Carisii*, 'Gods of the underworld, I commit…and hand over to you Tychene, the daughter of Carisius.' • 'hedged' performatives (passive forms; nouns), only verbs of giving *Donatio deis*, 'Gift for the Gods'

Table 1 (*cont.*)

I. Kagarow (1929)	II. Faraone (1991)	III. Kropp
2. Prekative Formeln	**2. Prayer Formula**	**3. Request Formula**
"gebetsartige Formeln" (p. 29f.) verb: imperative 2nd pers. (T7) optative 3rd pers. (T8) 1st pers. sing. pres. indic. (T9)	"Gods or daemons are invoked and urged by a second person imperative" (p. 5) "occasionally…third-person passive imperative" (p. 6) "a prayer to underworld deities, who themselves accomplish the binding of the victim" (p. 10)	Instruction(s) given to the deity (pleas; orders/commands), or: instruction without explicit addressee
T7: ὦ δεῖνα κάτεχε, 'O NN, restrain'	ὦ Ἑρμῆ κάτεχε τὸν δεῖνα, 'O Hermes, restrain NN'	• direct speech act: imperative (or subjunctive as imp.) 2nd pers.: *Interficite eum, occidite, enecate, praefocate Porcellum*, 'Kill him, strike down, do away with, choke Porcellus'
T 8: ὦ δεῖνα, ἐπιλάθοιτο, 'O NN, may he forget'	ὦ Ἑρμῆ, ὁ δεῖνα καταδεδέσθω, 'O Hermes, NN must be bound'	(v. indirect speech act)
T9: ὦ δεῖνα ἱκετεύω ὑμᾶς, 'O NN, I beseech you'		• performative utterance only verba orandi (*rogo, oro*) *vos rogo, uti recipiatis nomen Luxiae*, 'I beg you to take (into your power) the name of Luxia' • "hedged" performative *Rogaverim…ut ei…sanitatem non permittas*, 'I would ask…that you do not allow him…health'
3. Wunschformeln	**3. Wish Formula**	
"böser Wunsch ohne Anrufung der Gottheit" (p. 30) verb: optative 3rd pers. (T10) imperative 3rd pers. (T11)	"victim is the subject of a third person optative" (p. 5) "usually employed as the second part of the so-called *similia similibus* formula" (p. 6)	instruction without explicit addressee • indirect speech act: wish concerning the victim(s) subjunctive (3rd pers.)

Table 1 (*cont.*)

I. Kagarow (1929)	**II. Faraone (1991)**	**III. Kropp**
T10: ὁ δεῖνα ἀτελὴς εἴη, 'May NN be unsuccessful' T11: ὁ δεῖνα καταδεθήσεται, 'Let NN be bound'	ὁ δεῖνα ἀτελὴς εἴη, 'May NN be unsuccessful'	*Uratur Successa, aduratur*, 'May Successa burn, totally burn'
4. 'Vergleichungsformeln'	**4. '*similia similibus* formula'**	
"Sie bestehen aus zwei Teilen: der Protasis und der Apodosis, die den Fluch selbst enthält." (31) ὥσπερ—οὕτω, 'just as—so'	"persuasive analogy […], in which the binding is accomplished by a wish that the victim become similar to something to which he or she is manifestly dissimilar" (p. 10)	analogy within **request formula** *quomodo—sic* 'just as—so'
T15: ὡς καταδεῖται…οὕτως καταδήσατε, 'Just as NN is bound…so bind'	"operation of 'empirical analogy' used in scientific inquiry to *predict* future action and 'persuasive analogy' used in ritual to *encourage* future action" (p. 5)	analogy within **request** formula (direct speech act) *ut muta sunt ossa quae?]sunt ibi, mutos et metu plenos facias, quorum nomina hic habes*, 'Just as the bones there are mute,] make mute and full of fear whose names you have here'
T17: ὡς ἀτελὴς κεῖται… οὕτως εἴη…'Just as X lies useless […], so may be […]'	"As this corpse is cold and lifeless, in the same way may NN become cold and lifeless"	analogy within **request** formula (indirect speech act) *Quomodo hoc plumbum non paret et decidit, sic decidat aetas, membra, vita…*, 'Just as this lead is not visible but sinks down, so may the youth, limbs, life of…sink down'
		4. 'curse formula' Verbal action of cursing (1 example!) • performative utterance *Execror involaverit…*, 'I curse (the person) who stole…'

3. *The Class of 'Transformatives'*

As I noted above, words can "change the world" or create a new reality. And at first sight, the explicit performative utterances by which the manipulation or the committal of the victim is accomplished seem to be typical realisation-forms of what Searle called declarations (rather than Austin's 'exercitives').[52] Their pragmatic function is defined by Searle and Vanderveken as follows: "It is a characteristic feature of all declarations that the speaker makes something the case by declaring it to be the case".[53] They hasten to make clear, however, that such ordinary declarations are not to be classified with "declarations performed by witches, wizards, magicians, etc.", even if ordinary 'declarations' are the manifestation of man's "quasi-magical power".[54] In fact throughout their discussion they stress the special character of language-use within non-secular rituals: what they call 'supernatural declarations' are a special case:

> [I]n general declarations require an extralinguistic institution… The only exceptions to these institutional requirements are… that some declarations invoke supernatural rather than merely institutional powers.[55]

In his fundamental taxonomy of speech acts (1979), Searle had already stated how he understood the extra-linguistic changes produced by declarative utterances:

> Declarations bring about some alteration in the status or condition of the object or objects referred to solely in virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed. This feature of declarations distinguishes them from the other categories.[56]

In the case of the committal formula, the successful performance brings about just such a change of status or condition: the victim is deemed to pass from the human into the divine sphere (i.e. become *sacer*), exactly comparable to the results of an official dedication. The change of status is of course physically impalpable, the object so dedicated not being visibly altered. Once the ritual (manipulation + utterance)

---

[52] Cf. Austin 1962, 151: "Exercitives are the exercising of powers, rights or influence".
[53] Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 206.
[54] Searle 1989, 549.
[55] Searle 1979, 18; 1989, 549; 554; Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 205.
[56] Searle 1979, 17.

has been successfully performed, the object has *eo ipso* acquired the 'status or condition' of being *sacer* or, to express the shift in a more linguistic manner: "X counts as Y".[57] On this definition, successfully to perform such a declaration implies that there must be some individual, human or supernatural, for whom "X counts as Y", i.e. someone who will recognise and accept the new "status or condition of the referred to object".[58] On this view, a declaration is an inter-subjective process within a normal situation of verbal communication consisting, at a minimum, of the three elementary factors: addresser, addressee, and message.[59] In the case of the committal spell, a communication is actually established between human being and deity or, as Faraone puts it, responsibility is shifted from the human to the divine sphere.[60]

It is the presence or absence of a communicative setting that constitutes the fundamental difference between the act of committal and the manipulation of the victim. The former (i.e. the curse and, of course, the request as "essentially hearer-directed" speech acts) requires an addressee (usually encoded by the second person). By contrast, the morphosyntactic structure of the manipulation formula implies the radical absence of a communication partner.[61] This observation corresponds to what Maria López Jimeno has pointed out in relation to the earliest Greek κατάδεσμοι: "Las más antiguas carecen por completo de dedicatorias o peticiones a los dioses, lo cual parece apuntar a una incorporación posterior de este elemento religioso a la tradición y rituales mágicos".[62] I would argue that the absence of communication from the manipulation formula is directly linked to the results produced, or intended to be produced, by the *defigens* with his magic spell.

As we all know, the aim of the *defigens* is "to influence, by supernatural means, the actions or the welfare of persons or animals against

---

[57] Searle 1969, 52.

[58] See Searle 1989, 548 who characterises the "recognition of the audience" as "constitutive of bringing about the desired change".

[59] For the basic communication models, see Shannon and Weaver 1949, esp. 31–35; Jakobson 1960, 350–59. For a short overview see also Levinson 1983, 15–18.

[60] Cf. Faraone 1991, 5.

[61] Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 180.

[62] López Jimeno 1991, 211. Also Versnel 1991, 61: "The involvements of the gods or daemons in the action seems to be a result of an evolution that reaches perfection only in the imperial period"; ibid., 94 n. 7: "direct instructions to the gods or daemons date from the period of the Roman Empire. Earlier instructions to the gods are the exceptions, not the rule".

their will", usually in a negative way by causing pain or disease.[63] In addition, as Faraone says, "the *defigens* hopes to manipulate his victim in an automatic way" (Table 1, col. II.1). Both statements underline the fact that, whereas common-or-garden declaratives produce alteration of status and condition (Searle also uses the terms "institutional" or "social facts"), the manipulation formula is believed to bring about the intended negative repercussions "by a 'mechanical' and more or less 'automatic' procedure" (see above).[64] These repercussions are brute, physical facts, namely alterations of body and mind. In other words, this is no longer a matter of "X counts as Y" but of "X *is* Y".

The automatic effects attributed to the manipulation formula are also reflected in the semantics and valence of the performative *verba defigendi*. Verbs like *defigere* or *deligare* (without a prepositional phrase, see p. 363 above) denote concrete manual actions that do not imply any communicative intention. They are in fact two-valence verbs, requiring only the thematic roles of 'agens' and 'patiens'. I thus see the manipulation formula as the transposition of a manually-executed ritual act into language. This is, of course, also true of other rituals, such as baptism. In this context, however, it is very important to appreciate the difference between the character of the two actions: the manipulation of the tablet stands metaphorically for the aggression against the (absent) victim, whereas the relationship between the concrete act of baptising and the significance of the ritual as a whole (i.e. admission to the community of Jesus Christ) is based not on similarity but on convention—in other words, it is symbolic.[65] This is the reason why rituals such as baptism cannot be performed without the appropriate formulas which have in fact lost their semantic transparency and are understood as referring not to a concrete action but to an abstract concept.

These special features of the *verba defigendi* do not contradict their performative role, but rather give us an idea of the special function and scope of language used within a magic ritual. Searle offers the

[63] Jordan 1985, 151.

[64] Searle 1969, 50–53; id. 1995, 41. It is very important to underline again that these kinds of facts can only be created "if there is a successful communication between speaker and hearer" (Searle 1989, 555).

[65] The original meaning of βαπτίζω is 'immerse'.

following account of this sort of "performative occurrences" and the "relation between speech acts and actions generally":[66]

> Any verb at all which names an intentional action could be uttered performatively. The limitations on the class that determine which will succeed and which will fail derive from facts about how the world works, not from the meanings of the verb.[67]

What does all this mean for function and scope of language in magic ritual? Let me summarise the argument so far. The morphosyntactical structure of the manipulation formula does not imply a communicative situation. Since the effects on the victim are believed to show up automatically, neither dedication nor addressee is required, not even a virtual one to receive instructions. Consequently, the utterance loses its message-character just as the linguistic entities lose their function as signs. This is a way of explaining in linguistic terms how it is that language in a magic ritual can transcend its merely symbolic character.

Words themselves are, in fact, believed to act directly upon the target or victim *in absentia*. Personification of the *carmen*—which we should understand as tacit acceptance of a belief in the autonomy of words—is documented by Vergil, *Eclogue* 8. Here it is the refrain, repeated nine times, that organises the description of the magic ritual. The line consists of an imperative directed to the *carmina* to make them bring the target back home: *ducite ab urbe domum, mea carmina, ducite Daphnin*, "fetch him, my charms, fetch Daphis home from town".[68] Since a good omen is given, suggesting success, the *carmina*, having been launched on their way, must be recalled and soothed by means of the same procedure: *parcite… iam parcite carmina*, "leave off…leave off, my charms" (l. 109). That is an ancient example; as is well known, the power of words has been discussed more recently by Tambiah, who summarises the view of the Trobriand islander in terms comparable to Vergil's implicit point of view: "Finally, language as such has an

---

[66] Searle 1989, 535.
[67] Searle 1989, 557.
[68] *Ecl.* 8,68; 72; 76; 79; 84; 90; 94; 100; 104. Cf. Eitrem (1941, 59) who calls this passage "un apostrophe de la chanson magique elle-même". With regard to the importance of the verbal elements of the ritual he points out: "A ce qu'il paraît, le poète a considéré le *canere* comme l'élément le plus important de l'acte magique". Actually, in Theocr., *Id.* 2.17f., it was not the songs, but the "magic wheel" that was used to draw the man home.

independent existence and has the power to influence reality".[69] This assumption regarding the exceptional power of words uttered in the 'manipulation formula' is, I would say, closely comparable to the evil eye, a power any human being may possess to inflict harm directly, without recourse to supernatural forces.[70]

As I have already observed, Speech Act Theory does not take into account language-use within 'religious and supernatural' contexts, but considers them a case apart.[71] This exclusion explains why my manipulation formula cannot be classified in Searle's original taxonomy. This applies not merely to Graeco-Roman magic spells but to all types of utterance not used in everyday communicational interaction, such as Indian mantras. I would like to take up a suggestion by the Indologist F. Rambelli who, as far as the pragma-linguist is concerned, comes to rather similar conclusions to those I have been arguing for here:

> The use of mantras determines precise effects, such as the transformation of the world. Such a transformation is not just incorporeal, but dramatically bodily and material, since it concerns healing, worldly benefits, rebirth… (Rambelli 1993).

With regard to the classification of mantras as speech-acts, he encountered the same heuristic problems, "since speech act theory explains usages of ordinary language which have almost nothing in common with the recitation of mantras" (ibid.). As for classification, he ends up by proposing a new category of speech acts:

> An integral application of speech acts theory to the ritual usage of language in Buddhism must also take into account phenomena not considered by Austin's original theory, i.e. the existence of 'transitive' speech acts whose effects are transferred to another person (ibid.).

This account fits my manipulation formula exactly: the negative effects are believed to work *ex opere operato*. Rambelli's preferred term 'transitive', however, is unsatisfactory in that it focuses solely on the results of the action, thus ignoring one of the main emphases of Speech Act

---

[69] Tambiah 1968, 184 = 1985, 28. In 1990, 80 he quotes Malinowski's belief that there is "a very real basis to human belief in the mystic and binding power of words".

[70] On the evil eye, see Jahn 1855; Kagarow 1929, 1; Tupet 1986, 2606–2610; Dickie 1991; Gordon 1999, 221f.

[71] Cf. Searle 1989, 554.

Theory (as a theory of human action), namely the actor's intentions.[72] In view of this, I propose to adopt another key word introduced by Rambelli, namely transformation ("dramatically bodily and material"). This recalls Searle's concept of "alteration in the status or condition". Accordingly, it would make sense to name my class of speech-acts 'transformative', thus emphasising the speaker's intention, which is to produce directly (or automatically, or without any intermediary) the transformation of the concrete extra-linguistic phenomena specified by the performative verb. Like the manipulation formula itself, such transformatives document man's belief not only in his 'quasi-magical power' but in his truly magical power of procuring alterations in the world through utterance.

Bibliography

I. *References to* defixiones *cited*

Ol = Olivieri, A. 1899. Tavolette plumbee bolognesi di *defixiones*, *Studi Ital. di Filolog. Class*. 7, 193–98, no. 3.
CIL XIII 11340 no. I = Wünsch, R. 1910. Die *Laminae litteratae* des Trierer Amphitheaters, *BJ* 119, 1–12 at 11 no. 31.
SGD I no. 48 = Ziebarth, E. 1934. Neue Verfluchungstafeln aus Attika, Boiotien und Euboia, *SAWB* 33, 1022–50 no. 1a,b.
AE 1964: 168 = Turner, E.G. 1963. A Curse Tablet from Nottinghamshire, *JRS* 53, 122–124.
AE 1981: 621 = Marichal, R. 1981. Une tablette d'exécration de l'oppidum de Montfo (Hérault), *CRAI* 1981 (janvier-mars), 41–52.
AE 1986: 483 = Tomlin, R.S.O. and Hassall, M.W.C. *Britannia* 17 (1986) 428–31 no. 2.
Tab.Sulis = Tomlin, R.S.O. 1988. *Tabellae Sulis: Roman Inscribed Tablets of tin and lead from the Sacred Spring at Bath* = Part 4 (the curse-tablets) of B. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, II: Finds from the Sacred Spring* (Oxford) 59–277.
AE 1992: 1197 = Tomlin, R.S.O. and Hassall, M.W.C., *Britannia* 23 (1992) 310f. no. 5.
AE 1993: 1008 = *HEp* 9 (1999) 166 no. 503 = Corell, J. 1993. Defixionis tabella aus Carmona (Sevilla), *ZPE* 95, 261–68.
AE 1994: 1072 = Corell, J. 1994. Drei *defixionum tabellae* aus Sagunt (Valencia), *ZPE* 101, 280–86, no. 1.
AE 1999: 954 = Curbera, J.B., Sierra Delage, M., and Velázquez, I. 1999. A Bilingual Curse Tablet from Cuenca, *ZPE* 125, 279–83.
AE 2000: 925 = Marco Simón, F. and Velázquez, I. 2000. Una nueva *defixio* aparecida en Dax (Landes), *Aquitania* 17, 261–74.

[72] Cf. Searle 1983; id. 1989, 556: every utterance is the "manifestation . . . of the relevant intention"; id. 1992.

II. *Secondary Literature*

Ausfeld, C. 1903. *De Graecorum praecationibus questiones* (Leipzig).
Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford).
Bax, M. 2003a. Ritual Modes, Ritual Minds. Introduction to Bax 2003b, 159–170.
——. (ed.) 2003b. *Ritual Language Behaviour:* Special Issue of *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 4/2, 2003.
Beard, M., North, J., and Price, S.R.F. 1998. *Religions of Rome, 1: A History* (Cambridge).
Björck, G. 1938. *Der Fluch des Christen Sabinus.* Papyrus Upsaliensis 8 (Uppsala).
Blänsdorf, J. 2004. 'Guter Heiliger Atthis': Eine Fluchtafel aus dem Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtum (Inv.-Nr. 201 B 36), in K. Brodersen and A. Kropp (eds.), *Fluchtafeln. Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt a.M.) 51–58.
Bonner, C. 1950. *Studies in Magical Amulets, chiefly Graeco-Egyptian.* Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series 49 (Ann Arbor).
Bremmer, J.N. 1994. Greek Religion (Oxford).
Burkert, W. 1977. *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*. Die Religionen der Menschheit 15 (Stuttgart). ET as *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* by J. Raffan (Oxford 1985).
Cherubim, D. 1980. Zum Programm einer historischen Sprachpragmatik, in H. Sitta (ed.), *Ansätze zu einer pragmatischen Sprachgeschichte. Kolloquium Zürich 1978* (Tübingen) 3–21.
Derematz, A. 1994. La prière en représentation à Rome. De Mauss à la pragmatique contemporaine, *RHR* 211, 141–165.
Dickie, M.W. 1991. Heliodorus and Plutarch on the Evil Eye, *CPh* 86, 17–29.
Eitrem, S. 1941. La magie comme motif littéraire chez les grecs et les romains, *SO* 21, 39–83.
Faraone, C.A. 1991. The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 3–32.
Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D. (eds.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York and Oxford).
Gordon, R.L. 1999. Imagining Greek and Roman Magic, in Ankarloo/Clark 159–275.
Graf, F. 1991. Prayers in Magical and Religious Ritual, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 188–213.
——. 1997. *Magic in the Ancient World.* Tr. F. Philip (Cambridge MA) (First publ. in French, Paris 1994).
Hickson, F.V. 1993. *Roman Prayer Language: Livy and the Aeneid of Vergil*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 30 (Stuttgart).
Hopfner, Th. 1938. Ein neues θυμοκάτοχον, *Archiv Orientálni* 10, 128–48.
Jahn, O. 1855. Über den Aberglauben des bösen Blicks bei den Alten, *Bericht über die Verhandlungen der königlich sächsichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Philologisch-Historische Klasse* 7, 28–110.
Jakobson, R. 1960. Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics, in T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language* (Cambridge MA) 350–59.
Kagarow, E.G. 1929. *Griechische Fluchtafeln*. Eos Supplement 4 (Lwow and Paris).
Kropp, A. 2008. *Magische Sprachverwendung in vulgärlateinischen Fluchtafeln* (defixiones). ScriptOralia 135 = Reihe A (Altertumswissenschaftliche Reihe) 39 (Tübingen).
Lakoff, G. 1973. Hedges. A Study in Meaning Criteria and the Logic of Fuzzy Concepts, *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 2, 458–508.
Latte, K. 1960. *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Munich).
Levinson, S.C. 1983. *Pragmatics* (Cambridge).

López Jimeno, M del A. 1991. *Las Tabellae defixionis de la Sicilia griega* (Amsterdam).
Mey, J.L. 1993. *Pragmatics. An Introduction* (Oxford and Cambridge MA).
Muth, R. 1988. *Einführung in die griechische und römische Religion* (Darmstadt).
Ogden, D. 1999. Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds, in Ankarloo/Clark 1–90.
Pocetti, P. 2002. Manipolazione della realtà e manipolazione della lingua: alcuni aspetti dei testi magici dell'antichità, in R. Morresi (ed.), *Linguagio—Linguaggi. Invenzione—Scoperta, Atti del Convegno. Macerata-Fermo, 22–23 ottobre 1999* (Rome) 11–59.
Pulleyn, S. 1997. *Prayer in Greek Religion* (Oxford).
Rambelli, F. 1993. Sounds for Thought, *Semiotic Review of Books* 4/2, 1f.
Rüpke, J. 2001. *Die Religion der Römer* (Munich). ET as *Religion of the Romans* by R.L. Gordon (Cambridge 2007).
Scheer, T.S. 2001. Die Götter anrufen. Die Kontaktaufnahme zwischen Mensch und Gottheit in der griechischen Antike, in K. Brodersen (ed.), *Gebet und Fluch, Zeichen und Traum. Aspekte religiöser Kommunikation in der Antike* (Münster) 31–56.
Scheid, J. 2003. An Introduction to Roman Religion. Tr. Janet Lloyd (Edinburgh). Orig. ed. *Les religion des Romains* (Paris 1998).
Searle, J.R. 1969. *Speech Acts* (Cambridge).
—— 1979a. A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts, in Searle 1979c, 1–29.
—— 1979b. Indirect Speech Acts, in: Searle 1979c, 30–57.
—— 1979c. *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge).
—— 1983. *Intentionality* (Cambridge).
—— 1989. How Performatives work, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 12, 535–58.
—— 1992. s.v. Intentionality, *HSK* 7.1 (*Sprachphilosophie*). Berlin / New York 1992, 1336–45.
Searle J.R. and Vanderveken, D. 1985. *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge).
Shannon, C.E. and Weaver, W. 1949. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana IL).
Speyer, W., 1969. s.v. Fluch, *RfAC* 7, 1159–288.
Sudhaus, S. 1906. Lautes und leises Beten, *ARW* 9, 185–200.
Tambiah, S.J. 1968. The Magical Power of Words, *Man* 3, 175–208. Repr. in Tambiah 1985, 17–59.
—— 1973. Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View, in R. Horton and R. Finnegan (eds.), *Modes of Thought* (London) 199–229. Repr. in Tambiah 1985, 60–86.
Tambiah, S.J. 1985. *Culture, Thought and Social Action. An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge MA).
—— 1990. *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality.* L.H. Morgan Lectures 1984 (Cambridge).
Tupet, A.-M. 1986. Rites magiques dans l'Antiquité romaine, *ANRW* II.16.3, 2591–675.
Van der Horst, P.W. 1994. Silent Prayer in Antiquity, *Numen* 41, 1–25.
Verschueren, J. 1999. *Understanding Pragmatics* (London and New York).
Versnel, H.S. 1976. Two Types of Roman *devotio*, *Mnemosyne* 29, 365–410.
—— 1987. Les imprécations et le droit, *RHD* 65, 5–22.
—— 1991. Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 60–106.
Wissowa, G. 1912. *Religion und Kultus der Römer*[2] (Munich).

CHAPTER TEN

INVERSION, ADVERSION AND PERVERSION AS STRATEGIES IN LATIN CURSE-TABLETS

Christopher A. Faraone and Amina Kropp

Four of the curse-tablets from the temple of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz presented earlier in this volume by Jürgen Blänsdorf, and securely dated between 70 and 130 CE,[1] use compound forms of the verb *vertere* in idiosyncratic ways that suggest that their authors were improvising new uses for familiar 'persuasive analogy' formulas. In most cases the change in strategy seems to involve a shift away from the traditional concrete understanding of the trope (to invert or reverse the victim's body, mind or speech) to a more abstract one that takes greater account of the figurative meanings of these compound words, namely personal hostility, bad luck and even death. Alerted to this development by Professor Blänsdorf's publication of the Mainz texts, we began to look for similar cases in the published literature. Of the total of nine we found, six (including the four from Mainz) are located in Germania Superior, the others are widely scattered between central Italy, western Aquitania and the middle Danube. We also found three other analogous texts, equally scattered in space, from Carthage, Poetovio and the Brenner Pass area. This wide distribution of analogous strategies suggests that the phenomenon is independent of hand-books or models and represents the spontaneous adaptation of an image of reversal drawing on stock-phrases such as *mentem* or *animum avertere*, to alienate someone's sympathies but also to drive someone mad or distracted, or *aversus esse a*, to be hostile to, to be strongly opposed to. As so often, areas already worked for tropes and figures in a given culture prove most productive in the creation of new

[1] See pp. 141–89 above. Preliminary discussions of these new materials can be found in Blänsdorf 2005 and M. Witteyer, Curse-tablets and Voodoo Dolls from Mainz. The Archaeological Evidence for Magical Practices in the Sanctuary of Isis and Magna Mater, *MHNH* 5 (2005) 105–124. Note that our translations of the texts we discuss are deliberately literal rather than idiomatic.

ones.[2] We thus have two primary interests in this material: first, what does it imply about how curse-patterns developed in the Latin-speaking West; and second, what does it suggest about the relation between standard locutions, especially figurative usages, and curses formalised or solemnised by means of a ritual performance?

One of the new texts from Mainz curses a man named Ulattius Severus, who is alleged to have defrauded Florus of some goods (Text 1). In apparent response to this crime the wife of Florus inscribed a lead tablet with a 'prayer for justice' and deposited it in the sanctuary of Isis and the Mater Magna. Her prayer includes the following phrase (ll. 5–8):[3]

quemadmod<um>
hoc ego averse scribo, sic illi
(rev.) *omnia, quidquid agit, quidquid*
aginat, omnia illi aversa fiant.

Just as I write this in a hostile way, so may everything, whatever he does, whatever he attempts, everything go awry for him.[4]

The phrase *averse scribo* is unattested in other Latin curse-tablets, and the editor's suggestion that it be translated 'I write this in a hostile way' is well within the range of Latin figurative usage (see n. 31 below). In the traditional language of the curses, however, verbs for writing or inscribing with a strong deictic emphasis (note the use of *ego* and *hoc* here) usually refer concretely to the act of inscribing the tablet. One would expect, therefore, that the phrase *averse scribo* should refer to the manner in which the victim's name is inscribed on the surface of the tablet. In the Greek world, for example, we occasionally find formulas calling attention to the fact that the victim's name or the entire text is inscribed backwards, such as in this IV[a] curse from Athens (*DTAtt* 67): "Just as the words are cold and reversed (ἐπαρίστερα, lit. written right to left), so too may the words of Krates be cold and reversed".[5]

---

[2] For the concept of 'persuasive analogy' (magic = good rhetoric) as opposed to 'sympathy' (magic = bad science), see Faraone 1991, 8.

[3] Inv. no. 1.29 = Blänsdorf no. 7 here (p. 172). In Blänsdorf 2005, 21 n. 26, he translated the first phrase differently as "Just as I write this backwards…." The definitive text will be published as *DTM* 3.

[4] The translation is taken over from Blänsdorf.

[5] Here the words are 'cold' because they are inscribed in lead and 'reversed' from the usual direction of writing (left to right). Another good example is a curse of similar date said to be from Dekeleia in Attica (*SGD I*, no. 40): "Just as these things (i.e. the letters) are backwards so too may things be backwards for her" (ὥσπερ ταῦτα

This kind of analogy, then, sets up a symmetrical relationship between the ritual manipulation of the text and the intended effects on the victim. As in Text 1, the relationship is usually expressed by a *similia-similibus* formula referring to the physical or literal distortion of the text (ὥσπερ or *quomodo*) as a model for the 'distortion' of the victim (οὕτως or *sic*).[6] In our case, however, the name is written in a quite straightforward manner.

Just such a symmetrical relation is found in a rather simple curse-tablet from Cologne, written entirely retrograde (Text 2):[7]

> *Vaeraca (or: Uxeraca), sic res tua<s>*
> *perverse agas, comodo hoc*
> *perverse scriptu<m> est.*
>
> Vaeraca, in this way may you undertake your affairs backwards, just as this this text is written backwards.

The use of the adverb *perverse* with the verb *agere* to refer to the anticipated situation of the victim is parallel to the *aversa fiant* of Text 1, but here, thanks to the fact that the writing is retrograde, the adverb *perverse* must obviously be translated 'backwards'. By analogy, the author intends that the affairs or actions of the victim should likewise be 'reversed' or 'turned the wrong way'.[8]

Another of the new texts from Mainz expresses hostility by means of a different compound of *versum* (Text 3). Written round the rim of the tablet we find:

> *quidquid conabitur, quidquid aget, omnia illi inversum sit.*
>
> whatever she will try, whatever she will do, may all be turned upside-down for her.[9]

ἀνένπαλιν, οὕτ[ω] ἐκείνει <ἀ>νένπαλιν καὶ ἔπη καὶ ἔργα τὰ πάντα γένοιτο); see Faraone 1991, 7–8 for fuller discussion. Different types of text reversal, especially on the Latin tablets from Britain, are discussed by R. Tomlin, *carta picta perscripta:* Anleitung zum Lesen von Fluchtafeln, in Broderson and Kropp 2004, 11–29 at 25–27.

[6] For this semantic explanation of the ritual action, see F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA and London 1997) 209–213.

[7] On the death of Dr. M. Riedel, curator of the Römisch-Germanisches Museum Köln, this tablet was deciphered by J. Blänsdorf, A. Kropp, and M. Scholz. Blänsdorf presents the text, with a brief commentary, in his contribution to this volume (Text no. 3, p. 168).

[8] See e.g. Forcellini 1965, 3: 687, col. 2, s.v. *perverse: prave*. For a similar interpretation, see Blänsdorf on his text no. 3 (p. 169 above).

[9] Inv. 182.16 = Blänsdorf no. 5 here, p. 170. Blänsdorf translates the last phrase "let it all go wrong".

Here there is no analogy, simply a wish. No attempt has been made to distort the text physically. However, since the sentence is inscribed continuously right round the rim of the rectangular tablet, it would indeed be upside-down for the implied reader after the second turn.[10] In the main text we find a similar locution (ll. 5–7): *quidquid surget, omnia interversum surgat*, 'whatever she attempts, may all things be turned aside', where the verb *surgere* (used figuratively) replaces *esse/fieri*, and *interversum* is used instead of *inversum*.[11] The expressions *interversum surgat* and *inversum sit* correspond to *aversa fiant* (Text 1) and *perverse agas* (Text 2), all of them referring to the intended effects of the curse. Consequently, *interversum* and *inversum* can be interpreted as semantic equivalents of *aversa* and *perverse*.

In Text 3, then, we see what we might call an intermediate form. The persuasive analogy is never stated, although one might argue that in an earlier version of the formula the expression was indeed part of a *similia-similibus* formula referring to the reversal of the text. *Inversum* can thus be interpreted literally as 'upside-down', or more figuratively as 'perverted', 'altered' or even 'finished'.[12] Likewise *interversum* has a range of more abstract meanings, such as 'perverted', 'frustrated' or 'squandered'.[13]

These two expressions in Text 3 (*omnia illi inversum sit* and *omnia interversum surgat*) can be further elucidated by what another text, possibly a prayer for justice, against a woman named Tyche or Tychene, the partner or slave of Carisius, from ancient Minturnae in Latium. The precise motivation however is far from clear (Text 4):

3 *quodqu[o]d a[g]at, quod i<n>cida<n>t*
omnia in adversa.

whatever she may do, may all things fall into adversity.[14]

---

[10] For this 'magical' layout cf. also the Latin *defixiones inter agitatores* from ancient Hadrumetum (*DTAud* 275–279; 282–284; *AE* 1907: 68f.). For a recent discussion see Gordon 2005, esp. figs. 4–6 for illustrations of the type.

[11] Blänsdorf translates: 'may her striving in all things be reversed'.

[12] Cf. *TLL* 7. 2/1 col. 164, 53 s.v. *inverto*. The adverb *inverse* (ibid. 166, 27) is actually glossed *perverse*; Forcellini 1965: 2, 925, col. 2, s.v. *inverto: perverto* (when used in combination with e.g. *verba* or *mores*). Forcellini gives the following equivalents, which we have translated into English: 'turn upside-down, reverse, invert, pervert, alter, change'.

[13] See also *TLL* 7.1, col. 2303. 12 s.v. *interverto*.

[14] *DTAud* 190 = *CIL* X 8249. Oddly enough, H. Solin has never discussed it in his *Analecta*. *Quod* here is the neuter sing. relative pronoun that replaced the subjunction *ut* in spoken Latin and survives in the Romance languages as *che* (Ital.) or *que* (Fr. and

The syntactical structure is identical with that of Text 3, but instead of the adjective *in(ter)versum* we find the prepositional phrase *in adversa*, a fixed expression, in which the abstract noun *adversa* serves as a standard term for 'misfortune', 'bad luck'. Since this formula does not here refer to any actual distortion of the text, it nicely illustrates the abstract or figurative sense of both *interversum* and *inversum* that we saw in Text 3.

With regard to the first section of the *similia-similibus* formula, compounds of *versum* may in fact refer to ritual actions other than writing. A well-known second-century CE curse in relation to litigation from between the villages of Chagnon and Villepouge in the Charente Inférieure (*ager Santonum*), for example, combines *aversum* and the verb *surgere* in a similar fashion (Text 5).[15] Here the analogy is expressed and the verb retains its more basic and literal sense as a verb of movement:

…sic il[o]s [in]imicos […] //
aversos ab hac l[i]te esse; quo-
modi hic catellus aversus
est nec surgere potest{i},
sic nec illi;…

…so let those enemies be turned aside from this lawsuit; just as this puppy is turned aside [or perhaps: 'upside-down'] and is unable to get up, so let them (be affected).

In this case, the persuasive analogy is drawn from the fate of a puppy that was evidently killed and then deposited in an expressive position, perhaps twisted face- or upside-down, along with the tablets.[16] Similarly, one of the tablets at Mainz was found next to a poppet made of clay, which had been broken in two and then deposited with the upper part prone and the abdomen and legs supine.[17]

Sp.), cf. J. Herman, *La formation du système roman des conjonctions de subordination* (Berlin 1963) 108–111.

[15] R. Wünsch, Neue Fluchtafeln, *RhM* 55 (1900) 241 no. 9 = *DTAud* 111–12 = *CIL* XIII 11069–70 = *ILS* 8752 = *ILAquit. Santones* 104a,b (cf. *Atlas* 14 E3); also G. Vienne, Les tablettes à écrire au Musée archéologique de Saintes, *Bibliologia* 12 (1993) 213f. The reading adopted here is that of Wünsch, followed by Audollent.

[16] For this ritual and other cases where animals have been twisted and buried with curse-tablets, see Faraone 1999, 66f.

[17] M. Witteyer, Verborgene Wünsche: Befunde antiken Schadenzaubers aus Mogontiacum-Mainz, in Brodersen and Kropp 2004, 41–50.

That *aversum* might also mean 'upside-down' with regard to the actual writing is clear from another of the new curse-tablets from Mainz (Text 6).[18] This is a prayer for justice that contains a series of *similia-similibus* formulas evoking castrated *galli* and the withered pine-trees of the March ritual in the temple (cf. Blänsdorf 2005, 23f.; in this volume, p. 162). It begins rather simply: *Quintum in hac tabula depono aversum*, "I set Quintus down in this tablet *aversum*". No analogy is stated, but in line 7 two words are written upside-down: *Quinti nomen*.[19] The second word, *nomen*, was probably copied by mistake from an original containing the instruction, "Write the name of the victim upside-down".[20] More important for us is the fact that at any rate in this text *aversum* means 'turned upside-down'. The author need not express the analogy formally or fully if the text is properly manipulated.

We find a similar inversion in a Latin text from Favianae in Noricum (Mautern an der Donau) published by Rudolf Egger (Text 7).[21] This very odd inscription, which has been thought to be a love charm,[22] is perhaps another 'prayer for justice'. It is addressed to Pluto and Aeracura, who are equated in the invocation with *Iuppiter infernus* and *Iuno inferna*, the ruling couple of the underworld. The obverse reads:

---

[18] Inv. no. 31. 2 = Blänsdorf no. 18 here (p. 186).

[19] Blänsdorf offers a different interpretation. He translates *aversum* in the first line reflexively ("In this tablet I curse Quintus, *who has turned against himself*") and believes that the name in line 7 was written upside-down unintentionally: the writer started writing on one part of the tablet, gave up and began a new text over the old one on the other side. We think that it is a strange coincidence, however, that both *aversum* and the corresponding distortion appear in the same text, especially in light of the inverted name on our Text 7.

[20] Copying errors are quite frequent in Latin curse-tablets, e.g. the text from Carnuntum cited in n. 23 below. For the case of *carta picta perscripta*, see, e.g., Tomlin 1988, no. 8. An impressive example, albeit not a curse but a phylactery on sheet-silver, is found in a text from Trier where the divinity's name is missing: *bona sancta nomen pia nomen*, good, holy NAME, pious NAME: R. Wünsch, Die Laminae litteratae des Trierer Amphitheaters, *Bonner Jahrbücher* 119 (1910) 1–12, at 11 no. 31 = *CIL* XIII, 11340 no. I = *AE* 1911: 152. Being in Latin, it is of course omitted by Kotansky *GMA*.

[21] *AE* 1950: 112 (= Egger 1948, text on p. 118). Favianae/Mautern (there is some doubt about the form: *Atlas* calls it Faviana, Egger and the recent excavators Favianae) lies directly on the Danube, mid-way between Lauriacum and Vindobona (*Atlas* 12, I4). There had been an auxiliary fort here since late I^{p}, at the date of our text manned by the *coh. I Aelia Brittonum milliaria*.

[22] Egger's main reason for thinking it must have to do with some amorous affair was that it addresses a wife and mentions a husband. But it does not fit into the category of love magic, see Faraone 1999, 51 n. 50.

(a) *Pluton sive{m} Iov-*
em infernum dici opor{no-}
tet Eracura Iuno
inferna acciet<e> ia<m> c<e>lerius
infra scribtum e<t> tradite {i}
Manibus.[23]

Pluto, or perhaps I should say Jupiter of the Underworld, Aeracura, Juno of the Underworld, summon now quickly the one inscribed below and hand him over to the Manes.

The tablet had been buried under the floor of a small apsidal sanctuary that was probably dedicated to these deities whose cult here, to judge from the epigraphic evidence, was of considerable regional significance.[24] It had been used literally to seal a small jar (6.5cm high) made of red clay and containing some burnt material, which had been concealed just to the south of the altar and carefully laid under a pair of stones (Egger 1948, 112 with fig. 25). The cursive script is clear and elegant, and is probably the work of a professional scribe. The name of the victim, *Aurelium Sinnianum Ceserianum*, is written upside-down after this invocation (ll. 6b–7a,b).[25]

---

[23] We give Egger's original reading, not that of *AE*. Egger cites another tablet, found in infill beneath the rebuilt S. gate of the amphitheatre (II) belonging to the *canabae* at Carnuntum in Pannonia Superior (Egger 1926, 83–90), where we find the vocative forms *sa<nc>te Dite pater et Veracura et Cerberauxilie, q<u>i tenes limina inferna sive {sive} superna*, referring to the same underworld deities and their canine assistant (Egger 1926, 136–38; likewise not in *ILLPRON*). Such elaborate invocations are common in prayers for justice, and, as Egger pointed out (1948, 118), in our text the complainant's name, Silvia, is given. On the other hand, there is no reference to a charge levelled at the victim, and the appeal to the deities is peremptory. Egger noted that *Pluton* is a Greek form, and that the adj. *infernus* seems literary (1948, 114f.).

[24] Cf. Egger 1926, 139f., who inclines to H. Gaidoz' old idea (1892) that the name *Aeracura, Aera Cura* [also *Hera* or *Haera*] might be derived from Ἥρα κύρια, which he picked up from G. Wissowa, s.v. Aeracura, *RE* 1 (1893) 667. It is however quite uncertain whether the Histrian divinity spelled Hera or Haera (*CIL* V 8126; 8200) is Aera Cura.

[25] I.e. *C<a>eserianum*. The implication of *Caesarianus* is of course that he was an imperial freedman; Egger was inclined to date the script to III^{p} (p. 114) rather than the Tetrarchy (when the term Caesarianus became official). For the recent excavations of the *vicus*, which have revealed an important pottery industry (which may have been the reason for the presence of an imperial *libertus*), see St. Groh and H. Sedlmayer, Ein Handwerksbezirk im östlichen Lagervicus des Kastells *Favianis*—Mautern an der Donau, *PAR* 50 (2000) 23–29; cf. Jahresbericht, JÖAI 73 (2004) 346. *Sinnianus* is an otherwise unrecorded cognomen (libertine names in *-anus* usually mean 'purchased from…'), and there must be some doubt about the reading.

The verso, which is even briefer and finished off with an elegant curlicue, offers a *similia-similibus* formula of the sort that concerns us:

(b) *Sic Silvia inversu<m> m-*
aritu<m> c{e}ernis quom
{m}odi nomen il<l>ius
scribtum est.

Thus, Silvia, you see your husband upside-down, just as his name is written.

This formula is a little odd, since one would expect some other tense, say the future or the subjunctive, but the meaning is clear enough, thanks to the inverted name overleaf, which is surely the name of Silvia's husband.[26] Here, then, we find evidence for both the analogy and the manipulation of the victim's name. It is also clear, from the parallels with the curse from Mainz against Quintus (Text 6), that *aversum* and *inversum* can both mean 'upside-down'.[27] Egger misunderstood this particular sense of *inversum* and thought the force of the analogy was that, just as the name of the beloved man was 're-turned', so he should 'return' to his wife.[28] That was why he interpreted the text as an 'attraction spell' (ἀγωγή) rather than a curse against Sinnianus, although he did realise that the second command on the obverse (*tradite Manibus*), well known from other curse-tablets, expressed the idea that the victim should be killed.

In Text 7, therefore, the meaning of *inversum* seems to be bifid. The analogy and the inverted name suggest that we translate the word con-

[26] Cf. *TLL* s.v. *maritus*: 1, *de hominibus: a, strictiore sensu i.q. coniunx, vir* (with plenty of Classical evidence).

[27] Here, as in the case of the curse from Aquitania (Text 5), which was apparently buried with a dead puppy, the ritual was probably fairly elaborate, but unfortunately there is virtually no information about what the pot contained. Egger had the residues analysed and concluded that the ashes were the remains of an 'einfach und harmlos' sacrifice: just some bits of charcoal were ancient; some grains of sand, and root fibres that looked like 'human hair', had somehow got in later (1948, 120). In view of the frequent use of poppets in connection with curse-tablets, however, we should not exclude the possibility that these ashes are the remains of a human figurine that had been burnt in the pot, although there is nothing explicit in the text of the curse tablet to support this; cf. D. Ogden, Binding Spells: Curse-tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds, in Ankarloo/Clarke 1999, 1–90.

[28] Egger 1948, 117. This translation is daring, since *invertere* is not attested with the meaning 'return', 'come back' (cf. n. 12). One of Egger's reasons for adopting his hypothesis was that Silvia is explicitly named, which hardly ever occurs in malign curses.

cretely ('upside-down') and understand the aim of the curse as being to 'invert' the man and his affairs, i.e. put them into complete disarray. The injunction on the other side of the tablet, to hand over to the Manes the victim whose name was written upside-down, suggests however a darker and more abstract sense, 'finished' or 'ended'.

Another example from Germania Superior adds to our understanding of the possible double meaning of *inversum* in the text from Faviana. It is a curse from the Schiltachtal in the Schwarzwald, a few km. from Arae Flaviae (Rottweil on the Neckar), aimed at an unknown thief (Text 8).[29] It reads:

> *fib<u>lam Gnatae / qui involavit…/…ut illum / aut illam aversum faci/ ant di sicut hoc est // aversum*,
>
> Whoever carried off Gnata's fibula…may the gods render him or her averted, just as this is averted.[30]

In this translation we have rendered the participle *aversum* neutrally by its English cognate 'averted' in order to allow for a range of possible meanings.[31] Although the author makes no explicit mention of the act of writing in this curse (i.e. *scribo* or *scriptum*), the full ritual is present, albeit expressed in minimal form by the deictic pronoun *hoc*, which alludes to the fact that the entire text is written retrograde from right to left. The final word of the curse (the key participle *aversum*), besides being written backwards like the rest of the text, has undergone a triple reversal in having its last four letters turned upside-down and being written on the reverse of the tablet.

Text 8 shows, therefore, that the participle *aversum*, when it appears in these kinds of magical analogies, means both 'reversed' and

---

[29] A full bibliography of curses against thieves will be found in Faraone, Garnand and Lopez-Ruiz 2005, 161–86.

[30] H.U. Nuber, Eine Zaubertafel aus Schramberg-Waldmössingen, Kreis Rottweil, *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 9 (1984) 377–384. The tablet, which is in the form of a *tabula ansata* and is not folded, was probably suspended from a nail that made the one large hole in its surface. Nuber lists some parallel cases on p. 173, Table I, nos. 4, 6a, and 7; cf. *Tab.Sulis* no. 8 (opisthographic): "it was transfixed with a nail that has left a raised lip on (b)".

[31] See *TLL* 2, col. 1323, 48 s.v. *averto*; Forcellini 1965, 1: 414, col. 3 s.v. *averto*. They list the following meanings (our translation): turn off/away, avert, withdraw, remove. The figurative meaning of *aversus* corresponds to *alienum, iratum, inimicum* (ibid. 415, col. 3) and is often combined with *animus*; see also *TLL* 1324, 44: under *translate ad animum refertur* (e.g. Tacitus, *Hist*. 4.80: *neque averso imperatoris animo* [where however M reads *adverso*]).

'inverted'. Indeed, as the editor noted, it also contains a third, more abstract, connotation, for the phrase *aversum facere* can also be understood as the equivalent of 'to kill' (i.e. 'to avert from life').[32] This figurative interpretation is borne out by the similar use of *aversum* in Text 5, which refers both to the twisted puppy and to the anticipated death of the victim. The death of the victim is a recurrent theme in curses, e.g. *sanguine suo solvat* (Versnel 1991, 84ff.). Since Ulattius Severus' name (Text 1) was not manipulated in any way, one explanation might be that its author misunderstood the instructions in a hand-book or memorised recipe, or simply neglected to write the text retrograde or to invert the name of the victim. There is, however, another possibility: just as in some of the other texts where manipulation of this kind is absent, the author may have understood both halves of the *similia-similibus* formula abstractly or figuratively. The phrase *hoc ego scribo averse* could, therefore, simply mean, as Blänsdorf suggests, 'just as I write this in a hostile way'.

The fourth text from Mainz (Text 9) shows a similar aberration that may also point to an improvised abstract or figurative gloss on the traditional formula. It is a prayer for justice that concerns the theft of a purse containing money and golden rings.[33] It presents the following *similia-similibus* formula, which we read as follows:

…quo]
mod[i] hoc grap{p}hio averso, quod minime, uti solet, sic [eum]
5 *aversum, dii deae{e}que [-2- e]sse sin{e}atis…*

Here, once again, we might expect the words *quo]mod[i] hoc grap{p}hio averso* to refer to some obvious feature of the inscribed text, but there is no sign of the kinds of distortion discussed above. The word *graphium*, moreover, seems at first sight to be a Greek loan word for a stylus, the instrument used to inscribe the text. In Blänsdorf's view the simile refers to the action of erasure (*stilum vertere* in earlier Latin), so we should translate: "Just as (I write?) this with a bad stylus…".[34] The act

[32] The death of the thief is envisaged in a number of other texts, e.g. *DTAud* 129: *uti vos eum interemates interficiates intra annum itusm* (*sic*); Olivieri 1899, no. 3: *interficite eum occidite eni[ca]te profucate.*

[33] Inv. no. 28. 27 = Blänsdorf no. 9 here (p. 175f.).

[34] Blänsdorf translates: "just as (I write this) with a reversed stylus, which is not as it should be, so may you, O gods and goddesses, allow (him) to be reversed". In *graphio averso* he sees an allusion to the writer's hostility, cf. the phrase *averse scribo* in our Text 1.

of erasing a victim's name would surely be a powerful magical action and one worthy of an analogy, but there is a problem: the author of this text apparently did not know the name of the victim (the text begins 'Whoever stole the purse from us…') and hence cannot erase his or her name.

The formula can however be better explained as a lexical innovation. It is quite likely that *graphio* was a verb belonging to the spoken variety of Latin, which eventually developed into the modern Italian verb *graffiare*, 'scratch'.[35] Greek loan words in Latin curse-tablets are not frequent and the cases that do occur are usually of words that survive in the Romance languages. A good parallel is the verb *gyrare*, 'circle around', that appears in some curse-tablets against charioteers (e.g., *DTAud* 272 l. 12: *male gyrent*) and still exists in modern Italian (*girare*). By analogy, the word *graphio* is probably best understood as the first-person singular, present tense of **graphiare*, a synonym for *scribere*.[36] If so, *averso* cannot be an adjective modifying the noun *graphio*, but must rather be an adverb,[37] and we should translate the entire analogy concretely as follows: "Just as I write this backwards (or 'upside-down')…so, too, may you gods and goddesses grant that he be backwards (or 'upside-down')". We then encounter the same problem as in Text 1: neither the text of this tablet nor the name of the victim is reversed or inverted. Again we must assume a figurative rather than a concrete sense for the participle *aversum*, and interpret *averso graphio* figuratively: "Just as I write this with hostile intent…so, too, may you gods and goddesses grant that he be treated with hostile intent (i.e. injured or killed)". The phrase *aversum…esse sinatis* would then correspond to *aversum faciant* in Text 8.

There are three other extant Latin tablets—found at Carthage, Veldidena and Poetovio—that contain compounds of *vertere*. In all three of these texts the verb is used in the context of a wish, but without any persuasive analogy. The verso of the North African tablet (Text 10), a long binding-curse against the *venator* Maurussus, employs an

[35] For the etymology of this verb, see M. Cortelazzo and P. Zolli (eds.), *Il nuovo etimologico. Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana*² (Bologna 2000) s.v. 'graffio'; T. De Mauro and M. Mancini, *Garzanti etimologico* (Milan 2000) s.v. 'graffiare'.

[36] See C. du Fresne, Sieur du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, ed. L. Favre. 10 vols. (Niort 1883–87) [original ed. 1681; Favre's ed. repr. Graz 1954–58 and again 2000] 4, 102 s.v. *graphiare* (= *scribere*).

[37] The final -o of *averso* might actually be an -e (the cursive letter-shapes can be very similar), or a neologism on the analogy of adverbs such as *cito* or *vero*.

innovative form of prefix: *perversus sit, perperversus sit Maurussus*, 'may Maurussus be perverted, totally perverted'.[38] The reduplicated prefix in *perperversus* is obviously emphatic, and (in the absence of any orthographic distortion) we should translate the verbal phrase, as we did *aversus*, either as 'may he be overturned' or 'may he be destroyed'. Comparison with Greek charioteer curses suggests that the concrete meaning may be on the author's mind, for such curses often seek to upset or overturn rival charioteers or their chariots and, like the curse against Maurussus, they do not employ these verbs in a *similia-similibus* formula. A tablet from Hadrumetum in Africa Proconsularis, for example, reads: "(demon) twist upside-down the soul of Hesychius".[39] Late-antique incantations against charioteers found at Rome (Porta S. Sebastiano) and Antioch use the same word: καταστρέψητε, 'turn upside-down!'[40] Similar language is applied to a pantomime in two fourth-century curses from Fiq in the Gaulan (Lake Tiberias): στρέψον καταστρέψον, "turn him, turn him upside-down!" in one, and διαστραίψαται = διαστρέψατε, "turn him completely over!" in the other.[41] It would seem, then, that in the rough-and-tumble world of the hippodrome, and by extension the amphitheatre (and theatre), the notion of inversion was often understood concretely as demanding that your opponent or his chariot be literally upturned during the race or fight.[42] The author of the curse against Maurussus, however, also includes a repeated request that the god take him all the way to Hades (*perducas ad domus tartareas*), suggesting that here too it is impossible

[38] *DTAud* 250 = *AE* 1899, p. 191 no. 105 (inferior reading by R. Cagnat, but with a photo, pl. XVI). Not in *CIL* VIII.

[39] *SGD* I, no. 147: κ]ατάστρεψον αὐτῷ ψυχὲν τοῦ Ἐσυχίου.

[40] The curses from Rome are based on a common template: *DTAud* 161 ll. 36, 115, 122f.; 165 l. 38f.; 166. l. 17f., 32f.; 167 l. 16f.; 187 l. 56f.; cf. καταστραφῆνε, 162 l. 24. A recipe 'For wrecking chariots' in the Great Paris codex instructs the practitioner to inscribe a short incantation on a tin-foil strip: "Turn upside-down (κατάστρεψον) So-and-so and those who are with him" (*PGM* IV 2215).

[41] *DTAud* 15 l. 42 and 16 frag. X, ll. 4f. (bis). The compound verb *katastrephein* is used of the act of turning over agricultural land with a plough and upsetting or upending a cup of wine; see *LSJ* s.v.

[42] At first glance the Greek parallels seem to provide a possible model for the innovative intensification of *perversum, perperversum* and the doubled imperatives elsewhere on the tablet (l. 22: *obligetis perobligetis*), since they seem quite like the verbal intensification (στρέψον, καταστρέψον) we saw in the pantomime curses from Fiq. Such double prefixation is, however, a regular phenomenon of spoken Latin, cf. V. Väänänen, *Introduction au latin vulgaire* (Paris 1981) 95.

to exclude the second figurative meaning of *perversus*. Besides, given that an overturned chariot in a high-speed race usually meant death for the driver, the concrete and abstract meanings are nearly identical in their intent and meaning.

The text from Veldidena (Text 11) is closer to the new curses from the Rhine, both geographically (it was found in Wilten, a suburb of Innsbruck, that is, on the Brenner Pass) and thematically (it is directed against an unknown thief).[43] The relevant portion of the text is addressed by a woman named Secundina to the gods Mercury and Moltinus:

…*ut* //
(reverse:) *persicuatis et eum*
10 *aversum a fortunis <s>u-*
is avertatis et a suis prox-
simis et ab eis quos caris-
simos abeat…

…that you pursue him and alienate him from his possessions, from his closest friends and from those whom he holds dearest…

Here, too, there is no persuasive analogy and, although a similar syntactical structure is found in Text 5 (*aversos ab hac lite esse*), the command seems to fall into another category of curse, those designed to separate people from each other, usually marital or sexual partners (Faraone 2004, 39f.). A lead tablet from Nemea of probably Hellenistic or Roman date, for example, was apparently used in the context of erotic jealousy: "I turn away (ἀποστρέφω) Euboula from (ἀπό) Aineas, from his forehead, face, eyes, mouth, breast, soul, belly, penis, anus, from his entire body".[44] Since our Text 11 includes two finite verbs

[43] *AE* 1961: 181. The text is given from L. Franz, Ein Fluchtäfelchen aus Veldidena, *JÖAI* 44 (1959) 70–76 [not in *ILLPRON*]; cf. Solin, *Ostia* no. 12; Versnel 1991, 83. The *AE* text is quite unreliable.

[44] *SEG* 30: 353 = *SGD* I, no. 57. The original editor, S.G. Miller, dated this text to the late Classical period, but Jordan 2000, 32 has recently described it as 'Hellenistic-Roman'. This is one of only two occurrences in the Peloponnese of the name Euboula listed by *LGPN* 3A (1997) 160, but it is found sporadically in Western and Northern Greece (and Athens). Recipes for erotic binding-spells found in much later magical hand-books show that these spells could also be used to divert the victim *towards* someone else: "turn the heart (στρέψον τὴν καρδίαν) of So-and-so (f.)…towards (πρός) So-and-so (m.)" (*PGrMag* XIc.3f., II–III^{p}) and "turn (ἐπίστρεψον) the soul of So-and-so (f.) towards (πρός) me, So-and-so (m.), in order that she may love me" (*PGrMag* IV 1806–08, IV^{p}). Elsewhere we find the verb κλίνειν ('incline' or 'bend')

(*persicuatis, avertatis*) and no analogy, it too is probably drawn from this different magical tradition of repudiative or separation-spells.

The curse from Poetovio (Text 12) seems to use the participle *aversa* for this same purpose:

(a) *Paulina aversa sit / a viris omnibus / et deficsa sit, ne quid*
(b) *possit mali facere. / Firminam [cl]od[as] ab o/mnibus humanis.*

May Paulina be averted from all men and may she be transfixed, in order that she be unable to do anything of evil. May you shut (?) Firmina away from all mortals.[45]

This curse, apparently directed against two women, Paulina and Firmina, aims at keeping them away from others and thereby preventing them from harming the *defigens*.[46] The subtle variation between *ab viris omnibus* and *ab omnibus humanis* may hint, moreover, at some kind of sexual jealousy in the case of Paulina or even at the possibility that she is a prostitute.[47]

Our findings may conveniently be summarised by means of a table:[48]

No.	Provenance	Locution	Text altered?	Result expected
1.	Mainz	*scribo averse*	no	*omnia aversa fiant*
2.	*Cologne	*perverse scriptum*	retrograde	*perverse agas*
3.	Mainz	none	turns corners	*omnia illi inversum sit*

used in similar contexts. The last-mentioned recipe, for example, uses this verb in the rubric: "It bends (κλίνει) and leads the soul of whomever you wish" (1718f.)' [Preisendanz translates 'macht gefügig'] and prescribes the formula: "I bend (κλίνω) the soul of So-and-so (m.)" (1721).

[45] A. von Premerstein, Ein Fluchtäfelchen mit Liebeszauber aus Poetovio, *JÖAI* 9 (1906) 192–98 = *AE* 1907: 99 (unreliable reading). There is a large nail-hole through the last two letters of the word von Premerstein restored as *[cl]od[as]* = *claudas*; the beginning is destroyed by a fold. From his drawing the O and reversed D seem clear enough.

[46] Even if one discounts the restoration *claudas*, the intention of the spell is clear from the accompanying prepositional phrase *ab omnibus humanis*.

[47] For Roman-era spells in Greek from a well in the Athenian Agora, that aim at reducing the popularity of rival prostitutes, see C.A. Faraone, *Thumos* as a Masculine Ideal and Social Pathology in Ancient Greek Magical Spells, in S. Braund and G. Most (eds.), *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen* = *Yale Classical Studies* 32 (Cambridge 2003) 144–62 at 156–60.

[48] An asterisk indicates a 'standard' *defixio*.

4.	Minturnae	none	no	*incidant omnia in adversa*
5.	Charente Inf.	*hic catellus aversus*	no	*inimicos aversos*
6.	Mainz	*depono aversum*	name inverted	(none stated)
7.	Favianae	*quomodi nomen*	name inverted	*inversum maritum*
8.	Arae Flaviae	*sicut… aversum*	retrograde	*aversum faciant*
9.	Mainz	*hoc graphio averso*	no	*aversum esse sinatis*

The new tablets from Mainz, Cologne and Rottweil have greatly increased our knowledge of the types of curses used in the north-western provinces in imperial times, especially the genre of 'prayers for justice' and the sub-genre of prayers against thieves, and thus give us a renewed opportunity to compare and contrast magical texts from this area with those used in other parts of the empire. We close this study, therefore, with a discussion of the question whether these new texts from the Rhine provide us with evidence for the use of traditional hand-books, as well as for local creativity, a complex situation that has recently been documented, for example, in the curse-tablets found at Hadrumetum (Gordon 2005). Scholars have shown, for example, that in the Latin West (especially in Britain) 'prayers for justice' and prayers against thieves are modelled on earlier curses from the Greek East and suggested that such imitation is best explained by the circulation of magical hand-books.[49]

As in other parts of the ancient world where papyri do not survive, the most telling evidence for the use of such hand-books is mistakes made by the author of a curse or amulet in transferring a traditional formula onto a lead tablet or gemstone, or in copying part of the recipe's 'secondary text' onto the lead tablet.[50] We find some evidence of this type of error in the Mainz tablets. In our Text 6, for example, the author inverted the phrase *Quincti nomen*, where he should have only written *Quintus*. This text, as Blänsdorf points out, was written in classical Latin by an individual with considerable education, capable of using legal terms and the constructions and stylistic devices of Roman

[49] This is especially clear in prayers for justice, where we find close parallels in the legalistic language as well as in the accumulation of epithets in invocations to the goddess or god, cf. Tomlin 1988, 59–63; Versnel, 1991 and in this volume (p. 334); Faraone, Garnand and López-Ruiz, 2005, 161–86.

[50] Cf. the bibliography collected in Faraone 1999, 33 nn. 137–40.

rhetoric. Was he using a magical hand-book in Latin? If he were, it was probably not one that was in general circulation, because, as Blänsdorf notes, the *similia-similibus* formulas involve cult-personnel (the *galli* and the *bellonarii*) or cultic items (the pine-tree of Attis) that are quite specific to the temple of the Mater Magna, and are thus unlikely to have had a wide resonance. The insertion of the word *nomen* does nevertheless suggest a written source of some kind, so perhaps we have to do with a model text that was kept in the sanctuary.

Texts 1 and 2 use a participial compound form of *vertere*, but in general it seems unlikely that Greek hand-books were the ultimate source for this use of the verb *vertere* in the persuasive analogies we have discussed in this paper. Just one surviving Greek curse uses the verb στρέφειν or any verb of turning in a *similia-similibus* formula, namely a third- or fourth-century CE curse inscribed on a small square of papyrus apparently designed to obtain the return of a runaway slave-girl: "As the Hermes-stone(?) of the mill is twisted and as this chit is ground, so too twist the brain and the heart and the mind of Zetous" (ὥσπερ στρέφεται…οὕτω στρέψον τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὴν καρδίαν καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν…).[51] Here, the twisting motions of a hand-mill, as it grinds up the papyrus, are apparently thought to do the same to the victim. But in this case the analogy (ὥσπερ στρέφεται…οὕτω στρέψον) clearly does not refer to an inversion or reversal of the text, but to the mechanical rotation of the mill. We suggest, therefore, that the use in prayers for justice of various compounds of *versum* in *similia-similibus* formulae may be a local German phenomenon. It is true that there are a handful of Greek examples of using retrograde or spiral writing with analogies,[52] but all three come from the Classical period so that it is difficult to make a case for continuity. The Latin texts from Germany, on the other hand, date from the mid-Principate and are generally consistent in form. They also add a variant never found, as far as we can tell, in a Greek curse, namely the victim's name written upside-down.[53]

---

[51] *SupplMag* no. 56. For more detailed discussion, see C.A. Faraone, Hermes without the Marrow: Another Look at a Puzzling Magical Spell, *ZPE* 72 (1988) 279–86, and the further comments of Daniel and Maltomini *ad loc*.

[52] See n. 5 above for two fourth-century Attic examples with retrograde texts, and Faraone 2004, 35, for a discussion of the now disintegrated Selinus disk-*defixio* with spiral writing (*SEG* 4: 37–38 = *SGD* I, no. 99, V[a]).

[53] Instructions from a Late-Antique papyrus hand-book have been thought to refer to a wax poppet placed upside-down in a pot. R. Kotansky translates the passage:

The second important local feature of these curses is a development away from the concrete meaning of these participles to a more abstract one. The analogy-formulas on the German curse-tablets often work simultaneously on two semantic levels, with a compound form of *versum* referring concretely to the ritual manipulation of the text itself, but also figuratively to the desired effects on the victim (bad luck, death etc.). In a few tablets, moreover, this semantic shift seems also to affect the ritual action. Thus it may well be that the woman who wrote *averse scribo* in Text 1 and failed to reverse or invert the letters of his name or the text, understood the phrase figuratively, as referring to her own animosity: "Just as I write this in a hostile manner, so may everything be hostile for him".

Bibliography

Blänsdorf, J. 2005. The Curse-tablets from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz, *MHNH* 5, 11–26.

Brodersen, K. and Kropp, A. (eds.) 2004. *Fluchtafeln. Neue Funde und Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt a.M.).

Egger, R. 1926. Das zweite Amphitheater, in *Der römische Limes in Österreich* 16, cols. 69–158. Cols. 136–56 were repr. under the title: Eine Fluchtafel aus Carnuntum, in idem, *Römische Antike und frühes Christentum*, 1 (Klagenfurt 1962) 81–97.

——. 1948. Liebeszauber, *JÖAI* 37, 112–20. Repr. in idem, *Römische Antike und frühes Christentum*, 2 (Klagenfurt 1963) 24–33.

Faraone, C.A. 1991. The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 3–32.

——. 1999. *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge MA).

——. 2004. Twisting and Turning in the Prayer of the Samothracian Initiates (Aristophanes, *Peace* 276–79), *Museum Helveticum* 61, 30–50.

Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D. (eds.) 1991. *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford).

Faraone, C.A., Garnand, B., and Lopez-Ruiz, C. 2005. Micah's Mother (*Judges* 17:1–4) and a Curse from Carthage (*KAI* 89): Evidence for the Semitic Origin of Greek and Latin Curses against Thieves? *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 64, 161–86.

Forcellini, Aeg. et al. 1965. *Lexicon totius latinitatis*. 4 vols in 6 (Padua). Ed.[4] Padua 1864–1926; photographic reprints (1) Padua 1940; (2) Padua 1965.

Gordon, R.L. 2005. Competence and 'Felicity Conditions' in two Sets of North African Curse-Tablets (*DTAud* nos. 275–85 and 286–98), *MHNH* 5, 39–64.

"Hold the figure upside-down on its head and put it into a new pot in the dark" (*GMPT* CXXIV 22–25, V–VI[P]). Kotansky's note 6 *ad loc.*, however, alerts us to a difficulty in the text, which might mean 'to the south' rather than 'upside-down'. However, the most recent version of the text, *SupplMag* no. 97, reverts to Youtie's original interpretation, which envisages a piece of bone stuck in the poppet's head, and no inversion). At least one of the poppets from the Fountain of Anna Perenna was found placed upside-down (see p. 205 above).

Olivieri, A. 1899. Tavolette plumbee bolognesi di defixiones, *Studi italiani di Filologia classica* 7, 193–98.
Tomlin, R.S.O. 1988. The Curse-tablets, in B. Cunliffe (ed.), *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath*, 2: *The Finds from the Sacred Spring.* OUCA Monograph 16 (Oxford) 59–277.
Versnel, H.S. 1991. Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 60–106.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

EXECRATING THE ROMAN POWER: THREE *DEFIXIONES* FROM EMPORIAE (AMPURIAS)*

Francisco Marco Simón

1. *A Fresh Look at the Texts*

Excavations carried out during August 1944 by Martín Almagro in the necropolis of Ballesta, to the west of Ampurias, unearthed a quadrangular structure that contained eight funerary urns with gifts: glass and ceramic *exaleiptra* or *alabastra*, one or two thin-walled beakers, bronze objects, an iron key, and two coins—an Ampurian *as* and a coin with the word *Indica* on it—dating at the earliest to 25 BCE.[1] Three of the urns were associated with opisthographic lead plaques. I give here a more or less definitive version of the texts inscribed on them, based on recent direct examination of the pieces in the Barcelona Archaeological Museum:[2]

---

* This paper has been written in the context of research project BHA 2002-02584, financed by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture. I am grateful to Richard Gordon for his comments, which have greatly improved the text. Any remaining errors are my responsibility.

[1] Pi Vázquez 2005, 166. Andrew Wilburn (2005, esp. 180–181), misunderstanding what Almagro Basch says (1955, 25), has recently claimed that "the archaeological context of the artifacts demostrates that the tablets and the funerary urns were buried concurrently, most likely with the knowledge of those participating in the funerary ritual (…) For the Ballesta tablets, the discovery of the artifacts within the three funerary urns and as part of a shared burial area impliques that the family members or other close associates who were present at the funeral would have been aware of the inclusion of magical objects within the burials. No indication of discomfort or anxiety is apparent in the archaeological evidence or the texts of the curse tablets, which are, admittedly, very brief". This is quite wrong: the urns and their accessories can be dated to the reign of Augustus, while the three *defixiones* were written—and, of course deposited—much later, in the latter part of the reign of Vespasian (see *infra*).

[2] I thank the Director of the Museum, Dr. Nuria Rafel, for his aid in my study of these texts. My order corresponds to that of *IRC* nos. 172–174, where a tally of the numerous different readings that have been offered since 1944 can be found. Almagro's text was repr. as *AE* 1952: 122, with important remarks by H.-G. Pflaum.

No. 1a:

Lamboglia 1959, no. 3a = Gager, *CT* no. 52.2b = Pi Vázquez 2005, no. 2b = Wilburn 2005 no. 1a. See Plate 21a.

Dimensions: 5.9 × 3.1 × 0.2 cm; approximate letter heights: 0.5–0.4 cm.

Fulvus legatus Au-
gusti, Rufus legatus
Augusti, Maturus
proqu[r]ator Augusti,
<consilium> legati, atvocati In-
dicetanorum.

Fulvus, the legate of the emperor, Rufus, the legate of the emperor, Maturus, the procurator of the emperor, the legate's (consilium) and the defenders of the *Indicetani.*

No. 1b:

Lamboglia 1959, no. 3b = Gager, *CT* no. 52.2 a = Pi Vázquez 2005, no. 2a = Wilburn 2005 no. 1b. See Plate 21b.

Consilium Fulvi,
legati Olossi-
tani, Campanus
Fidentinus Augus-
t[i?---]

The council of the legate Fulvus, the *Olossitani* legates, Campanus Fidentinus, the imperial (?)…

Wilburn 2005, 170 translates *Consilium Fulvi* as "The advocate Fulvus". Enough said.

No. 2a:

Almagro 1952, no. 2b = Lamboglia 1959, no. 1[a] = Gager, *CT* no. 52.1b = Pi Vázquez 2005, no. 1 = Wilburn 2005, no. 2b. See Plate 22a.

Dimensions: 5.7 × 6 × 0.2 cm; approx. letters heights: 0.5–0.4 cm.

Olossita[ni]
Titus Aurelius
Fulvus lega-
tus Augusti,

5 *Rufus leg[atus]*
[Au]gus[ti].

The *Olossitani*, Titus Aurelius Fulvus, legate of the emperor, Rufus, legate of the emperor.

No. 2b:
Almagro 1952, no. 2a = Lamboglia 1959, no. 1b = Gager, *CT* no. 52.1a = Pi Vázquez 2005, no. 1b = Wilburn 2005 no. 2a. See Plate 22b.

Maturus proqura-
tor Augusti, consi-
lium legati
legati : Indiceta-
5 *norum*
Indiceta[n]orum.

Maturus, procurator of the emperor, the legate's council, the legates (representatives) of the *Indicetani*, of the *Indicetani*.

Wilburn misprints Marturus (l. 1).

No. 3a:
Lamboglia 1959, no. 2a = Gager *CT* no. 52.3b = Pi Vázquez 2005, no. 3a = Wilburn 2005 no. 3a. See Plate 23a.

Dimensions: 5.2 × 4.6 × 0.3–0.2 cm; letter heights: 0.5–0.4 cm.

Fulvus legatus
Augusti, Rufus lega-
tus Augusti, Matu-
rus procurator
Augusti, consilium
legati atvoca-
ti Indicetano-
rum [Indicetano?]
rum.

Fulvus, legate of the emperor, Rufus, legate of the emperor, Maturus, procurator of the emperor, the legate's council, the legal representatives of the *Indicetani*.

Wilburn again prints Marturus (l. 3).

No. 3b:
Lamboglia 1959, no. 2b = Gager *CT* no. 52.3a = Pi Vázquez 2005, no. 3b = Wilburn 2005 no. 3b. See Plate 23b.

[O]lossitani,
Sempronius
Campanus Fi-
dentinus, at-
versari
me inique
ne in[---]nt.

May the *Olossitani*, Sempronius Campanus Fidentinus, my adversaries not (…) me wickedly.

In l. 7, the editors of *IRC* (p. 161) conjecture *ne int[er]sint*, 'may…not intervene unjustly'. This is very tempting, but in the current state of the tablet it is impossible to read anything beyond what is transcribed above.

Palaeographically, the three texts are remarkably homogeneous. All are written in rustic capitals, and are to be read from right to left (i.e. retrograde) and bottom to top, although some letters are laid out in the normal way (G, C, Q and D). Little pressure was applied to the stilus, which makes them difficult to read, at least in their present condition. This applies particularly to no. 1, which is practically indecipherable today.

At least three representatives of the Roman administration are mentioned as targets of the Ampurian curse tablets:

1) T. Aurelius Fulvus, the governor of Tarraconensis with the title of *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, and the only person whose *tria nomina* are given. As Hans-Georg Pflaum saw immediately after the publication of the *defixiones*, he is almost certainly to be identified as T. Aurelius Fulvus, cos.II 85 CE (*PIR*^{2} A 1509 = *RE* Aurelius no. 136); much less plausibly, as his homonymous son, the father of Antoninus Pius, cos. 89.[3]

[3] T. Aurelius Fulvus, cos.II 85 was in Armenia in 64 CE as commander of *Legio III Gallica* under Corbulo (*ILS* 232), and with the same legion in Moesia in 69 when, following his victory over the *Roxolani*, Otho awarded him the *ornamenta consularia* (Tacitus, *Hist*. 1.79.5). He seems to have been a strong supporter of Vespasian, enjoying a second cos. and becoming *praef. urbi* (*HA* Pius 1.4); cf. Pflaum 1952, 198; Syme 1953, 155; 1958, 7; Alföldy 1969, 19f. The date of his governorship of Tarraconensis is unknown: Syme suggested a brief tenure in 70 or, more plausibly, between c.75–8

2) Rufus, who is also given the title *legatus Augusti*. Syme, and much later Fabre, Mayer and Rodà, followed by Pi Vázquez, have all argued that in this context, evidently a negotiation with the Roman authorities, the title must denote a *legatus iuridicus*.[4] If so, he may perhaps be identified with Q. Pomponius P.f. Rufus, cos. suff. 95 (PIR² P 749 = *RE* Pomponius no. 68), who is known to have been in Tarraconensis between 74–75 and 78.[5]

The *iuridicus* was an official—a relatively young senator, early in his career—responsible for the oversight of the governor's administration of justice in his province. In view of the probable context of the *defixiones*, which I discuss below, the intervention of such a person would be perfectly intelligible. In his immediate response to Almagro's publication, Pflaum drew attention to an important dedication on the bridge at Aquae Flaviae (Chaves in NE Portugal) by the ten *civitates* of the area, dated 79 CE, which likewise mentions the *legatus Aug. pr.pr.*, the *legatus Aug.* and the *procurator Aug.* (in that order).[6] Since the dedication includes the *leg. VII Gemina*, however, the *legatus Aug.* here is clearly the legionary commander, not a praetorian *iuridicus*. The idea that the *defixiones* list the same officials (not the same persons of course) in the same order as the inscription from Chaves is attractive, since the case was heard by the governor's *consilium*, that is, the senior officials of the province and the governor's friends, with the possible addition of *equites Romani* who happened to be in the province on some sort of official business.[7] The presence of the legionary legate on that body might well have made more of an impression on provincials arguing their case than that of a youthful *iuridicus*.[8]

(1958, 8). The only alternative is his son, Aurelius Fulvus cos. 89 (*PIR*² A 1510 = *RE* s.v. Aurelius no. 135), who seems to have died relatively early.

[4] R. Syme 1958, 7 n. 91 'perhaps the earliest yet known'; Fabre, Mayer and Rodà 1991, 161; Pi Vázquez 2005, 170.

[5] Alföldy 1969, 21; Fabre, Mayer and Rodà 1991, 161f.

[6] *CIL* II 2477 = *ILS* 254; Pflaum 1952, 198.

[7] On the governor's consilium, see J. Crook, *Consilium Principis* (Cambridge 1955); P.R.C. Weaver, *Consilium praesidis: Advising Gorvernors*, in P.M. McKechnie (ed.), *Thinking like a Lawyer: Essays on Legal History and General History for John Crook on his 80th Birthday*. Mnemosyne Supplement 231 (Leyden 2002) 43–62.

[8] Following G. Kantor,'Qui in consilio estis*: The Governor and his Advisers*', unpubl. MPhil. diss., Oxford, n.d. [c.2003], 13f. In that case, a better candidate than Q. Pomponius Rufus would be L. Minicius Rufus, cos.suff. 88, mentioned in a letter by Pliny, *Ep*. 10.72.1, who is known to have been propraetorial legate of Gallia? Lugdunensis between 83 and 88 CE (*PIR*² M 627 = *RE* s.v. Minicius no. 23; cf. Pi Vázquez 2005, 173).

However, I believe that Pflaum was wrong to rely here on the Chaves text: there is no reason to think that the legionary legate, whose winter camp was after all at Legio (Léon), well over 900 km distant as the crow flies, would have been on assize duty so far to the east. It is surely easier to agree with Syme and the editors of *IRC* 3 that Rufus was indeed a *legatus iuridicus*.

3) Maturus, the *procurator Augusti*. With his usual acumen, Pflaum also suggested in 1952 that this man (the name is rare) must be identical to the Marius Maturus who was the praesidial procurator of Alpes Maritimae in 69, where he raised a force of local upland farmers to oppose Otho.[9] If so, we may infer that the decision to appoint him to Tarraconensis was based on appreciation of the administrative experience he had gained while governor of Alpes Maritimae.

On the basis of the grave-goods (especially two coins, one with Caesar's head, the other from the mint at *Indica*), Almagro dated these texts at latest to the early years of Augustus' reign.[10] Lamboglia was still making the same argument in 1959 and 1973,[11] Plana and Pena even as late as the 1990s.[12] It will, however, come as no surprise to find that it was the prosopographers who first realised the correct date. Already in 1952, as I have said, Pflaum identified the governor as the grandfather of Antoninus Pius and the procurator as the Marius Maturus known to have been a senior equestrian official in 69 CE. However, in the context of his wider conclusions about the development of the equestrian career structure, he linked Maturus' appointment to Domitian's restructuring of provincial administration.[13] A year or two later, Ronald Syme, who had already argued that T. Aurelius Fulvus' second consulate must have been in 85 CE (1953, 155), likewise

[9] Pflaum 1952, 198; cf. Tacitus, *Hist*.2.12. Maturus later supported Vitellius, then Vespasian (ibid. 3.42f.).

[10] Almagro 1954, 124. He had previously suggested a date around 25 BCE: M. Almagro, Plomos con inscripción del Museo de Ampurias, *Memorias de los Museos Arqueológicos Provinciales* 8 (1947) 123–126.

[11] Lamboglia 1959; cf. idem, La formazione del municipio de *Emporiae*, *RSL* 39 (1973) 21–35.

[12] R. Plana and M.J. Pena, Ampurias: cuestiones agrarias y jurídicas de finales de la República, *Studia Historica. Historia Antigua* 13–14 (1995–96) 89–104. When the texts were first published, Gómez Moreno, Tabellae defixionum emporitanae, in *Misceláneas. Historia, Arte, Arqueología* (Madrid 1949) 331–335, identified Rufus as L. Nodius Rufus, legate of Tarraconensis in 193 (*CIL* II 4125).

[13] H.-G. Pflaum, s.v. Procurator, 2, *RE* 23 (1957) 1240–79 at 1247; idem 1960–61, 1: 95–98, no. 40bis.

identified him with our Fulvus (see n. 3 above). In ignorance of these prosopographical arguments, Balil, in his analysis of the grave-goods, came to the same conclusion on archaeological grounds (Balil 1967, 201). He argued that the tomb was earlier than the *defixiones*: it was probably to be dated soon after the reign of Tiberius, whereas the texts were Flavian.

There can therefore no longer be any doubt that the texts from Emporiae fall somewhere between 75 and 85 CE. The only question is whether the gap can be narrowed. I think it can. Although Pflaum associated Maturus with the Domitianic reform, he did so in the context of his exaggerated emphasis upon that emperor's role in the process of creating an equestrian career structure. It is now understood that at least twelve equestrian procuratorships existed in imperial provinces already by the end of the Julio-Claudian period, including Hispania Citerior/Tarraconensis.[14] Given that he was already a senior equestrian in 69, Maturus' appointment fits much better in the 70s than after 82. There is in fact no other argument for preferring a date under Domitian. The balance of probabilities thus tilts strongly towards the second half of the reign of Vespasian (c. 75–78 CE).

2. *The Historical Context*

We shall never know the true historical context of these three *defixiones* and the decision to lay a curse on the Roman authorities. But we can make a plausible reconstruction. It seems reasonable to think that the occasion for the provincial governor, the *legatus iuridicus* (if that was Rufus' office), the procurator and the governor's *consilium*, as well as representatives of the towns in question, all to be assembled in one place would be proceedings of some sort concerning the re-organisation of their territories.[15] Such an occasion might explain the writing and concealment of the Ampurian curse tablets. The Latin forms of

[14] Cf. W. Eck, The Growth of Administrative Posts, in *CAH*² 11 (2000) 238–265 at 244.

[15] Although the *ciuitas* was the basic administrative unit of the Empire, and had an autonomous administration, not all cities had the same legal status. The intervention of the Roman authorities usually brought about the gradual 'Romanisation' of settlements. However, these interventions were not systematic—at least up to the time of Septimius Severus—and were normally a response to crisis-situations or express requests from the inhabitants: cf. J.M. Ojeda, Luces y sombras del Estado Burocrático. La administración de las provincias hispanas durante el Alto Imperio: El caso de la

the names of the two *civitates* of the area, *Indicetani* and *Olossitani*, may indicate that the occasion was the new situation arising from the *ius Latii* decreed by Vespasian. The implementation of this decree will have involved altering the legal status of these communities in order to make them *civitates*, and they would therefore have needed representation at the centre in order to defend their interests.[16]

The *Indicetani* and the *Olossitani* were two neighbouring *civitates* (this is the first known occurrence of the latter under this name). Since they were located in the area of Olot, in the interior of the province of Gerona, it seems likely, as Lamboglia suggests, that they should be identified with the Iberian mint that made Ampurian imitation drachmas, *Olosortin*,[17] in the area of La Garrotxa.[18] It has also been suggested that they might be identical to the Castellani.[19]

The majority view has interpreted these texts as implying a conflict between two distinct communities. Lamboglia, for example, thought they were written at the instance of Sempronius Campanus Fidentinus, the spokesman of the *Olossitani* before the Roman authorities, once the latter had come down on the side of their opponents:

> Il fatto che i *Olossitani* appaiano in opposizione agli *Indicetani* e alle maggiori autorità della *Hispania Tarraconensis* viene a gettare un fascio di luce sulla formazione territoriale del municipio di *Emporiae* e sulla particolare posizione degli *Olossitani*, come popolazioni del retroterra che aveva ragioni di malcontento e forse contestazioni di confine contra la città dominante.[20]

Bética, in *Elites y promoción social en la Hispania Romana* (Pamplona 1999) 145–166 at 148. This seems to fit the present case.

[16] Pi Vázquez 2005, 174–175, suggests that the procurator was involved because of the concerns of the Imperial *fiscus*. Given that the context was a hearing by the governor's *consilium*, however, on which the procurator would anyway have sat, this is a superfluous argument, without necessarily being wrong. On the tedium, frustration and delay involved in hearings before governors, see Burton 1975, 99–102.

[17] Lamboglia 1959, 148–152. However, A. Pérez, Las cecas catalanas y la organización territorial romano-republicana, *AEspA* 69 (1996) 37–56 at 46, has questioned this identification; moreover, *olosortin* might be an anthroponym: Mª P. García-Bellido and C. Blázquez, *Diccionario de cecas y pueblos hispánicos* (Madrid 2001) 2: 299f.

[18] J. Padró and J. Sanmartí, L'ocupació del territori per la polis emporitana i la seva significació econòmica. Algunes hipótesis, *Fonaments* 6 (1987) 23–26.

[19] Fabre, Mayer and Rodà 1991, 162. On the *Castellani*, see R. Torrent Orri, *Los castellani y el poblado ibérico y romano de Olot* (Olot 1957), suggesting that they might have belonged to the 'tribe' of the *Ausoceretes*, with ancient toponyms such as *Sabendunum, Bari*, *Egosa* and *Bessedda*.

[20] Lamboglia 1959, 153, 155 and 158, suggests that the *Olossitani* were *contributi*. He read AVC in 1b (3b in his numeration) after the name Campanus Fidentinus,

In fact, almost everyone who has studied these texts: Pflaum, Balil, Solin,[21] Ripoll Perelló[22] and Gager,[23] maintains that what we have here is a legal conflict, for example over boundaries, between the two communities of the *Indicetani* and *Olossitani.* The most widely-accepted scenario is that the *Indicetani*, and the Roman authorities, are being cursed by the *Olossitani*, represented by their advocate, Sempronius Campanus.

There are two reasons for rejecting this scenario of a conflict between two communities, exacerbated by Roman support for one side only.[24] Firstly, the *Olossitani* are cursed along with the Romans in 1b as well

---

rather than *AVGVS|T[I*(?) and expanded it as *auc(tor)*. He concluded that Campanus was the author of the *defixio*, and took Fidentinus as a locative adj., i.e. he came from *Iulia Fidentia* in Baetica (Lamboglia 1959, 153 n. 1). Fidentinus is a rare *cognomen*: I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (Helsinki/Helsingfors 1965) 257 attests only three cases—two of them are *hispani*—in the imperial period: Barcino, *AE* 1966, 210; Aurgi, *CIL* II²5, 36; Ipagrum, *CIL* II²5, 591. OPEL s.v. lists four: three female and one heavily restored (*Fid]enti[nus*).

[21] Pflaum 1960–1, 1: 95–98 no. 40b; Balil 1967, 198; H. Solin, Eine neue Fluchtafel aus Ostia, *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum. Societas Scientiarum Fennica* 42 (1968) no. 3, 1–31 at 26–28.

[22] Ripoll Perelló 1980, 416 argued that the suit was between the inhabitants of the plain, together with the coastal city of Ampurias, and the mountain-dwellers of the upper reaches of the River Fluviá, where the name of the ancient Olositani persists today in the name of the city of Olot.

[23] Gager, *CT* 143, no. 52 translates the texts as follows:

1. (Side A): "Maturus, Augustan Procurator; councillor of the legate, (that is) the councillor of the legate for the Indicetani; (the advocate?) for the Indicetani". (Side B): "The Olossitani; Titus Aurelius Fulvus, Augustan legate; Rufus, Augustan legate".
2. (Side A): "Councillor of M. Fulvus, the Olossitani, Campanus Fidentinus…". Side B): "Fulvus, Augustan legate; Rufus, Augustan legate; Maturus, Augustan procurator; councillor of the legate; advocates of the Indicetani".
3. (Side A): "Sempronius Campanus Fidentinus of the Olossitani…oppose me unfairly…". (Side B): "Fulvus, Augustan legate; Rufus, Augustan legate; Maturus, Augustan procurator; councillor of the legate; advocates of the Indicetani".

He thus completely misunderstood the fact that the case involved not 'councillors' but the *consilium legati*.

[24] My view is shared by Fabre, Mayer and Rodà, 1991, 162. M. Almagro, *Las fuentes escritas referentes a Ampurias* (Barcelona 1951) 59, had earlier pointed out that these inscriptions in fact contained a curse against the Roman authorities as well as the representatives of each of the two communities mentioned: "Reference is made, in an execration, to some "legati Augusti" in the city (of Ampurias) and some "advocati indicetani" and "advocati olossitani", public posts that bear witness to the reform, in those times, of the administration of Ampurias, initiated by Caesar so thoroughly that by the time of Augustus, when Livy was writing, the political-administrative uniformity of Roman citizenship had been implemented for all the inhabitants of the city, Romans, Hispanics and Greeks, and this might explain why the Imperial magistrates mentioned in the inscriptions were hated so much" (my transl.).

as 2a.[25] That disproves the idea that the *defigens* was an *Olossitanus*, or one of their representatives. Secondly, all the individuals and groups mentioned: the Roman officials, the *consilium* of the *legatus*, the *Indicetani*, the *Olossitani*, their representatives (*legati*), and Sempronius Campanus, appear in the nominative as the targets of the curse in one or other of the texts. This implies that the *defigens* belonged to none of these camps or interests.

Fabre, Mayer and Rodà suggested that the context may in fact have been a redistribution of land belonging to the city of Emporiae during the process of defining the territory of new municipalities such as Aquae Calidae. In their view, the author may have been a citizen of Emporiae who owned land situated to the east of the city, which was to be, or had been, transferred to the community of the *Olossitani*.[26] This explanation seems plausible to me: the texts' content and probable chronology fit very well with the new situation arising from the grant of *ius Latii* to the whole of Hispania by Vespasian in 70 CE.[27] This edict would have been followed immediately by a *lex Latii* regulating all aspects of municipal life, including imperial finances and properties. These changes brought about building and public-works programmes in the newly-privileged communities, such as Aquae Calidae (Caldes de Malavella) or perhaps Rhode (Roses), both of which are near Emporiae.[28] This would be the overall historical context in terms of which we might make sense of the information provided by these *defixiones iudiciariae*, leading to future proceedings to be heard in a court consisting of the *consilium* under the presidency of the governor.[29]

---

[25] Fabre, Mayer and Rodà, 1991, 162. They read 1.4 of 1b as *Aug(usti)*, and suggested reading *[pr]o[curator]* in line 5. This involves taking Sempronius Campanus Fidentinus as a second *procurator Augusti*, making him a fourth representative of the Roman government. My examination of the text was able to shed no light on this issue: I could not see the O they claim to have read; all that can now be seen is *Aug(us)|t[i?---]*. The hypothesis that the texts mention two different *procuratores* multiplies the problems unnecessarily and cannot be taken as assured.

[26] Fabre, Mayer and Rodà 1991, 162.

[27] Plin. *NH* 3, 30: *Vniversae Hispaniae Vespasianus Imperator Augustus iactatum procellis rei publicae Latium tribuit*. On the whole issue, see Andreu Pintado 2004.

[28] Andreu Pintado 2004, 146–148; 242.

[29] For the functioning of these tribunals, which attracted a great deal of attention from the areas near the city in which the *conventus* was being held, the actions of the plaintiffs and defendants in the proceedings, the subsequent decisions of the administration, and the documentation that included them, see Ando 2000, 376–382. As in the case featured in the Latin Bronze of *Contrebia Belaisca* (F. Beltrán, in F. Beltrán, J. De

In his study of native revolts in the Roman Empire, Stephen Dyson stressed that they generally occurred during the organisation of conquered territories when—for example, in connection with the implementation of the *census*—towns were pressurised into meeting Roman administrative requirements.[30] Individuals had to declare their place of residence, the number and names of their family members, and the location of their properties in a particular *ciuitas* and *pagus*.[31] With the introduction of the *census* the Hispanics would have had the impression that Rome now had the final say as regards ownership of land since, as various cases showed, the right to deprive both claimants to the land in question was implicit in the right to adjudicate in ownership disputes—as seems to be the case with the *Indicetani* and the *Olossitani*. And while Rome did not as a general rule confiscate land from inhabitants of the provinces, merely reserving the right to value it,[32] she unquestionably imposed permanent changes on the perception of local landscapes throughout the Empire by this means.[33]

Hoz and J. Untermann (eds.), *El tercer bronce de Botorrita (Contrebia Belaisca)* (Zaragoza 1996) 23ff.), the governor and his *consilium* held assizes in many different cities and towns, as attested in Strabo 3. 4. 20, 166C or Suetonius, *Caes.* 7, who describes a tour by Caesar when he was the quaestor of C. Antistius Vetus in Hispania Ulterior, which took him to Gades: *ubi cum mandatu praetoris iure dicundo conventus circumiret Gadisque venisset*. In large provinces, such as Hispania Citerior/Tarraconensis, at least during the second century, the proconsul might send a legate to conduct the assizes instead of coming himself (Burton 1975, 96f.). The route taken by the governor and/or his legates followed a set plan (there were 14 assize-centres in Asia, for example), and it is likely that the functioning of assizes was laid out in the provincial edict or the governor's *mandata*. Egyptian papyri suggest that, there at any rate, the rules governing the *conventus* circulated independently, and one could request a hearing and resolution of one's case before the *conventus* itself, cf. Ando 2000, 375. Burton 1975, 100f. however rightly observes that procedure in Egypt cannot be generalised.

[30] S. Dyson, Native Revolts in the Roman Empire, *Historia* 20 (1971), 239–274; idem, Native Revolt Patterns in the Roman Empire, *ANRW* 2.3 (1975) 138–175.

[31] Ulpian ap. *Digest*. 50, 15, 4, 1; P.A. Brunt, *Roman Imperial Themes* (Oxford 1990) 329–335 and 345–346. On the updating of the census every 14 years from the time of Tiberius onwards, Ando 2000, 354–355.

[32] See C. Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics in the early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor 1991) 149–169; Edmonson 1992/93; C. Moatti, *Archives et partage de la terre dans le monde romain (IIe siècle avant–Ier siècle après J.-C.).* CÉFR 173 (Rome 1993); see also Ando 2000, 353.

[33] For Lusitania, see the analysis of Edmonson 1992/93, 26–30.

3. *Graeco-Roman Curses against Constituted Authority*

The *corpus* of *defixiones iudiciariae* includes 67 Greek and 46 Latin examples, and from what we currently know, tablets of this type were placed—mostly in tombs—during the preliminaries of preparing a lawsuit. The principals were individuals or groups who were getting ready to defend themselves against their opponents, and they would go to a professional, perhaps a known magician, to make out the *defixio*. The practice clearly shows the emotional—or not strictly legal—dimension of lawsuits, which were of course heard in public, in some cases at least before a large audience.[34]

Various written testimonies attest to widespread belief in the effectiveness of curse tablets of this type.[35] I will limit myself to those nearest in time and space to the items discovered in Emporiae. Cicero mentions the case of an advocate for the opposition in a private case who, in the very middle of his speech, experienced a black-out, and automatically blamed his lapse on the spells and curses cast on him by Cicero's client Titinia.[36] Similarly, in the middle of the second century CE, the physician Galen expressed his scorn for those who believed in the power of spells, by quoting their purpose in the following terms: "I shall immobilise my opponents so that they are unable to say anything during the proceedings".[37] And episodes such as that of Libanius, the renowned rhetor from Antioch, and the dried chameleon show that it was not only ordinary people who believed in the effectiveness of spells.[38]

---

[34] Gager, *CT* 119, in relation to the Greek material, questions the separation of legal from political *defixiones*.

[35] On this issue, see P. Kiernan, Did curse tablets work?, in B. Croxford, H. Eckardt, J. Meade and J. Weekes (eds.). *TRAC 2003: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Theoretical Archaeology Conference (Leicester 2003)* (Oxford 2004) 123–134.

[36] Cic., *Brutus* 217: *Qui in iudicio privato vel máximo, cum ego pro Titinia Cottae peroravissem, ille contra me pro Ser. Naevio diceret, subito totam causam oblitus est dique veneficiis et cantionibus Titiniae factum esse dicebat*. The man was Cn. Sicinius, trib. pleb. 76 BC.

[37] Galen, "On the power of all drugs", *Opera omnia*, ed. C.G. Kühn (repr. Hildesheim 1965) XII, p. 251; *cf.* Gager 124, n. 20.

[38] At the beginning of 386, Libanius had a health problem that manifested itself in an attack of gout, dizzy spells, anxiety attacks and phobias, which made it impossible for him to work, and he had a dream—in which two children were sacrificed and the body of one of them was placed in the temple of Zeus—which he interpreted as being a sign that he was the victim of hostility by some magician. The discovery of the dried corpse of a mutilated chameleon in his studio was deemed by him to be incontestable

The Ampurias *defixiones* are exceptional among Latin curse tablets in attacking political representatives or those in power: in virtually all surviving *defixiones iudiciariae*, the *defigens* simply curses his opponents (*adversarii*) and their helpers. But there is a *defixio* found in the Roman cemetery at Praunheim/Frankfurt a.M. that confirms that people believed in the power of curses in the context of judicial proceedings involving the Roman authorities. Markus Scholz seems recently to have resolved the problems with the old reading.[39] The *defigens* requests the gods of the Underworld to strike dumb a certain Marius (?) Fronto, so that, when he is called before the governor (*ut Fronto fiat mutus, cum accesserit (apud) consularem*), he shall be unable to give evidence against Sextus:[40]

Obverse:
Rogo manes / inferi ut [Ma?]/rius Fronto a[dv]ersarius Sext[i] / sit vanus neq/ ue loqui pos/[s]it contra / [S]extum, ut / Fronto fiat / mutus qu/[um] (=cum) access/[e]rit

Reverse:
consular/[e]m, ut sit / mutus ne/que possit / loqui ne/que qui[c]/quam ag[e]/re, tamqu/am nullo / ab inf[e]/ris.

As in the Hispanic *defixiones*, what is not specified in the text is whether the proceedings in question were to take place in *Mogontiacum* (Mainz), the capital of the province, or in *Nida (*Frankfurt/Heddernheim). At any event, the author or instigator of the *defixio* wanted the execration against Fronto to be so powerful that he commissioned or wrote a second tablet—now missing—with identical content, and

---

proof that he was indeed the target of a malign spell: Liban., *Orat.* 1, 243–250. On this episode, see C. Bonner, Witchcraft in the Lecture-room of Libanius, *TAPhA* 63 (1932) 34–44.

[39] The reading of *AE* 1978, 545 = *EDH* HD00460 is: *Rogo Manes [---] / Inferi ut [---]/rius Fronto [adv]/ersarius Sex[ti] / sit vanus neq/ue loqui pos/[s]it contra / [S]extum ut F[r]onto fiat / mutus qu/[um] access/[erit] // [---]ONS ultr(o) / [---]m ut sit / mutus ne/que poss[it] / loqui ne/que qui[c]/quam ag[e]/re TAN[---] / MINVLLO / ad Inf[---] / RE[---].*

[40] I am grateful to Amina Kropp for bringing this *defixio* to my attention and for providing me with M. Scholz's text, which is the one reproduced here: cf. Reuter and Scholz 2004, 49f. no. 74 a/b = eidem, *Alles geritzt: Botschaften aus der Antike* (Munich 2005) 56f. The same text also appears in Fasold's publication on the Praunheim necropolis (see next n.). M. Scholz is working on a longer publication, with a full discussion of the term *consularis* and the issue of whether the hearing was to take place in Mainz or Nida.

the two *laminae* were buried a few metres from each other among soldiers' tombs dating from around 100 CE.[41]

One of the curse tablets found in the joint sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz represents another parallel, in my opinion, for the Hispanic pieces, albeit not so direct as this last case. This is no 8 of those published in this volume by Jürgen Blänsdorf (p. 174). The text is as follows:

Obverse:

Tiberius Claudius adiutor: / in megaro eum rogo te, M<a>/t<e>r Magna, megaro tuo re/cipias. Et Attis Domine, te / precor, ut hu(n)c (h)ostiam accep/tum {h}habiatis, et quit aget agi/nat, sal et aqua illi fiat. Ita tu / facias, Domna, it quid cor eoconora / c(a?)edat.

Reverse:

Deuotum defictum / illum menbra, / medullas, AA (?) / nullum aliud sit, / Attis, Mater Magn<a>.[42]

This unusual *defixio* is directed against a certain Tib. Claudius, whom Mater Magna is asked to receive as a victim in her *megaron*, a term which, as Blänsdorf points out, seems to refer to the pit for chthonic sacrifices. He is described as an *adiutor*, a term which usually refers to somebody acting under the direction of another person. In this context, it is a technical term denoting the assistant of a Roman magistrate, and probably refers to an *adiutor tabulariorum*, the assistant of a *tabularius*, a post more or less directly related to provincial *procuratores* in various inscriptions.[43] The target, Tib. Claudius, would have

---

[41] Reuter and Scholz 2004, 50. Scholz translates *sit vanus* (referring to Marius (?) Fronto) as "lügenhaft sei", i.e. not 'mendacious' (the usual sense of the word) but 'disreputable'. I incline to think it means "let him forget everything he was going to say". The use of the word was presumably prompted by the common idea that magic is 'empty', e.g. Pliny, *HN* 30.14; 17; 19 etc. On the cemetery, see P. Fasold, *Tausendfacher Tod*: *Die Bestattungsplätze des römischen Militärlagers und Civitas-Hauptortes Nida im Norden Frankfurts.* Archäologische Reihe 20 (Frankfurt a.M. 2004).

[42] Blänsdorf translates: "Tiberius Claudius Adiutor—In(to) the temple, I ask you, Mater Magna, in your temple may you receive him. And Attis, Lord, I ask you that you may credit him as a sacrifice to your account, and whatever he does, may it become salt and water for him. Thus may you do, Mistress, what cuts his heart and liver—// Cursed and banned in his mind, marrow, nothing else shall be, Attis, Mater Magn(a)" (the grammar of the reverse is unclear).

[43] For example, *CIL* III 1466, 1468–69, 4020, 4023, 4062, 6075; VIII 4372–73, 7053, 7055, 7076, 10628. In two cases, Augustan freedmen are referred to as *adiutores procuratoris* (*CIL* III 431; VII, 62), which raises doubts as to whether they belonged to the provincial or the Emperor's private administration. See E. de Ruggiero (ed.), *Dizionario Epigrafico* 2.2 (Rome 1961) 79–86 at 85.

been a freedman who obtained his emancipation during the time of Claudius or Nero. But what I would like to underline here is the fact that it refers to a further representative of Roman political power, this time of a lower rank than in the previously-mentioned cases, as the *devotum defictum* in a gruesome sacrificial request to Attis and the Magna Mater.

In the Greek-speaking world, of course, there are one or two instances where political figures feature as victims. The best-known case is Cassander's brother Pleistarchus, Cassander himself and some of his political allies, who are cursed in an Athenian text of the late fourth century BCE.[44] Another, from *Halai*, is apparently directed against two brothers of Callistratus son of Callicrates of the deme Aphidna in the first half of the fourth century.[45] Adolf Wilhelm identified several other names that appear in *DTAtt* as prominent figures in society: trierarchs, judges, administrators and orators.[46] At a lower social level, a *defixio* of imperial date from the Athenian Agora attempts to force a manumission by cursing the slave-owner and his family; and another attempts to prevent a slave-owner from prosecuting a run-away.[47] The well-known judicial *defixiones* from Amathous in Cyprus (II–III^{p}) are also relevant here.[48] An unusual feature of these texts is that they mention the names of both parties in the lawsuits, the *defigens* as well

[44] *SEG* 30: 325.2 = *SGD* I no. 14; López Jimeno 2001, no. 207. An English translation in Gager, *CT* no. 57. Jordan dated this between 313/2 and 307 BCE; C. Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide to Ancient Greece*. Sather Classical Lectures 50 (Berkeley 1985) 77–82, plausibly relates it to Pausanias 1.15.1 (victory of the Athenian cavalry over Pleistarchus in c.304).

[45] *DTAtt* 24 as re-read by Wilhelm 1904, 116f. (tr. Gager, *CT* no. 58). The first person mentioned is Phocion, and Wilhelm duly toyed with the idea that it might be the famous Athenian general. A person named Callistratus appears in two other texts, one from Athens (*DTAud*. 63, name heavily restored) and the other from an unknown provenance (Ziebarth 1934, 1027f. no. 2 = *SGD* I no. 68). On Callistratus and his family, see J. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (Oxford 1971) no. 8157. Other texts from IV^{a} mention attacks against high-ranking individuals: for example, Epichares (W. Peek, *Attische Grabinschriften II: Unedierte Grabinscriften aus Athen und Attike* [Berlin 1958] no. 205, l. 2), probably the treasurer of Athena in *IG* II. 2 1388, 1391, 1392) or various trierarchs from between 340 and 320 (W. Peek, *Kerameikos. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen*, vol. 3 [Berlin 1941] 94, no. 5).

[46] E.g. *DTAtt* nos. 11, 18, 24, 30, 42, 65, 84 with Wilhelm 1904; also López Jimeno 2001, 10.

[47] See *SGD* II 10f. nos. 17 and 19.

[48] *DTAud* nos. 22–37 = Mitford 1971, 246–83 nos. 127–42. More than two hundred fragments, amounting to around one hundred different items, were found at the bottom of a well-shaft. Of these Miss L. MacDonald published the seventeen best-preserved in 1890–1. At that time, they were believed to come from Kourion; it is now

as his opponents (i.e. the victims of the *defixio*). One of them offers, according to the usual reading, a clear parallel to the Emporiae items. A man named Alexandros, also called Makedonios, son of Matidia, directs a curse at Theodoros, the governor (ἡγέμων) of Cyprus, and Timon, the son of Markia, whose case the governor was presumably inclined to favour.[49]

In addition to these examples, I should like to mention an inscription which illustrates the threat that magical activity in the form of *defixiones* might pose to the representatives of authority. This is a text from *Tuder* (Todi) whose interest has recently been underlined by Serrano Delgado (1996).[50] I.O.M. *custos conservator* is thanked for saving the colony, the *ordo decurionum*, and the people of *Tuder* from the malevolence unleashed by a public slave who had attached (*defixa*) the names of the decurions to (presumably funeral) monuments, in other words, tombs:

---

known that the provenance was in fact Ayios Tychonas, the modern village partly covering the site of ancient Amathous (not far away from Kourion in fact).

[49] *DTAud* 25 = Mitford 1971, 253–5 no. 130, tr. Gager, *CT* 136f. no. 46 (adapted): "*Daimones* under the Earth and *daimones* whoever you may be; fathers of fathers and mothers (who are a) match (for men), whether male or female, *daimones* whoever you may be and who lie here, having left grievous life, whether violently slain or foreign or local or unburied, whether you (plural) are borne away from the boundaries of (the) cities or wander somewhere in the air, and you (singular) who lie under here, take over the voice(s) of my opponents, (I) Alexandros, also called Makedonios, to whom Matidia gave birth, namely, Theodoros the governor and Timôn to whom Markia gave birth NÊTHIMAZ…MASÔLABEÔ MAMAXÔMAXÔ ENKOPTÔDIT…ENOUOUMAR AKNEU MELOPHTHÊLAR AKN…ruler of the *daimones* beneath the earth.… And muzzle Theodorôs the governor…of Cyprus, and Timôn, so that they may be unable to do anything against me, Alexandros MAZO…also called Makedonios. But just as you are…wordless and speechless…so also let my opponents be speechless and voiceless. Theodôros the governor and Timôn.…". Mitford comments: "We may conjecture that Alexandros, on finding that the proconsul in his judicial capacity favors Timon, has included the judge in the curse he directs against his adversary" (1971, 225).

[50] *DTAud*. p. cxxi; F. Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion der Sklaven in Griechenland und Rom*, I (Wiesbaden 1981) 184f.; MacMullen 1981, 51; T. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London 1981) 189, who wrongly translates *quod…defixa monumentis ordinis decurionum nomina numine suo eruit…* as "because by the force of his thunderbolt he *destroyed* the names of the members of the Council which had been placed on the tombs of the dead…" (my italics); G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi*² (Baltimore 2006) 128; H.S. Versnel, Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers, in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York and Oxford 1991) 60–104, 63; Gager *CT* 245, no. 135; Ogden 1999, 70.

Pro salute / coloniae et ordinis decurionum / et populi / Tudertis Ioui Opt(imo) Max(imo) / custodi conseruatori / quod is sceleratissimi servi / publici infando latrocinio / defixa monumentis ordinis / decurionum nomina / numine suo eruit ac uindi/cauit et metu periculorum / coloniam ciuesque liberauit / L. Cancrius Clementis lib(ertus) / Primigenius / sexuir et Augustalis et Flauialis / primus omnium his honoribus ab ordine donatus / uotum soluit.[51]

If, as the text seems to suggest, the curse tablet contained the names of the decurions, it would have been a long text, as a *Curia municipalis* usually consisted of 100 members, although we do know of some that had only thirty. But the use of the plural (*monumentis*) seems to imply multiple *defixiones* involving several tombs, probably the mausolea of local aristocratic families. The alarm provoked by this aggression explains the stark vocabulary: the slave who carried out this act of *infandum latrocinium* is called *sceleratissimus*.[52] At any event, the malign attack on the *curiales* is represented as directed against the whole community (*pro salute coloniae et ordinis decurionum et populi Turdetis…metu periculorum coloniam civesque liberavit*), and the dedication to *I.O.M.* is logical, since, as *Custos* and *Conservator* of the city, he had the power to take the most appropriate protective measures against a spirit-attack like this.[53]

The expression *numine suo eruit ac uindicauit et metu periculorum coloniam ciuesque liberauit* suggests the *defixio(nes)* were physically

---

[51] *CIL* XI 4639 = *ILS* 3001, rev. ed. in *AE* 1985, 364. "For Salvation of the colony of Tuder, both of its city council and of its people. To Jupiter Optimus Maximus, guardian, keeper, because he by his own divine power has removed and safeguarded the councillors' names that had been written in a *defixio* (and attached) to tombs through the unutterable crime of a truly wicked public slave and has freed the colony and citizens from fear of perils. L. Cancrius Primigenius, freedman of (L. Cancrius) Clemens, member of the six-priest colleges both of Augustus and of the Flavians, the first person to be awarded this honor by the council, has fulfilled his vow" (adapted from Gager *CT* 245f.). Dessau already understood the *monumenta* to be tombs.

[52] Serrano Delgado 1996, 333f. *Scelus* is a synonym for a profane act and religious transgression which requires expiatory sacrifices. *Campus sceleratus* was the name of the place where Vestal Virgins who had broken their vows of chastity were buried alive, just as *sceleratum limen* denotes the limits of Tartarus in Virgil, *Aen.* 6.563. *Nefandum* sometimes qualifies *scelus* to denote profane acts (Liv. 31.14.8; Mart. 7.14.1), and *latrocinium* can mean criminal acts committed under cover of darkness (Horat., *Ep.* 1.2.32).

[53] The cult of *Iuppiter Custos* was fairly common during the reign of Nero thanks to the god's protection against spells that threatened the emperor, but it flourished during the Flavian period: Domitian dedicated sanctuaries to *Iuppiter Custos* and *Conservator* in gratitude for the god's protection during the civil war (Tac., *Hist.* 3.74); many coins of this reign refer to Jupiter under these two aspects; see Fears 1981, 76–79.

dug up in order to nullify their malign intention and defend the community.[54] The dedicator, L. Cancrius Primigenius, was a *sevir Augustalis* and *Flavialis* and so must have enjoyed good contacts within the *ordo decurionum* that had appointed him.[55] Context and the Flavian chronology of the text from *Tuder* thus fit neatly with our three *defixiones* from Emporiae: like them, it shows that malign attacks might well be expected in the context of problems affecting the public sphere.

4. *Comparative Evidence*

In 20 CE Germanicus died in Antioch under mysterious circumstances. Tacitus tells us that he thought that his illness was due to some "poison" given to him by Piso, the governor of the province of Syria. Examination of the floor and walls of the house he was living in revealed "human remains", *defixiones* with the name of the prince, ashes with traces of blood and other items connected with magic.[56]

---

[54] Gager *CT*, 245 half-suggested an alternative interpretation, which has been developed in more detail by D. Jordan (in personal correspondence, for which I should like to express my gratitude). Jordan argues the term *defixa* should be taken not in a technical sense (i.e. preparing a curse tablet), but in a general sense, i.e. list(s) attached to public monuments (i.e. not specifically tombs). The slave's act would then have been a public one, not a magical or private one. He thinks there is no reason why a *servus publicus* might not have posted up (*defigere*) a list of wanted suspects, for example. According to this scenario, the *sevir* L. Cancrius Primigenius, on learning of this proclamation, asked Jupiter to save the city the bother of looking for the men. The god, a god of rain and storms, obligingly sent a storm to wipe out the names and thus "rehabilitate" them (perhaps because they had been subjected to some magic procedure). Apart from its inherent implausibility, this suggestion poses problems of a contextual and textual nature. Firstly, the text says that the names were the names of decurions (*ordinis decurionum nomina*): how could *curiales* be outlawed in a public act by a slave? Moreover, the verb *eruo*, which comes before the rehabilitation (*uindicare*), means to dig up (out of the earth, vel sim.). This implies that the word *defigere* cannot mean 'post up' but must be being used in its technical sense: we must assume that the *defixio(nes)* had been placed e.g. under the threshold, or under the floor, of the tombs. Only by digging them up could the decurions be 'saved' or 'rehabilitated'. The strong language is surely a response to the collective fears aroused by the malign, secret nature of the attack by the *servus publicus*, not a dispute over whether Jupiter ought to have been asked to deal with the 'outlaws'.

[55] *Sevir et augustalis et Flavialis primus omnium his honoribus ab ordine donatus.* On the Augustales, see R. Duthoy, Les Augustales, *ANRW* II.16.2 (1978) 1254–1309 and J.M. Serrano Delgado, L'Augustalité et l'organisation des municipes sous le Haut Empire Romaine: quelques remarques, *RHD* LXVI (1988) 231–240. On Domitian's reform of the *Sodales Flaviales* in favour of Jupiter, see Fears 1981, 78 n. 384a.

[56] *Saeuam uim morbi augebat persuasio ueneni a Pisone accepti; et reperiebantur solo ac parietibus erutae humanorum corporum reliquiae, carmina et deuotiones et nomen*

Piso was accused on his return to Rome and committed suicide, aware of his imminent condemnation due to the seriousness of the charges, but not before he had written to Tiberius proclaiming his innocence and asking him to spare the lives of his children, a request which was granted.[57]

The Germanicus episode is the best-known literary account of the use of malign magic against authority or its representatives in the Roman world. Naturally, this type of initiative was equally known in later periods, and to conclude this paper and put the *defixiones* of Emporiae into a still larger context, I should like to mention here some examples of *maleficium* directed specifically against senior representatives of authority by means of what African anthropologists term sorcery.[58]

There are many examples of *maleficia* directed against persons of high-status already in the Ancient Near East. Such danger is pre-supposed by a Hittite text addressed to the goddess Ishtar of Nineveh, documenting a ritual of counter-magic whose aim was to free the royal family from malign magical attack.[59] In the "harem conspiracy"

Germanici plumbeis tabulis insculptum, semusti cineres ac tabo obliti aliaque malefica, quis creditur animas numinibus infernis sacrari (Tac., *Ann.* 2.69.5). On this episode, see A.M. Tupet, Les pratiques magiques à la mort de Germanicus, in *Mélanges Pierre Wuilleumier (*Paris 1980) 345–352, comparing the poisoning theory as against earlier interpretations such as that of F. D'Erce, La mort de Germanicus et les poisons de Caligula, *Janus* 56 (1969) 123–148.

[57] Tac., *Ann.* 3.9–18. See also A. Caballos, W. Eck and F. Fernández, *El senadoconsulto de Gneo Pisóne padre* (Seville 1996)/ W. Eck, A. Caballos and F. Fernández, *Das Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*. Vestigia 48 (Munich 1996). The fact that the *SC de Gn. Pisone patre* makes no mention of the rumours about *defixiones* etc. confirms Tacitus' claim that Piso was able to prove his innocence on this point (Tac., *Ann.* 3.14.2); they were apparently not among the charges that were laid officially against him. This official silence however is itself evidence for the plausibility such rumours enjoyed not merely at a popular level but also, as Dickie suggests elsewhere in this volume, among the élite (p. 98f.).

[58] On the distinction between 'witchcraft' (an innate quality of evil deriving from a physiological peculiarity) and 'sorcery' (the deliberate use of malevolent magic using spells or special techniques), deriving from Evans-Pritchard's study of the Azande, see e.g. Thomas 1972, 551–554, with the corresponding references. It is however a distinction devised by anthropologists for the African situation, and has only limited use elsewhere. In Europe, for example, there is no meaningful notion of 'involuntary' harm, except in the special case of the evil eye.

[59] "Si quelqu'un a fait quelque chose [de mal] envers le roi, la reine et les enfants royaux et qu'il les a placés *dans* la terre, alors, vois! Moi, je les prends *de* la terre; en outre il prononce le[s] mots de cette façon; alors on fait ainsi dans cet endroit" (Kbo II 9 Vo IV 13–16); see M.-C. Trémouille, Les rituels magiques hittites: Aspects formels et techniques, in Moreau-Turpin 1: 77–94 at 90.

against the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses III (ca. 1182–1151 BCE), one of the conspirators, a priest, used a ritual scroll to lay a curse on the king.[60] In the Demotic tale of Si-Osire, the Nubian chieftains attack the Pharaoh Menkh-Pre-Siamun by means of sorcery, transport him from Egypt to Nubia, thrash him in public with 500 blows, and send him back, all within six hours.[61] But the closest parallel in Egypt to the *defixiones* of Emporiae is a find in the temple of Kalabsha near Meroe in Nubia, rebuilt by Augustus over a late-Ptolemaic temple: a human cranium was found behind a temple-mural depicting bound prisoners (the usual form of aggressive magic in Egypt), while a bronze head taken from a statue of Augustus was found buried under the threshold of the temple.[62] I think this parallel is very important for understanding the Emporiae documents, directed as it is against the Roman presence (among other enemies) in Meroe and even includes a decapitated image of the enemy ruler, Augustus.[63]

---

[60] One of Ramses' wives, Queen Tiye, with the compliance of stewards, inspectors, a priest, a magician and others, plotted unsuccessfully to murder the king and place her son upon the throne. The partially-preserved trial records document the indictment of twenty-eight men and an unknown number of women, and the execution of all but five (four of whom were mutilated), because they had made use of written magical spells, inscribed wax figurines, and potions to exorcise, disturb and enchant. Interestingly, the source of this magical information was the king's own library (Ritner 1993, 192f.; Koenig 1994, 165f.). Other examples of harem conspiracies are that against Amenemhat I (=Amenemhet, XII Dyn.: 1992–62 BCE) (Ritner 1993, 199–201), and probably the Berlin red pots, which date from later in the same dynasty, and seem to contain curses against royal ladies and their retainers, evidently involved in a similar conspiracy (J.C. Wilson, The Execration of Asiatic Princes, in J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near-Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament* [Princeton 1969] 328f.).

[61] M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, 3: The Late Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980) 146f., cf. R.K. Ritner, Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire: the Demotic Spells and their Religious Context, *ANRW* II 18.5 (Berlin and New York 1995) 3333–3379 at 3354.

[62] The temple is dedicated to Mandulis, the Meroitic equivalent of Horus. It was moved to its present location in 1970 on acount of the rising waters of Lake Nasser. On the find see P.L. Shinnie and R.J. Bradley, The Murals from the Augustus Temple, Meroe, in W.K. Simpson and W.M. Davis (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Sudan* (Boston 1981) 167–72; cf. Ritner 1993, 171 (very summary). The Roman presence here did not last long: by the late 20s BCE they had withdrawn to Hiera Sykaminos, 80 km south of the First Cataract: A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs* (London 1986) 40f. On the bound-prisoner trope, see Koenig 1994, 131–85; M. Étienne, *Heka* (Paris 2000) 18–21 with cat. nos. 5, 6, 10, 12 and p. 76f. fig. 3. A cranium was also found at the famous Meroitic Megissa site, ibid. 45 fig. 13.

[63] The date of the deposit could not however be established very precisely. Once the Romans had left, their symbols of power must rapidly have lost aura.

Turning to medieval and early-modern Europe, we can find numerous cases of *maleficia* in the history of the Merovingian dynasty,[64] and of Capetian and Angevin France.[65] Indeed, such accusations, typically levelled against powerful subjects and factions, were a useful political stand-by.[66] Elizabethan England too provides very interesting examples of malevolent magic against the highest political figures. For example, shortly before the death of Queen Elizabeth I of England, two of her ladies-in-waiting found a playing card (the Queen of Hearts) with an iron nail knocked through the forehead.[67] At the North Berwick trial in Scotland in 1590, it was claimed that Danish witches had attempted to drown King James and Queen Ann of Denmark on their sea-passage from Denmark.[68] Sir Francis Bothwell was accused in May 1591

---

[64] Gregory of Tours (*Hist. Franconum*, V. xxxix; VI. xxxv) relates that in 580, Queen Fredegunda lost two of her younger children in an epidemic and was convinced that they had died victims of magic practices, a cause to which she was to attribute the death of another child three years later. See Cohn 1987, 194–195.

[65] In 834, after the capture of Chalôn, Lothair I, the son of Louis I of France, drowned a nun, Gerberga, in the Saône "as is usually done with sorceresses", because of a spell she had allegedly cast on him (Cohn 1975, 150). Gerberga was the sister of Bernardo, count of Barcelona. In 1028 William II, count of Angoulême, was struck down with a mystery wasting illness, which was attributed to sorcery; a woman was accused and horribly tortured but refused to confess; three other women then did confess, which led to the discovery of clay dolls buried in the earth (ibid. 154). In 1308 Guichard, bishop of Troyes, was accused, at the instigation of Philip the Fair, of making a wax figure, baptising it with the name of the Queen, Joan, piercing it with needles and throwing it into the fire, in accordance with instructions from the devil. In fact, the accusations were part of a campaign to launch a posthumous attack on Pope Boniface VIII, and to discredit Clement V and his defence of the Templars (ibid. 185–92).

[66] In 1317 Pope John XXII, who was fond of accusing his enemies of *maleficium* practised with the aid of demons, had the elderly bishop of Cahors, Hugues Géraud, arrested, tortured and burnt at the stake, and his ashes thrown into the Rhône, on a charge of trying to poison him and cast a malign spell; meanwhile in Italy his allies, the bishop and the chief inquisitor of Milan, accused the head of the Ghibelline faction, Matteo Visconti, of plotting against the Pope using wax dolls. in this case, however, the commission of interrogation dismissed the case on the grounds that there was only one witness, who had been bought (Cohn 1975, 192).

[67] Rosen 1969, 310–312. Earlier, in August 1578, three dolls pierced with nails were found in a London dunghill, and it was widely believed that they were directed against the Queen (see R. Scott, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (New York 1972 = London 1584) 275). R.H. Robbins argued that magic was felt to be particularly threatening during the 120 years following Elizabeth's accession because this was the period in which the theological concept of witchcraft superseded the old belief in the power of *maleficium*, once the idea of the witch as a devil-worshipper had been imported from the Continent (criticised by Thomas 1972, 542).

[68] The depositions included the claim that the defendants "had been given (by the Devil, at Newhaven, near Edinburgh) the recipe for a mixture of venom of roasted

of having ordered an image of the King to be cursed by witches.[69] There is also the account of the death of Ferdinand, Earl of Derby, in 1595, allegedly by magical attack.[70]

In Spain, at the court of Philip II in Madrid, a young woman, Lucrecia de León, was arrested in 1590 and accused by the Inquisition of having "contrived" a series of dreams which defiled the honour and reputation of the monarch, by forecasting the invasion of the kingdom by its enemies, its destruction, and the death of the king and his eldest son.[71] The alleged spells against King Carlos II 'El Hechizado', in the context of palace intrigues over the succession, are well known.[72]

---

toad, stale urine and adder skin with which to infect the royal linen. They had also asked the Devil to activate a wax image of the King which would then be destroyed by fire". All this is recounted in a famous pamphlet "Newes from Scotland" (Edinburgh 1591) (see the text in Normand and Roberts 2000, 309–324). On the North Berwick trial, see C. Larner, James VI and I and Witchcraft, in A.G.R. Smith (ed.), *The Reign of James VI and I* (London 1973) 74–90; Normand and Roberts 2000, 91–103, 203–221.

[69] H. Stafford, Notes on Scottish Witchcraft Cases, 1590–91, in N. Downs (ed.). *Essays in honor of Conyers Read* (Chicago 1953) 96–118; Normand and Roberts 2000, 39–49.

[70] He died on 16th April. Among the depositions recorded by John Snow, *Annals of England* (London 1600) 1275–77: "The 10th April about midnight was found in his bedchamber by one Master Halsall an image of wax with hair like unto the hair of his Honour's head twisted through the belly thereof from the navel to the secrets. This image was spotted, as the same Master Halsall reported unto Master Smith, one of his secretaries, a day before any pain grew, and spots appeared upon his sides and belly. This image was hastily cast into the fire by Master Halsall before it was viewed, because he thought by burning thereof (as he said) he should relieve his lord from witchraft and burn the witch who so much tormented his lord; but it fell out contrary to his love and affection for, after the melting thereof, he more and more declined." See Rosen 1969, 305–309, 308. I am grateful to Richard Gordon for this information on malign-magical attacks on authority in early-modern England.

[71] These "dreams of Lucrecia" appear as the final link in a millennium-prophecy chain that in the early Middle Ages had acquired a certain nationalistic flavour, and was part of the appeal to prophecy as a tool of political protest used by the figures of Savonarola, Thomas Münzer or William Hackett (R.L. Kagan, *Los sueños de Lucrecia. Política y profecía en la España del s. XVI* (Madrid 1991) 18–19). We can of course find a similar use of prophecy in antiquity, such as the Druidic prophecy which interpreted the burning of the Capitol by Vitellius' troops in 69 CE as a sign of the end of the Roman Empire and the *translatio Imperii* to the Gallic west (Tac., *Hist.* 4.52.2); cf. G. Zecchini, La profecía dei druidi sull'incendio del Campidoglio nel 69, *CISA* 10 (Milan 1984) 121–131; D. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge MA 1994) 171f.

[72] These spells were supposedly the cause of the king's impotence and deteriorating health; he looked like an old man before he was 40, according to the British ambassador, Stanhope. The devil, in reply to questions from the exorcists, stated that the king had been the target of spells since the age of 14, repeated subsequently by order of the Queen Mother and again in 1694 "by a person who wanted the Fleur de Lys to

Anthropology also provides examples of the political use of curses. For example, the death of the paramount chief of the Kuwsawgu—a division of the Gonja tribe, in modern Ghana—in the late-nineteenth century was attributed to the mystical power of his enemies. Even now, in public the kings wear a vast gown that covers them entirely, often with myriad leather amulets attached, so as to prevent mystical attack.[73]

Finally, to take a contemporary example, gossip in Israel has it that certain experts in the Kabbalah laid a special kind of curse, the *pulsa de-n(o)ura* (פולסא דנורא, medieval Aramaic for a lash or stick of fire), on Ariel Sharon in July 2005, because he was planning to evacuate the Gaza strip. This curse caused the stroke that eventually laid him low. Indeed there is a video in circulation recording the ritual act being performed. Similar claims are made about the death of Yitzhak Rabin: he may have been assassinated by a fanatic, but that was because he had already been cursed by right-wing extremists, notably Avigdor Eskin, a member of the Gush Emunim. Although Jewish scholars claim (as one would expect) that there is no religious authority for such acts, the idea of such curses evidently has a powerful resonance at the popular levels of Israeli society.[74]

The three Ampurian *defixiones* belong of course to a completely different social context, but they are evidence of a comparable use of malign magic against political authority. It was precisely their relatively exceptional nature in the Roman world (comparable only to the ritual in the Kalabsha temple) that motivated me to write this article. The action of the anonymous *defigens* might be interpreted in terms of resistance to a process of 'Romanisation' defined—not exclusively, but essentially—through the imposition of a common set of legal rules, initially included in the *formula provinciae* that defined the fundamental principles under which the provincial governors worked.[75] Whereas

---

come to Spain"—referring to the House of Bourbon. On these questions, see J. Nada, *Carlos II El Hechizado: el último Habsburgo español* (Barcelona 1968) 215 *et seq.*; F. Tuero Bertrand, *Carlos II y el proceso de los hechizos* (Gijón 1998).

[73] E. Goody, Legitimate and Illegitimate Aggression in a West African state, in M. Douglas (ed.). *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London 1970) 207–255 at 224.

[74] I thank Richard Gordon for this information.

[75] See Florus 2.30.29, with regard to the pacification of Germania, where provincial government is defined as the application of the rule of law. The same point is made three centuries later by e.g. Ammianus Marcellinus (14.8.13) in relation to the integration of Arabia as a province; or the prophecy in the *Historia Augusta* (*HistAug.*

the use of execration (*defixiones*) might be seen, from the perspective of the (new) Roman order, as 'disloyal' or 'anti-consensual', from the perspective of the *defigens* the ritual deposition of such tablets, containing the names of Roman magistrates and representatives of communities who had allegedly benefited unfairly from their decision, would have been an appeal to that "area of almost total liberty" which magic represented for those who used it.[76] These Flavian documents from Tarraconensis are thus typical of a period of marked social change and uncertainty; by appealing to magic, their author(s) were doing what they could to hinder a state of affairs that was wholly against their interests, imposed by an alien but inexorable power.

Bibliography

Alföldy, G. 1969. *Fasti Hispanienses: Senatorische Reichsbeamte und Offiziere in den Spanischen Provinzen des Römischen Reiches von Augustus bis Diokletian* (Wiesbaden).

Almagro Basch, M. 1952. *Las inscripciones ampuritanas griegas, ibéricas y latinas* (Barcelona).

——. 1955. *Las necrópolis de Ampurias* 2, 23–26, with 60–62 (and plate I. 2).

Ando, C. 2000. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles).

Andreu Pintado, J. 2004. *Edictum, Municipium y Lex: Hispania en época flavia (69–96 d.C.)*. BAR International Series 1293 (Oxford).

Balil, A. 1964. Defixiones emporitanas, *AEspA* 37, 197–201.

Burton, G.P. 1975. Proconsuls, Assizes and the Administration of Justice under the Empire, *JRS* 65, 92–106.

Cesano, L. 1961. s.v. *Defixio*, in E. De Ruggiero (ed.), *Dizionario Epigrafico* (Rome) 2.2: 1558–1591.

Cohn, N. 1975. *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry inspired by the Great Witch-hunt* (London). Sp. transl. *Los demonios familiares de Europa* (Madrid 1980).

Edmonson, J.C. 1992/3. Creating a Provincial Landscape: Roman Imperialism and Rural Change in Lusitania, *Studia Historica. Historia Antigua* 10–11, 13–30.

Fabre, G., Mayer, M. and Rodà, I. (eds.) 1991. *Inscriptions romaines de Catalogne, vol. 3: Gerone* (Paris).

——. (eds.) 2002. *Inscriptions romaines de Catalogne, vol. 5: Suppléments aux volumes I-IV et instrumentum inscriptum* (Paris).

Fears, J.R. 1981. The Cult of Jupiter and Roman Imperial Ideology, in *ANRW* II.17.1, 66–107.

Koenig, Y. 1994. *Magie et magiciens dans l'Égypte ancienne* (Paris).

Tacitus 14.2) on the future emperor of Rome, who would "give judges" to the peoples beyond the boundaries of the Empire, such as Parthians, Persians, Franks, Alamani or Sarmatae (cf. Ando 2000, 339f.).

[76] M. Martin, *Magie et magiciens dans le monde greco-romain* (Paris 2005) 278.

Lamboglia, N. 1959. Una nova popolazione pirenaica: Gli Olossitani, *RSI* 25, 147–151.
López Jimeno, I. 2001. *Textos griegos de maleficio* (Madrid).
MacMullen, R. 1981. *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven).
Mitford, T.B. 1971. *Inscriptions of Kourion*. Mem. Am. Phil.Soc. 83 (Philadelphia).
Normand, L. and Roberts, G. (eds.). 2000. *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland. James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches* (Exeter).
Ogden, D. 1999. Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds, in Ankarloo/Clark 1999, 1–90.
Pi Vázquez, M. 2005. Estudi de tres inscripcions sobre plom trobades a la necrópolis Ballesta (Empúries), *Empúries* 54, 143–154.
Pflaum, H.-G. 1952. Remarks ap. *AE* 1952: 197f. no. 122.
——. 1960–1. *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut Empire romain* (Paris).
Reuter, M. and Scholz, M. 2004. *Geritz und Entziffert. Schriftzeugnisse der römischen Informationsgesellschaft*. Schriften des Limesmuseum Aalen 57 (Stuttgart).
Ripoll Perelló, E. 1978. Acerca de unas *tabellae defixionis* de Ampurias (Hisp. Cit.), *Perennitas. Studi in onore di A. Brelich* (Rome) 413–416.
Ritner, R.K. 1993. *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*. Oriental Institute of the Univesity of Chicago: Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago).
Rosen, B. (ed.) 1969. *Witchcraft* (London).
Serrano Delgado, J.M. 1996. *Sceleratissimus seruus publicus*: Un episodio de la vida municipal afectando a la *familia publica*, in J. Mangas and J. Alvar (ed.), *Homenaje a José María Blázquez. Vol. 3: Historia de Roma* (Madrid) 331–44.
Syme, R. 1953. Review of A. Degrassi, *I Fasti consulari* (1952), *JRS* 43, 148–61.
——. 1958. Consulates in Absence, *JRS* 48, 1–9. Repr. in idem, *Roman Papers, 1* (A.R. Birley, ed.) (Oxford 1979) 38–51.
Thomas, K. 1972. *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth; first edition London 1971).
Vázquez Hoys, A.M. 1985. Aspectos mágicos de la Antigüedad, 3: La magia en las *tabellae defixionum* hispanas, *BSAArq* 21, 35–45.
Vich, S. 1989. Plomos mágicos en la Hispania Antigua, *Revista de Arqueología* ser. X, 102: 36–43.
Wilburn, A.T. 2005. *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (diss. University of Michigan) 156–256.
Wilhelm, A. 1904. Über die Zeit einiger attischer Fluchtafeln, *JÖAI* 7, 105–126.
Ziebarth, E. 1935. Neue Verfluchungstafeln aus Attika, Boiotien und Euboia, *SB Akad. Berlin, phil.-hist. Kl.* (Berlin) 1022–50.

CHAPTER TWELVE

NAILS FOR THE DEAD: A POLYSEMIC ACCOUNT OF AN ANCIENT FUNERARY PRACTICE[1]

Silvia Alfayé Villa

1. *Introduction: Nails in Funerary Contexts*

Italian scholars have recently re-opened an old debate about the function of nails discovered in Greek and Roman cremation and inhumation tombs.[2] Although some are undoubtedly utilitarian, the widespread presence, in the Greek world as well as in the Roman Empire, of single nails in graves, especially cremation graves, suggests they were deliberately buried with the grave-goods. Ever since the nineteenth century scholars have generally interpreted isolated nails of this sort as apotropaic, as talismans to protect the dead person from the dangers of the Afterlife. The alternative view has been that the dead were to be symbolically confined to the grave in order to prevent them from becoming revenants. There has however as yet been no synthetic study of the main problems connected with the intentional deposit of nails in defunctive contexts in the Graeco-Roman world. The purpose of this paper is to offer a summary survey of the archaeological material, mainly in the western part of the Roman Empire, followed by evaluation of the discussion it has evoked.

---

[1] I would like to thank Francisco Marco and Richard Gordon for their suggestions and comments which have much improved this article. My research has been conducted as part of the project "Espacios de magia, superstición y poder en el Occidente del Imperio Romano", financed by DGICYT (HUM 241–29). Note that where it is necessary to distinguish types of graves, inc. = incineration; inh. = inhumation. I have retained the ancient place names in referring to cemeteries where that practice was followed in the excavation-report.

[2] See the papers in Heinzelmann 2001; Maioli 2007, 108.

2. *Nails, Coffins and Grave-goods*

Some nails found inside graves were purely utilitarian: they are carpenter's nails, used for joining timber, either of the coffin or of the bier used to transport the corpse to the pyre.[3] A wide variety of ancient coffins is attested; in most cases iron nails were used in their construction, but sometimes they were jointed and/or dowelled. Occasionally they were even carved in one piece from a tree-trunk.[4] Where the wood itself is not preserved, the existence of a coffin is inferred from the distribution-pattern of the nails around the corpse and/or from changes in the colouring of the earth which reveal the dimensions of the coffin. Examples of this are known from the necropolis at Olynthus, and from the Roman cemeteries of London, Lankhills (Winchester) or Sainte-Barbe (Strasbourg).[5]

Another explanation for nails in funerary contexts is that they had been used in the manufacture of objects originally deposited as grave-goods but now decayed and disappeared. A case in point are the hobnails used in leather shoes or boots that have been found in graves in Lutetia Parisiorum, London or Lankhills.[6]

However, it is hard to discern a utilitarian purpose for single nails found in a tomb, nails that have never been used, or whose tip has been deliberately twisted—thus calling attention to their non-utilitarian significance—or that are "too large to have come from a coffin".[7] Nevertheless, this last claim must be allowed to be impressionistic: as

---

[3] Cf. for example Angelucci *et al.* 1990, 84f., figs. 33f.; Hachlili and Killebrew 1999, 60–90; Watson 2003, 16; 33f.; 60–63.

[4] Cf. Salin 1952, 95f.; 125f., 369f., figs. 47f.; Clarke 1979, 332–41; Barber and Bowsher 2000, 93–95; Watson 2003, 62f.; Blaizot et al. 2004, 92–108, fig. 6.

[5] Olynthus (VI–IV^{a}): Robinson 1942, 159f. Roman cemeteries in London (I^{p}–V^{p}): Watson 2003, 16f.; 44f.; Barber and Bowsher 2000, 91–98, figs. 63–66, 71f.; 108–109; 112. Lankhills (III^{p}–V^{p}): Clarke 1979, 332–41; 353–55. Sainte-Barbe (IV^{p}–VII^{p}): Blaizot et al. 2004, 92–96, fig. 6.

[6] Lutetia: Petit 1984, 349, fig. 223; Caerleon: Evans and Maynard 1997, 237–39; London: Barber and Bowsher 2000, 137f.; 354, fig. 99, Table 132; Lankhills: Clarke 1979, 178–181; 322–25; 370f.; 406–8. Since a pair of military boots contained around 300 hobnails, it is clear that in all these cases most of the nails must have been retrieved, perhaps for re-use; for other explanations, cf. Simmonds, Márquez-Grant and Loe 2008, 25–6, 115–6, 135.

[7] Cf. Paris et al. 1926, 88 (from tombs at Baelo Claudia); Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 216 (on the 10–15cm nails from the necropolis at Olynthus); Castella 1987, 32 (the large nails in the graves of Port d'Avenches); Hachlili and Killebrew 1999, 169 (necropolis of Jericho); Maioli 2007, 108 (twisted nails from Italian necropolis). See a discussion on this topic in Chausserie-Lapree and Nin 1987, 80–1.

Clarke points out, the number of nails used in the construction of coffins varied widely from one or two to more than fifty, and their size was very variable. Thus, for example, some of the nails used in the coffins of the late-Roman cemetery of Lankhills are 15–20 cm long.[8] The existence of these and other oddities, such as the presence of nails in cremation-tombs, and the discovery in some graves of imitation nails made of silver or glass—useless from a practical point of view—have led researchers to suggest other possible values of nails in defunctive contexts beyond the merely utilitarian.[9]

Nails found in cinerary urns might theoretically derive from the burning of the coffin, the bier and/or the grave goods on the pyre, so that their presence in the urn along with the ashes of the deceased would be unintended and thus irrelevant for our purpose.[10] This explanation is plausible in the case of small nails, which might have gone unnoticed by those who collected the ashes and deposited them in their final resting-place; but it is less likely that a 10–15cm long nail would have gone undetected, particularly if we take into consideration the fact that sometimes the nail is actually taller than the funerary urn (Text-fig. 11).[11] But the strongest argument in favour of deliberate inclusion is that, as Bruzza first pointed out well over a century ago, the nail is linked both in cremations and inhumations to a recurrent

[8] Clarke 1979, 337; 354; tables 35–37 on p. 332 indicate that most of the coffin nails found at Lankhills measured 4–11 cm, while the longest were 22 cm long. Such dimensions are by no means exceptional: most of the nails used in the coffins from the western cemetery of London are 4–10cm long, but some are up to 14cm long; cf. Barber and Bowsher 2000, 94; cf. also Martorelli 2000, 43 (large nails at Cornus).

[9] Gaidoz (in Jullian *et al.* 1902, 300) noted the discovery of long silver nails in graves from Greece, Italy and France (without specifying the cemeteries in question), and considered them to be 'magical'; also Martorelli 2000, 43, on glass nails in funerary contexts from Piamonte.

[10] This is the explanation offered by Almagro 1955, 100, and Vollmer and López 1995, 130–1, 137 n.17–20, for the numerous nails found in the cremations at Ampurias. Others have proposed similar arguments for the incineration burials they were dealing with: Uglietti 1985, 561f.; Evans and Maynard 1997, 190; 239 (many small wood-nails; prior cremation in coffins in 68 of 121 burials); Barber and Bowsher 2000, 60f.; 104–106; Falzone, Olivanti and Pellegrino 2001, 133f.; Chapon et al. 2004, 133f. In other cases, as pointed out by Ratel 1977, 83, Mondanel and Mondanel 1988, 29, and Simmonds, Márquez-Grant and Loe 2008, 115, the nails might have come from the wooden casket in which the cinerary urn was placed (Evans and Maynard 1997, 239 report numerous small tacks less than 25mm in length).

[11] As pointed out by Black 1986, 222f.; also Mondanel and Mondanel 1988, 98. See also several examples in Allain et al. 1992, 52f.; 128, tomb 74; Buchner and Ridgway 1993, pl. XCIII (grave 70), pl. XCV (grave 76), pl. CXI (grave 109); Ceci 2001, 89, figs. 4–5; Vegas 1988, taf. 34 and 79a (grave 66), and taf. 58 and 61 (grave 96).

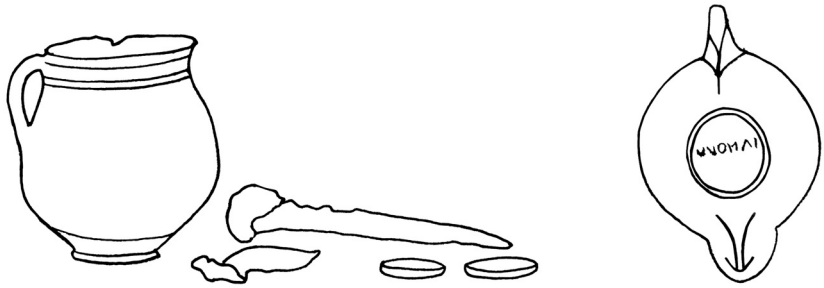

Fig. 11. Funerary goods: pottery vessel, two nails, two coins and a lamp. Grave 110, Pithekoussai (Roman cemetery). Drawing by J. Rodríguez Corral, adapted from Buchner and Ridgway 1993, pl. CXI.

set of grave-goods.[12] We thus find a typical set of grave goods in a whole range of cemeteries, mostly dating II–III^{p}, consisting of nail(s), a lamp, a small ceramic vessel and/or an unguent-jar and, quite often, a coin (Text-figs. 11–12). The idea that funerary-goods were consciously selected, with variations due to fashion and/or local tradition, is supported by a number of studies, mainly based on early-imperial Italian and Gallo-Roman cemeteries (Table 2, p. 433).[13] We also find regularities in the positioning of the objects: in the majority of documented cremation-graves, for example, either the lamp and the nail are deposited inside the cinerary urn, or the nail is deliberately placed inside the *olletta* or the lamp. In the case of inhumation-graves, the ceramic vessel containing the nail and the lamp is usually found at the foot of the skeleton, as at Pithekoussai or Picentia (Table 2). There are however some interesting variations. The skeleton in inhumation-tomb Bonjoan 7 at Ampurias, for example, dating from IV–III^{a}, was found holding an unguent-jar and an iron nail in its left hand. An almost exact parallel is known from inhumation grave Martí 75, also at Ampurias, and from grave 5 of the Greek necropolis at Camarina, dating from mid-IV^{a}, where the skeleton held a coin and a nail likewise in the left hand.[14] This last find also tends to corroborate Jorio's

[12] Bruzza 1874, li–iii.

[13] I have myself checked the inventories of grave-goods from several cemeteries, such as those at Pithekoussai and Ampurias. Other examples are: Ghirardini 1888, 320; Mondanel and Mondanel 1988, 98; Lagi de Caro 1995, 347f.; Quilici and Quilici 1998, 210; Ceci 2001, 89f.; 94; Falzone, Olivanti and Pellegrino 2001, 131 n. 10.

[14] Inh. Bonjoan 7: Almagro 1953, 146; 155 fig. 121; Martí 75: Almagro 1953, 80 pl. 52: a 7.5cm long iron nail and an unguent-jar held in the left hand of an infant; Camarina: Orsi 1899, 256f.

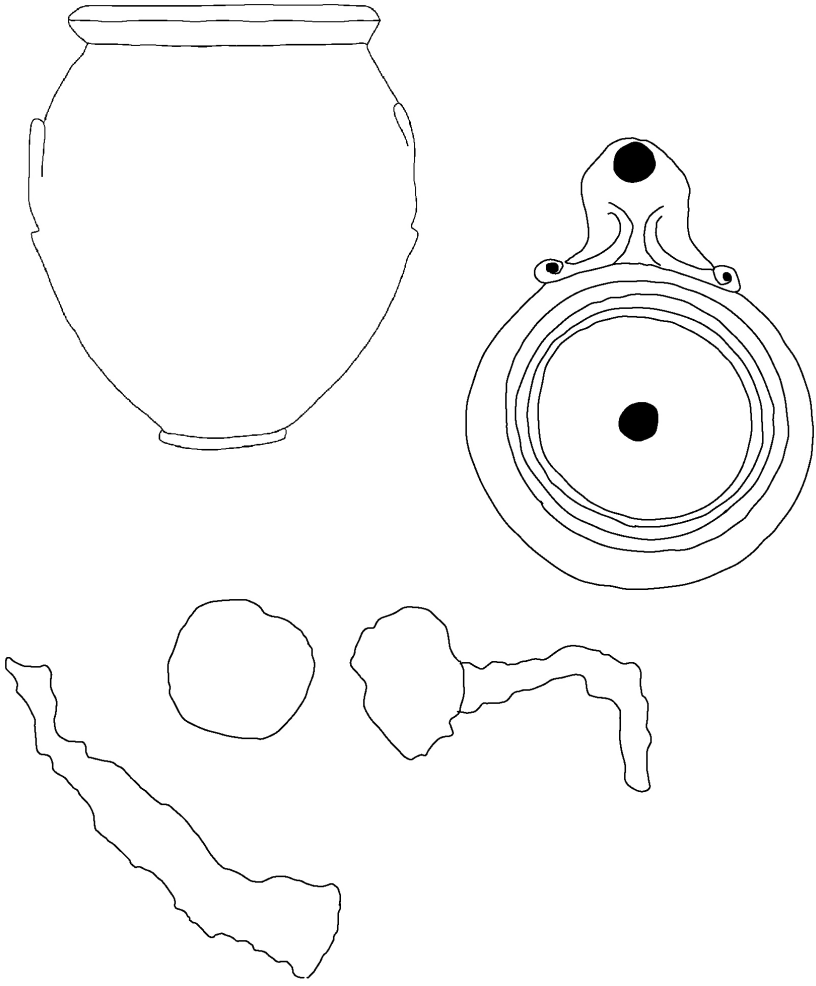

Fig. 12. The grave-goods from incineration tomb 7, Via Nomentana, Rome: pottery vessel, two nails, coin and lamp (I[P]). Drawing by J. Rodríguez Corral, adapted from Ceci 2001, 92, fig. 5.

thesis, formulated as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, that coins and nails often co-occur in such contexts (Text-figs. 11–12). Recent studies suggest that this association is not accidental but part of an entire ritual complex (Table 2).[15]

[15] Cf. Jorio 1824, 128f; Spano 1859, 123. Coin and nail are paired in a funerary context at Pezzino (tomb 551); Pontecagnano (graves 6244, 6268, 6288, 6319, 6320, 6419, 6501, 6648); Cornus (graves 82, 85); Pithekoussai (graves 2, 14, 15, 29, 49, 60,

Taking all these data into account, it can hardly be doubted that there are indeed many cases in which the presence of one or more nails cannot be explained away in utilitarian terms. The obvious alternative is that such deposits are evidence of a ritual practice linked to a belief in the symbolic and social significance of nails.[16] Archaeologists have offered two hypotheses, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive, though they are often treated as such: the nails were either apotropaic amulets, intended to protect the deceased from evil in the Afterlife, or they were protective/defensive, to prevent the dead from returning to disturb or harm the living. Each can be supported by anthropological parallels from all over the world (e.g. Frazer 1933–36/2003) and by the magical value attributed to nails in antiquity. In this paper, I confine myself to the latter.

3. *Usus clavorum in arte magica valde florebat*[17]

Before discussing the two hypotheses in greater detail, I should make some preliminary remarks so as to clear the ground. Nails are found in a number of magical contexts in antiquity. One reason for this is that their shape and function make them an ideal basis for metonymic and metaphorical evocation: deictic magical action complements the performativity of magical utterance. Nails are 'good to think'. Moreover, the mere act of driving nails into a material surface can be evoked in many different ways. Literary sources attest to the fact that they were considered a means of defence against malign powers and *la maledetta*.[18] Diseases could be 'nailed' and so deictically neutralised; examples are ceremony of the *clavus annalis*, which was originally linked to public calamity (Livy 7.3.3–8); and a cure for epilepsy recorded by

81, 125); Cabasse (tomb 6, 13, 20); Blicquy (tomb 21, 75, 79, 242, 306); Baelo Claudia (grave 820); Colonia Patricia Corduba (grave 5); Ampurias (inc. Las Corts 24; inc. Ballesta 15, 17, 18; inh. Ballesta 2, 8; inc. Rubert 24, 29; inc. Torres 5, 13–14, 18, 53, 64, 68; inc. Patel 5; inc. Sabadí 5; inc. Bonjoan XIV; inh. Bonjoan III); Fralana (tombs 21, 22); Tavant (tomb 6); Marcillat-La Faye; Lezoux III (grave 87); Sucidava; Gratte Dos (tomb 4); Chantambre; Mulva (graves 31, 63); Isola Sacra (tombs 22, 32) and in several necropoleis on the outskirts of Rome.

[16] As Morris 1992, 108, points out "grave goods are part of the total burial assemblage; taken away from it, they mean nothing. What we find is determined by the actors in ancient rituals, who put objects into graves because it seemed like a good idea at the time".

[17] Heim 1892, 541.

[18] E.g. Pliny, *HN* 10.152; 28.48; Columella, *De re rustica* 8.5.12.

Table 2. Published cemeteries with defunctive nails.

Necropolis	Grave	Grave-Goods.	Date	Bibliographical references
Pezzino, Agrigento	551	Nail, coin, *lekythoi*, amphorae, strigil, etc.	V^{a}	De Miro 1989, 59–61, pl. XLVIII; Cutroni 1995, 193, n. 7
Pithekoussai, Ischia	1, 2, 14, 18, 34, 35, 60, 69, 70, 76, 81, 104, 105, 109	Lamp, unguentary, nail and coin usually inside *olletta*, placed at the feet of the skeleton	V^{a}–II^{p}	Buchner and Ridgway 1993, 37, 38, 44–5, 47–8, 60–1, 81–2, 85–7, 90, 94, 123–6
Emporion, Ampurias, Gerona	Inhumation Martí 100; Inc. Martí 9; Inh. Bonjoan 7, 12, 36, 47; Inc. Las Corts 7, 17, 20, 24, 40, 46, 68, 78, 87, 97, 102, 113–114, 119, 121, 123, 125, 131, 142, 153. Inc. Ballesta 3, 4, 7, 15, 17–18, 22, 23, 32, 38, 46, 48, 54; Inh. Ballesta 2, 8; Inc. Rubert 1, 4, 13, 15–16, 22, 24–25, 27, 29–30, 39–40; Inh. Rubert 3; Inc. Torres 5, 8, 11,13–15, 18, 20, 23, 27–28, 30–31, 39, 42, 44, 50–51, 53, 60–61, 63, 64, 67–68; Inc. Nofre 8; Inc. Patel 4–7, 9, 11–12, 18, 29, 22; Inc. Sabadí 5–6, 8–9, 20; Inc. Anfiteatro 1, 2; Inc. Bonjoan III, VI–VIII, X, XII–XIV, XVII–XVIII, XXI; Inh. Bonjoan III; Inc. Granada II,VI; Inc. muralla NW 1, 2, 4–5, 9, 13.	Nail(s), coin, unguentarium, thin-walled vessel etc.	V^{a}–III^{p} (mainly I–II^{p})	Almagro 1953 and 1955; Vollmer and López 1995, 130–1, 137 n. 17–20.
Camarina, Sicily	5	1 nail, 2 coins	IV^{a}	Orsi 1899, 256
Via Nomentana 1119, Rome	7	Lamp+nail in thin-walled *olletta*, with nail+coin at bottom	III^{a}–II^{p}	Ceci 2001, 89, 92, figs. 4–5.

Table 2 (*cont.*)

Necropolis	Grave	Grave-Goods	Date	Bibliographical references
Vercelli	No details	Lamp, vessel, unguentarium, nails inside cremation urns	Late Repub.	Bruzza 1874, LI–LIII
Calle del Quart, Valencia	No details	"Nails as magical grave-goods"	Late Repub.	García Prósper and Guerin 2002, 210–1
Palestine	No details	Nail with magical function	Hellenistic Period	Hachlili and Killebrew 1999, 139–140, 169; Hachlili 2005, 494, 511–6.
Tipasa, Algeria	No details	Large bronze/iron nails in graves, used as phylacteries	I^{a}–II^{p}	Baradez 1959, 217–8
Via Flaminia, Rimini	56 (inc.)	1 twisted bronze nail placed under the ashes, at the bottom of the grave; 1 iron nail	I^{p}	Ortalli 2001, 236–7, fig. 21; Maioli 2007, 108, 215, fig. 117.
Via Nomentana km. 10.5, Rome	1; 7	Nail, and coin; coin and nail inside vessel	I^{p}	Ceci 2001, 92
Via Laurentina, Ostia	48, 49	Large nail inside cinerary urn	I^{p}	Squarciapiano 1958, 104, 107, n. 73.
D'Alleans, Baugy	No details	Iron nails inside graves without link to wooden structures	I^{p}	Fontvielle 1987, 130.
La Côte d'Orgeval, Sommesous, Marne	Infant inhumation St. 41, 302	1 nail, ceramic fragments	I^{p}	Guillier 1992, 19, 27, fig. 7.
Via Camerini, Rome	7	1 nail, 2 coins, mirror, glass…	I–II^{p}	Ceci 2001, 94
Via G. Antamoro, Rome	1, 2	Nail and coin	I–II^{p}	Ceci 2001, 95
Corinth	No details	Nail	I–II^{p}	Hoskins 2005, 277, n. 46.

Table 2 (*cont.*)

Necropolis	Grave	Grave-Goods	Date	Bibliographical references
Argentomagus, Saint-Marcel	Only masculine graves; for example 54, 69, 95, 105, 130 etc.	Bizarre disposition of the nails with "une function rituelle de nature magique", diverse objects…	I–II^{p}	Allain 1972, 26, figs. 3–4 ; Allain et al. 1992, 128–9
Port d'Avenches	10	1 nail (15cm.) from a ship, ring, ceramic fragments, glass	I–II^{p}	Castella 1987, 32, 62, 113, n^{o} 379.
Tavant, Indre-et-Loire	Infant inhumation 6, 15, 16	Nails intentionally placed inside the sarcophagi at the legs, feet or head of the skeletons, small nails possibly linked to wooden objects, coin, ceramic and glass vessels, jewels, miniaturized dagger, objects made of bone…	I–II^{p}	Riquier and Salé 2006, 27–9, 47–52, 71–2; figs. 23–4, 52–60.
Blicquy, Leuze-en-Hainaut	19, 21, 23B, 26, 33, 43, 48, 50, 75, 79, 106, 121,134, 142, 163, 167, 170,242, 243, 268, 278, 282, 293, 295, 303, 306, 315, 321, 338/340/341, 344, 381, 384, 392, 404, 405	1–4 large nails inside the cinerary urn (mixed up with the human bones), or with a bizarre disposition of the grave-goods	I–II^{p}	Laet et al. 1972, 30, 83–9, 92, 96–7, 99–100, 104–5, 115, 118–124, 126–7, 131–4

Table 2 (*cont.*)

Necropolis	Grave	Grave-Goods	Date	Bibliographical references
Lezoux III, Auvergne	Cremation 98, 102, 121, 141; 12; 87	1 nail mixed up with human bones inside cinerary urn; odd distribution of nails; 3 nails, cinerary urn, 2 vessels, 1 coin	I–II^{p}	Mondanel and Mondanel 1988, 98
Les Grandes Terres, Neuvic	Inc.	2 hollow iron nails without the tips, 5 pottery vessels (one pierced by a nail), 2 iron rings, stone slab	I–II^{p}	Chevillot and Moissat 1980, 207–14, 221–2, 227–9, 233–4, figs. 2, 4, 7–9, 16.3–4.
Mulva, Munigua, Seville	Inc. 9, 10, 13, 15; Southern Cemetery 24, 31, 41, 63, 66, 96	Nails placed inside cremation graves with a magical intention, jewels, pottery vessels, lamp, unguentarium, coin, glass vessels…	I–II^{p}	Raddatz 1973, 37–8, 52–6, 59–66, abb. 12–15, 19–20, 22–3, taf. 8–9, 14–20; Vegas 1988, 57, 76–80, 85–6, 92–3, taf. 13, 17, 23, 32–4, 57–8, 79, 81.
Bad Cannstatt, Stuttgart	8, 10, 19, 34, 36, 38, 41, 64, 67, 69, 71	1 or 2 nails placed inside "poor graves" with a magical intention, lamp, pottery vessels,…	I–II^{p}	Nierhaus 1959, 48–9, 70–1, 73, 75–6, 81–2, taf. 6.B, F; 9.C-D, F; 11, abb. 4; 12, abb. 4 , 6.
Fache des Près Aulnoys, Bavay	No details (10 cremations) + 2 uncertain graves (291, 396) + inhumation 546	Only one nail in each grave, grave-goods (no detailed).	I–III^{p}	Loridant 1992, 98.
La Calade, Cabasse, Var	3, 6, 13, 19, 20, 40	Nail tips, coin, lamp, unguentarium; bizarre layout of nails	I–III^{p}	Bérard 1961, 110–1, 115,123, 133–5.

Table 2 (*cont.*)

Necropolis	Grave	Grave-Goods	Date	Bibliographical references
Baelo Claudia, Bolonia, Cadiz	820; 811; infant inhumations (grave-numbers not given)	3 nails, coin, mirror, ring, etc.; 2 vessels, jewels, 2 lamps and a nail placed at the feet of the skeleton; nails placed at the feet and head of the corpse, jewels, lamps, etc.	I–III^{p}	Paris et al., 1926, 74–5; 83, 89; 87
Colonia Patricia Corduba, Cordoba	5	Nails and coins	I–III^{p}	Moreno 2006, 250.
Northern Gallia (*Lutecia*, Buno-Bonnevaux, Armorica…)	No details	Nail inside or around graves ("with magical intention"); large iron nails at the feet, jaw or chest of the skeletons	I–IV^{p}	Doorselaer 1967, 122; Chevillot and Moissat 1980, 227–9; Bourgeois 1984, 294; Petit 1984, 248; Galliou and Jones 1991, 113–4.
Fralana, Afilia	XX, XXII	Coin and nail inside thin-walls-vessel	II^{p}	Falzone, Olivani and Pellegrino 2001, 131–3, 135–6
Via U.Fracchia, Rome	40; 45; 108	Nail, coin, lamp, thin-walled *olletta*; 2 nails, coin; 3 nails, coin	II^{p}	Ceci 2001, 89, 94
Isola Sacra, Ostia	22, 32 (saggio 16)	Coin, unguentarium and nail at the feet and nail at the head of the skeleton; *olletta* with nail and coin inside	II^{p}	Angelucci et al. 1990, 75
Linton, Cambs.	5	1 nail, vessels, jewellery, glass bottle	II^{p}	Lethbridge 1935–1936, 70–71

Table 2 (*cont.*)

Necropolis	Grave	Grave-Goods	Date	Bibliographical references
Gratte Dos, Meuilley	Cremation 4; 37	Nail and coin inside urn; 2 "clous votifs", 10 nails from a bier, 2 vessels, coin	IIP	Ratel 1977, 77–8, 95, pl. IX
Marcillat-La Faye, Mars, Creuse	Inc.	44 nails (most of them twisted) of a "caractère rituel", coin, granite cinerary urn, ceramic vessels, lamps, glass fragments	IIP	Autexier 1976, 75–81.
Louroux, Creuse	A, D, J, pit F	Nails with bizarre (ritual?) location	II–IIIP	Autexier *et al.* 1978, 64.
Picentia, Pontecagnano	14 graves; detailed 6244, 6266, 6268, 6278, 6288, 6319, 6320, 6419, 6448, 6501	Twisted/broken nails and a coin inside a thin-walled vessel	II–IIIP	Lagi de Caro 1995, 347–348
Les Sablons, Fresnes-sur-Marne	Inhumations, no details	Large iron nails at the head, stomach or knees of the skeletons	IIIP	Delattre and Magnan 1998, 147
El Albir, Valencia	6	2 large nails thrust into the earth under the bottom of the tomb	III–IVP	González 2001, 360.

Table 3. Infant tombs with defunctive nails.

Necropolis	Grave	Grave-goods	Date	Bibliography
Pithekoussai, Ischia	1, 2, 15 (twisted hook, not a nail), 18, 34, 81	*olletta*, lamp, unguentarium, coins, nail (most of them inside the lamp or vessel placed at the feet of the skeleton)	V[a]-Roman	Buchner and Ridgway 1993, 37, 38, 46, 47–48, 60, 94
Emporion, Gerona	Inhumation Martí 75; 100; 134	Unguentarium held in infant's l. hand + nail; *idem*; 14 fragments of nails, *cardium* shell, 2 *lekythoi* (one held in infant's l. hand), small pottery cup, 2 fragments of cuttlefish-bone	V–III[a]	Almagro 1953, 80 (fig. 52); 94 (fig. 71); 111–2 (fig. 111).
Via Nomentana km 10.5, Rome	1; 7	Nail and coin; nail and coin inside a pottery vessel	I[p]	Ceci 2001, 92
La Côte d'Orgeval, Sommesous, Marne	Inhumation St. 41, 302	1 nail without link to wooden structure, ceramic fragments	I[p]	Guillier 1992, 19, 27, fig. 7.
Argentomagus, Saint-Marcel-Indre	Cremation 55,74, 78, 121; Inhumation 70, 77, 88, 122, 144	Bizarre layout of nails, cinerary urn, fragments of pottery…	I–II[p]	Allain et al. 1992, 43, 52–3, 55, 76, 86, 92–4, 97, 128; Laubenheimer 2004, 302
Tavant, Indre-et-Loire	Inhumation 6; 15; 16	2 nails placed at legs of skeleton, 4 small nails at bottom of the sarcophagi (possibly linked to a wooden bier/box), coin, ceramic vessels, miniaturized dagger; 1 fragment of nail placed at feet of skeleton, sarcophagi, ceramic and glass vessels, jewels, objects made	I–II[p]	Riquier and Salé 2006, 27–9, 47–52, 72, 99, 103; figs. 23–4, 52–60.

Table 3 (*cont.*)

Necropolis	Grave	Grave-goods	Date	Bibliography
		of bone; 1 nail placed at head of skeleton, 1 nail placed outside sarcophagi, 4 small nails possibly related to a wooden object, ceramic & glass vessels, pearls, animal bones		
Linton, Cambridgeshire	5	Nail, jewels, vessels, glass bottle	IIP	Lethbridge 1935–1936, 70–1
La Calade, Cabasse, Var	40	Groups of four nails placed around three *olpai*, plus lamp and the skull of infant; some of the nails bent or deliberately thrust into earth; ceramic vessels pierced by nails	II–IIIP	Bérard 1963, 297–306
Chantambre, l'Essonne	No details	coin, nail, carved stone,…	II–IIIP	Laubenheimer 2004, 303
Baelo Claudia, Bolonia	No details	Nails placed at head and feet of skeleton, jewels	IIIP	Paris et al. 1926, 87
Sucidava, Dacia	No details	Hecatiform vessel, 2 coins, pottery decorated with Dionysiac figure, 1 nail at feet of skeleton	IVP	Hampartumian 1978, 472–7, pl. XCI
Poggio Gramignano, Lugnano in Teverina	*IB* 14 (possible burial)	Iron nail, animal bones, iron nail placed above outer *amphorae*	VP	Soren and Soren 1999, 499, 511

Pliny: *clavum ferreum defigere in quo loco primum caput fixerit corruens morbo comitiali absolutorium eius mali dicitur*, "It is said that driving an iron nail into the spot where the epileptic patient's head first touches the ground [during a seizure] is a cure for that disease".[19] In these cases, the intention is to protect the community or client/patient; the aggression implied by the act of hammering is directed against harmful spirits or disease. On the other hand, as everyone knows, nails were used in an analogous fashion in malign magical curses for a quite different purpose, being driven through already-inscribed and rolled or folded *tabellae defixionum*. Here the implicit aggression is directed against the human target; the aim is to 'fix' a malign-magical curse. Piercing poppets with pins was another way of achieving the same effect.[20]

To the expressive values of shape and action we may add material composition (mainly iron but also bronze).[21] In the ancient world special properties, both medicinal (e.g. Pliny, *HN* 34.151) and amuletic, were attributed to both these metals.[22] Moreover the efficacy of the metal could be enhanced by taking the metal's provenance into account: iron linked with the dead, especially the blood of the criminal dead, was believed to possess special potency, which made objects made of it, e.g. rings, particularly valuable to practitioners of (malign) magic like Pamphile (Apuleius, *Met*. 3.17: *carnosi clavi pendentium*) or the super-witch Erictho (Lucan, *Bell.civ.* 6.544–46).[23] That the practice of extracting nails from tombs for such purposes was widespread in the Roman world is suggested by a funerary curse from near the Porta Latina in Rome intended to deter possible thieves: *Quiqumque hinc*

[19] *HN* 28.63. On the ceremony of the *clavus annalis* see Foresti 1979; Dungworth 1998, 153.

[20] On the use of nails in *defixiones* and poppets, cf. Preisendanz 1972; Faraone 1991; 1992, 74–93; Gager, *CT* 14–18; Graf 1997, 134–37; Dungworth 1998, 153–57; Ogden 1999, 14, 73–79; and 2002, 245–60.

[21] I here disregard the examples made of silver and glass.

[22] See Marshall 1904, 333; Massoneau 1934, 115f.; Tupet 1976, 35–44; Veltri 1998, 74f.; 79–81; Ogden 2001, 180. Some modern examples in Merrifield 1987, 162–175.

[23] E.g. Pliny, *HN* 28.46 (fragment of nail against fever); Lucian, *Philops.* 17 and 24 (amuletic ring); Alexander of Tralles, *Therap.* 1.1; there are also several Talmudic texts in the same sense. Cf. Jobbé-Duval 1924/2000, 81; 192; Tupet 1976, 37–42; 84–87 and 1986, 2657–68; Veltri 1998, 69–70; Ogden 1999, 14; 19f. and 2002, 121–24; 141f.; 166f.; Gordon 1999, 204–210; Hope 2000, 120–22; Dickie 2003, 175–192; Bohak 2008, 121f. Some anthropological examples of the magical use of this type of nail in Marshall 1904, 334, n. 12; Bellucci 1919; and Gazin-Schwartz 2001, 270f.

clavos exemerit [sic] *in oculos sibi figat*, "May anyone who extracts nails (from this coffin) run himself through the eyes (in so doing)".[24]

I should also mention in this prefatory discussion a group of nails clearly used for magical purposes but connected neither with *defixiones* nor—I am inclined to think, against a certain consensus—with the defunctive nails. These are the so-called *chiodi magici*, which are 10–20cm long, made of bronze or iron, decorated with geometrical patterns, sigla and/or *charakteres*, and show no signs of wear. A competent recent catalogue lists eighteen such nails, though at least one or two more have been published.[25] With some exceptions, they date from III–IV^{p}. Although the *charakteres* and other sigla make clear that these objects are linked to magical practices, the lack of provenance (most have come to light via the antiquities trade) means that their interpretation is problematic. The decisive fact for me is that, unlike the material I have presented in §2, not one of these nineteen *chiodi magici* demonstrably derives from a funerary context.

We may in fact doubt whether such nails form a coherent functional group. The one that forms part of the so-called magician's kit (III^{p}) found in the 1890s the lower city of Pergamon and now in the Antikensammlung, Berlin is generally thought to have been used in divination, although its precise *mode d'emploi* is controversial.[26] This may well have been the function of several others too, such as the one found in the Rath/Apollo sanctuary of S. Antonio, in Caere.[27] Jobbé-Duval however suggested many years ago that the nails used to cure epilepsy (cf. the passage of Pliny cited n. 19 above) may have been of this type.[28] For his part, Toutain thought that some related Gaulish examples may have been placed in sanctuaries as votive objects.[29] The

---

[24] *CIL* VI 7191 = *ILS* 8188. Cf. Brelich 1937, 12f.; Storoni 1973, 126f. no. LXII; Maioli 2007, 108. Admittedly the aim of such theft may have been simply utilitarian (cf. n. 6 above), like stripping churches of their lead and copper nowadays.

[25] Bevilacqua 2001. Add to her total a bronze nail decorated with inlaid gold from Tongres (Belgium); see Cumont 1914, 101f., pl. 67. The total is therefore 19+.

[26] First published by Wünsch 1905; see the recent discussion between Mastrocinque 2002, 177–79 and Gordon 2002, 196f.

[27] Colonna 2001, 151f.

[28] Jobbé-Duval 1924/2000, 146.

[29] Toutain 1920, 371 n. 2. Although he does not specify where these nails were found, he may have been referring to the red-painted nails found in the *fanum* of Harfleur and in the thermal sanctuary of Fontaines-Salées, which were identified by their discoverers as *clous votifs*; cf. Vesly 1909, 144; Louis 1938, 299, fig. 37; and Lacroix 1956, 258–60, fig. 90, who dates the Fointaines-Salées nails to the 4th century CE. Bevilacqua is ready to entertain the hypothesis (2001, 14).

decorated bronze *chiodi* found in the sanctuary of the Venetic healing-goddess Reitia at Este-Baratela, SW of Padua, may also be votives.[30] Rubensohn, followed recently by Bevilacqua, interpreted a lead nail from Paros with the Greek inscription ΠΥΡ as a magical protection against fire; it was perhaps knocked into the wall of the sanctuary of Asclepius.[31] The most plausible inference from the incised symbols is that nails of this type were mainly used as amulets. The smaller examples may have been worn around the neck or elsewhere on the person as protection against the evil eye or malign-magical attack. The dominant interpretation of the larger ones since the 19th century is that they were placed in tombs along with other grave goods as phylacteries.[32] In other words, they are deemed to be functionally identical with the very much larger number of uninscribed nails certainly found in such circumstances. As I have pointed out, this cannot be confirmed in any instance, and in some cases is certainly wrong. It is of course thinkable that they are simply expensive equivalents of uninscribed defunctive nails, but there as yet is no proof (and even if one were ever actually to be found in a grave, its interpretation would only be an inference, not a 'fact') and in my view it would be best to reserve judgement on the matter.

4. *The Magical-ritual Use of Nails in Cemeteries*

Disregarding the *chiodi magici* as perhaps a special case, the overwhelmingly dominant interpretation of the defunctive nails surveyed

---

[30] These nails are between 14 and 26cm long, and bear inscriptions (individual letters and geometrical shapes). They are dated V–IV[a]. Their interpretation, like that of the inscribed metal plaques from the same site, is controversial: Ghirardini thought they were specially-made votives never intended to be used (1888, 20–37; 317–323); Whatmough 1922 saw them as votive hairpins dedicated by women before marriage; Pellegrini and Prosdocimi believe that they are non-functional *Schreibgriffel* linked to a sanctuary where writing was a votive custom and had a predominantly magical-ritual use (1967, 140–168; cf. Pascucci 1990, 28; 161, fig. 63; Eibner 2007, 83, taf. 5/5–7). On Reitia see briefly Pascal 1964, 112f.

[31] Rubensohn 1902, 229; Marshall 1904, 334 n. 11; Bevilacqua 2001, 143.

[32] Amulets: e.g. Elworthy 1895/1970, 328–330; Massoneau 1934, 113f.; Bevilacqua 2002, 132–134. In the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century it was more or less taken for granted that such nails were talismans from tombs: Saglio 1892, 1241f.; Cagnat and Chapot 1920, 195f; Leclerq 1907, 1791. Wernet 1970, 12 claims that these items formed part of the ensemble of grave goods, although he does not actually specify a necropolis, nor could he have done so.

in §2 has been that they were apotropaic amulets whose purpose was to protect the deceased from threats in the Afterlife (§4.1). I do not dispute this, but wish simply to argue that nails in a funerary context may also have had other symbolic meanings which ought not to be disregarded (§4.2–3). This justifies the word 'polysemic' in my title.

4.1. *Nails as Apotropaic Amulets*

The apotropaic use of nails has been recorded sporadically for the Greek world, including Athens, Olynthus and Sicily.[33] Most recorded cases are however Roman, dating mainly to the period I^a–II^p. As I have pointed out, most scholars have identified such nails as ritually-deposited apotropaic talismans.[34] In the case of the nails found in or by Jewish tombs of the Second Temple Period in Palestine, Hachili and Killebrew have argued that they are evidence of a custom taken over from Greek usage. This cannot be shown directly, but they cite some (much) later Rabbinical texts that speak of placing iron objects between or inside tombs to protect them against harmful spirits.[35] As for the occasional finds of nails in late-antique tombs, they were once believed, under the influence of the hagiographic and apologetic tradition, to be instruments of martyrdom, but are now generally understood, along with bells, animal-teeth, coins and semi-precious stones, as apotropaic amulets.[36]

A variant of this apotropaic hypothesis is that the nails may have been understood as protecting the deceased from actual profanation of the grave by metal-robbers or by magical practioners.[37] Quite how the nails are supposed to be effective in this context is, however, not clear

---

[33] Elworthy 1895/1970, 328f.; Orsi 1899, 256 n. 2; Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 216; Cutroni 1995, 193 n. 7.

[34] Bruzza 1874, 51; Saglio 1892, 1244; Cagnat and Chapot 1920, 195; Baradez 1959, 217–8; Wernet 1970, 12–14; Raddatz 1973, 38; Nierhaus 1959, 48–9; Uglietti 1985, 562 n. 7; García Prósper and Guérin 2002, 210f.; Hoskins 2005, 277, n. 46; Moreno 2006, 250.

[35] Hachlili and Killebrew 1999, 139f., 169; Hachlili 2005, 494, 511–516. On the Talmudic texts, see Veltri 1998, 80f. Trachtenberg mentions inter alia the Jewish custom of placing metal over the corpse so as to protect it from harm by spirits (1939/1961, 174–180).

[36] Martyrdom: Boldetti 1720, 319–326; Liverani 1872, 80, 134, 136–137, 139; Martigny 1877, 533; Leclercq 1948, 1389; 1948, 2037. Amulets: Leclercq 1948, 2036–7; Testini 1980, 149; Giuntella 1990, 221; D'Angela 1995, 322f.; Nuzzo 2000, 253.

[37] Ghirardini 1888, 319; LeGlay 1987, 248; Bevilacqua 2001, 133; Ceci 2001, 90; Maioli 2007, 108, 215.

to me: the ordinary understanding, that the nails are deployed only against malign spirits or ghosts, is surely preferable. Can a nail really be understood as a form of mute curse?

4.2. *Nails for Keeping the Dead in Place*

Four types of dead were commonly thought in the ancient world to be dangerously 'restless', i.e. tended to haunt the place where they had died: those who had died prematurely (Gk. *aōroi*), those who had died violently (Gk. *biaiothanatoi*), those who had not received proper funeral rituals (Gk. *ataphoi*, Lat. *insepulti*), and those who had died before they were able to marry for the first time (Gk. *agamoi*, Lat. *innupti*).[38] Given that fear of revenants or *morts malfaisants* is well-attested in antiquity, and that iron nails were believed to be able to 'fix' dangerous supernatural forces, some scholars have suggested that this type of magic may also have served to protect the living against the dead.[39]

There is one ancient source, albeit a burlesque, that repeatedly refers to the use of iron bonds, *magicum ferrum*…*vincula ferrea* (§2; cf. 16), to fix a ghost. The topic of one of the pseudo-Quintilianic declamations (IV[P]) is the attempt by a woman to sue her husband for having hired a magician to 'fix' the ghost of her son who enjoyed repeated visits to her after his cremation, embracing her and remaining by her all night long.[40] The idea seems to have originated in taking the wish *sit tibi terra gravis* literally (e.g. §7) and exploring the resulting possibilities in as absurd a manner as possible; the information about the alleged rituals is of course vague in the extreme (the rhetor was simply recycling literary tropes). However the use of iron bonds/chains in such rituals is taken as common knowledge, in addition to

[38] Cf. Cumont 1922, 128–147, 64–69; Johnston 1999, 127–199; Ogden 2002, 146–178; Alfayé 2009; cf. in general Jobbé-Duval 1924/2000; Stramaglia 1999; Felton 2000.

[39] E.g. Cumont 1914, 101f.; Annequin 1973, 21; Black 1986, 223; Delattre and Magnan 1988, 147; Dungworth 1998, 153, 156; Ortelli 2001, 236f.; Riquier and Salé 2006, 72.

[40] *Declam. maior* 10, pp. 199–219 Håkanson, partly tr. in Ogden 2002 no. 125; cf. Ellis 1911; Wagenvoort 1927; Stramaglia 1999, 293–299, 308–323; Ogden 2001, 178–180; Schneider and Urlacher 2004; Alfayé 2009. As is well-known, this is the sole example of such a theme in this collection. The documentary quality of these declamations is of course problematic; I take it that the rhetor is alluding to 'current belief', or 'formerly current belief', amalgamating ritual practices from a number of different sources for effect.

rituals performed at the tomb and/or over the corpse (e.g. §2, 7f., 15, 18). Like nails, chains or stanchions are physical objects that can be evoked in a number of different ways. It is familiar that statues of deities and heroes might be bound with chains as a punishment or to prevent them from moving; Pausanias for example describes how the inhabitants of Orchomenus, following the directions of the Delphic oracle, settled the malign ghost of Actaeon by giving proper burial to his remains and erecting a bronze statue to him and fixing it to a rock with iron.[41] Pseudo-Quintilian also mentions that the magician placed stones on the youth's corpse (§8: *ferro… ac lapidibus artare*, cf. 15), a ritual to prevent the dead from rising that happens to be documented archaeologically in some of the Roman cemeteries studied in this paper.[42] The magical practice of throwing spears—certainly not swords—over the tomb or the corpse so as to fix "the emerging ghost or render it powerless" (Cary and Nock 1927, 27)—also has an archaeological correlate.[43]

The pseudo-Quintilianic text purports to describe a complex ritual to fix an already active ghost. From there it is no great step to thinking that nails may have been pre-emptively deposited in tombs to prevent the dead from returning to disturb the living. A number of archaeologists have done just this, for example Doorselaer (Roman-period tombs in northern Gaul); Petit (long iron nails placed on the lids of coffins at Lutetia); Giuntella (nails deliberately placed beside late-antique graves on Sardinia); Hachlili and Killebrew (likewise, Second Temple period Jewish tombs in Palestine); and Remesal (bronze nails beside tombs at Baelo Claudia).[44] In the early 1960s, Bérard interpreted the tips of

---

[41] Paus. 9.38.5, cf. Faraone 1991, 168–179, 187, 197 n. 111; 1992, 83, 136–140; Johnston 1999, 59–62, 157f.; 2005, 303; Icard-Gianoglio 2004.

[42] Cf. Alfayé 2009. Ampurias: Almagro 1955, 22, 90 (inh. Ballesta 6); Lutetia: Petit 1984, 348; Bourgeois 1984, 294; Pithekoussai: Buchner and Ridgway 1993, 123, tomb 104; Baelo Claudia: Paris et al. 1926, 92f. with pl. 57; Fresnes-sur-Marne: Delattre and Magnan 1998, 147; London, Western Cemetery: Barber and Bowsher 2000, 323f. pl. 114; Poggio Gramignano: Soren and Soren 1999, 508, 518, 527, pl. 251, child's tomb *IB* 36.

[43] E.g. Stead 1987, 234–237 (Garton Station, North Yorkshire); Alfayé 2009. Ogden 2002, 165 claims that [Quint.] also refers to "swords being driven down into the grave, no doubt to pin the ghost down into it (compare the pinning of voodoo dolls and curse tablets)" but I cannot locate the passage, nor does he provide a section number.

[44] Doorselaer 1967, 122 ("barrières interposées entre l'âme malfaisante et les vivants"; the argument was picked up for Armorica by Galliou and Jones 1991, 113f.); Petit 1984, 348; Giuntella 1990, 221 n. 10; Hachili and Killebrew 1999, 169; Hachlili

nails (deliberately nipped off the shaft) found scattered inside some Gallo-Roman tombs at 'La Calade', Cabasse (dép. Var, I-III^{p}) as "une véritable ceinture prophylactique".[45] He reads one case in particular, the infant-burial in tomb 40, where clusters of four nails were found enclosing three *olpai* (jugs), a lamp and the child's skull, as an effort magically to fix an *aōros* to the grave. Some of these nails were bent or had been deliberately thrust into the earth, a feature paralleled in other Roman cemeteries, such as those of Picentia, Via Flaminia, Baelo Claudia, Ampurias or 'El Albir', Valencia.[46] At all these sites, the practice seems to be employed systematically, i.e. non-casually, which increases the likelihood that this was a deliberate ritual practice intended to fix the dead.

It is apparent from the archaeological record that such 'fixing' rituals were generally performed at the same time as the corpse (or ashes) was deposited in the tomb. The pseudo-Quintilianic declamation suggests however that there was, or might be, a scale of ritual violence that could be exerted upon the dead. The most extreme form of such violence—no doubt only in the case of very recalcitrant ghosts—was to pierce the skull and/or other parts of the body with nails. This practice is documented archaeologically for the ancient world: although nails found within skeletal remains may occasionally be otherwise explained (e.g. decomposition and collapse of the coffin), it is usually clear that the nails had been deliberately driven through the skull, the limbs or

---

2005, 511f.; Remesal 1979, 41 (noting "el considerable número de clavos de bronce aparecidos fuera de las tumbas de la necrópolis de *Baelo Claudia*, colocados entre las piedras que rodean las tumbas con la punta hacia fuera"); Sillières 1995, 98. See also Bourgeois 1984, 294; Delattre and Magnan 1988, 147; Riquier and Salé 2006, 72.

[45] Bérard 1961, 110–111; 115; 123; 135; 156–158 (tombs 3, 6, 13, 19, 20). For tomb 40, see idem 1963, 297–306. Other singular arrangements of nails detected in various Gallic-Roman cemeteries have also been interpreted from a magical point of view; for example, cf. Laet et al. 1972, 30, 115, pl. 72, 149b; Autexier 1976, 81 n. 7; Autexier et al. 1978, 64; Chevillot and Moissat 1980, 227–8; Mondanel and Mondanel 1988, 98; Allain 1972, 26, figs. 3–4; Allain et al. 1992, 128–129. However, as Ratel points out 1977, 83, the systematic identification of these bizarre distributions of nails as ritual evidence ought to be treated with caution.

[46] Picentia: Lagi de Caro 1995, 347f.; Via Flaminia: Ortalli 2001, 237 fig. 2; Baelo Claudia: Paris et al. 1926, 118f.; 190 nos. 46f.; Ampurias: Almagro 1955, 91 fig. 69 etc.; 'El Albir': González 2001, 360, who does not provide an explanation regarding the peculiar placing of "dos clavos de gran tamaño introducidos en la tierra con la punta hacia abajo", placed under the tombstones and fragments of *dolia* which formed the grave.

the abdomen.[47] It has even been suggested that the piercing of Oedipus' feet alludes to this practice, since it "seems to be a preemptive ritual designed to cripple a ghost in its efforts to gain revenge".[48]

These two major hypotheses interpret the presence of one or more nails in a tomb as a sympathetic magical practice primarily intended to achieve one of two main conscious intentions: to ward off supernatural danger from the deceased, and to protect the living from revenants by symbolically confining them to the grave.[49] In any given case, unless other analogous items are also present in the tomb, it is almost impossible to decide between them. Heuristically however we may posit a continuum between the two poles, apotropaic and 'fixing': it seems obvious that practices such as weighing down the corpse with stones, or driving nails through it, are to be located much farther towards to the latter pole than the mere burial of nails beside a tomb. Many cases, perhaps the majority, will have been located somewhere in the middle of the continuum, since the one intention by no means excludes the other. I incline in fact to view the deliberate deposition of nails in a funerary context as a ritual both *for* and *against* the dead, a magical practice that included both rituals expressive of affection and rituals intended to avert trouble from the unquiet dead. It may also be that in many cases local custom or belief prescribed the dominant symbolic purpose of such rituals.

4.3. *Some Deviant Cases*

This is however not quite the end of the story. There are a number of archaeological finds of nails in a funerary context that do not fit this dual protective/defensive pattern but seem to reveal other, different, symbolic intentions. They serve to confirm my earlier point about the evocative power of objects such as nails. At any rate, it seems clear that these could be employed in defunctive contexts other than for protective purposes. We may take as an example inhumation-grave 110 at Pithekoussai on Ischia (II^{P}), where a log was found on the corpse's

[47] Cf. Jobbé-Duval 1924/2000, 179–193; Alfayé 2009, eadem, forthcoming. On this practice in the Mediaeval period, cf. Caciola 1996, 15–34; for modern parallels cf. Lawson 1910, 361–484; Frazer 1933–6/2003, I, 75–87.

[48] Faraone 1991, 182 n. 62; 194, n. 103.

[49] The dual intention has been pointed out by Wolters 1935, 35–36; Wernet 1970, 14; Ratel 1977, 95f.; Chevillot and Moissat 1980, 228–9; Guillier 1992, 27; Hachlili and Killebrew 1999, 139f., 169; Ortalli 2001, 236f; Maioli 2007, 215.

abdomen with a 12cm long iron nail hammered through it, the tip pointing towards the skull.[50] A similar ritual practice, dating some five centuries earlier (III[a]), is attested by inhumation-grave 49 of the same necropolis, and in other Roman graves in the cemetery of S. Montano, also on Ischia.[51] No ready explanation for this practice is available. Then again, nails may be associated with *defixiones* in an atypical manner, for example in the cremation zone of the cemetery of Skt. Severin at Mautern on the Danube (Austria); or at Ampurias, where the famous curse tablets were found in ash-urns along with small headless nails—possibly evidence of a ritual performed to empower the execration.[52] Finally, many cases in Gallo-Roman cemeteries (I-IV[p]), and elsewhere, indicate that nails might be used to inflict ritual damage on grave goods such as ceramics or metal vessels.[53]

5. *Magical Solutions to Deadly Problems*[54]

Such considerations are however relatively marginal. The ritual deposition of nails in graves seems mainly to have been apotropaic (against attack by malign spirits), protective/defensive (to protect the living from potential revenants), or a mixture of both.[55] Unfortunately, we cannot tell whether the practice was reserved for the tombs of people who, given the circumstances of their death or their degree of social deviancy, were thought particularly likely to become 'restless dead'.[56] We can well imagine however that an attempt might have been made to neutralise such potential threats by recourse to ritual action. It is

---

[50] Buchner and Ridgway 1993, 126f. nos. 110–3 and 4, pl. CXI, no. 20.

[51] Buchner and Ridgway 1993, 74–76, 126, pl. XCI no. 22.

[52] Mautern (III[p]): Scherrer 1998, 26f. ; 71–79, pls. 14–15; Ampurias (I[a]): Almagro 1955, 61–62, pls. 22f. (inc.-tombs Ballesta 22 and 23). Apart from resp. four and two "vástagos cuadrados de clavitos sin cabeza", the grave goods consisted of a cinerary urn, the *defixiones* and, in the case of tomb 23, a small bronze tablet. The inclusion of nails, therefore, appears to be deliberate. On these curse tablets, cf. Wilburn 2005, 156–83; and see further the paper by F. Marco Simón above (p. 399).

[53] See Bérard 1963, 302–306; Ratel 1977, 92, 95 pl. 10; Chevillot and Moissat 1980, 207–14, 233–4, figs. 7–9; Mondanel and Mondanel 1988, 93f.; Simon-Hiernard 1990, 50, plate 25; Allain et al. 1992, 129, plates 40–4. Other instances in Spano 1859, 122; Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 216 pl. 44; Almagro 1953, 72f. no. 1, pl. 39.

[54] I borrow the expression from Johnston 1999, 38.

[55] Lawson 1910, 410–412, 504–506. 'Fixing' the dead can also be understood as a means of protection, since the ghost was thus helped to find peace.

[56] 'Restless dead' is the title of Johnston 1999 (cf. n. 38 above). On the funerary indications of social deviancy cf. Shay 1985; Hope 2000, 116–120; Alfayé 2009.

surely significant that a considerable percentage of the nails discussed here derive from infants' burials; infants are one of the categories of particularly dangerous dead (see Table 2).[57]

On the other hand, this does not mean that such practices must have been immutable or have had a single significance over their whole range. Judging from the documentation analysed here, the practice established itself in the western part of the Roman Empire during the Late Republic and became increasingly common during the High Empire. This chronological and geographical spread still needs to be explained.

We must also reject mono-causal explanations in favour of multifactorial approaches more in keeping with the polysemic significance of the nail in the ancient world. Just to take the evidence of tomb 40 at 'La Calade', we can find nails employed in the construction of the coffin, used to pass grave-goods 'over' into the next world, and again as ritual deposits of my type.[58] It is however obvious that if we are to expand our material basis, we need meticulous excavations that actually see the light of day; we also need further secondary studies documenting the distribution, orientation and context of nails found in the archaeological funerary record.[59] More primary material and further careful analysis offer the only hope of identifying the symbolic value of such nails more precisely, and so ultimately of teasing out their multiple meanings. Unfortunately, nails continue to be considered archaeologically insignificant, and reports of cemetery excavations often lack detailed information on such items.

Nevertheless I believe that we already possess sufficient data to support the view that the deliberate deposition of nails in tombs is a dual form of protective magic. This conclusion does not necessarily exclude other explanations; we should be looking for mutually complementary accounts. As Lombardi puts it:

---

[57] On this category, see Jobbé-Duval 1924/2000, 68–73; Vtervrugt-Lentz 1960; Johnston 1999, 161–199. Note some further instances of special rituals linked to children's burial in the Roman period: Bérard 1963; Hampartumian 1978, 473–477; Mondanel and Mondanel 1988, 98–100; Allain et al. 1992, 128; Guillier 1992; Soren and Soren 1999, 461–652; Martin-Kircher 2000; Laubenheimer 2004; Vaquerizo 2004, 169–199; Riquier and Salé 2006.

[58] Bérard 1963, 295–306.

[59] Autexier et al. 1978, 64.

> forse *la* spiegazione non esiste, esistono *le* spiegazioni…Non ci possiamo consentire l'ottimismo della spiegazione, dobbiamo ricercare le spiegazioni tenendo conto che i simboli sono polisensi, e potrebbero anche essere ambigui.[60]

Let me end by repeating the point that greater refinement in our understanding of the polysemic connotations of defunctive nails is only to be expected if practical archaeologists regularly make a point in their reports of ancient cemeteries of noting such apparently insignificant details in all their diversity, and if those reports are actually published. Only when that primary information is available can others perform the secondary task of comparison and analysis.

Bibliography

Alfayé, S. 2009. *Sit tibi terra gravis*: Magical-ritual Practices against *Restless Dead* in the Ancient World, in F. Marco, F. Pina and J. Remesal (eds.), *Formae mortis. El tránsito de la vida a la muerte en las sociedades antiguas* (Barcelona) 181–216.

——. Forthcoming. Dreadful Burials: Corpses and Skulls Pierced by Nails in the Ancient World, in R. Fisher and S. Morris (eds.), *Monsters and the Monstrous. Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil* (Oxford).

Allain, J. 1972. Secrets d'une tombe antique, *Archeologia* 44, 24–7.

Allain, J., Fauduet, I. and Tuffreau-Libre, M. 1992. *La nécropole gallo-romaine du Champ de l'Image à Argentomagus (Saint-Marcel, Indre)* (Saint-Marcel).

Almagro, M. 1953. *Las necrópolis de Ampurias, 1: Introducción y necrópolis griegas* (Barcelona).

——. 1955. *Las necrópolis de Ampurias, 2* (Barcelona).

Angelucci, S. et alii. 1990. Sepolture e riti nella necropoli dell'Isola Sacra, *Bollettino di Archaeologia* 5–6, 49–116.

Annequin, J. 1973. *Recherches sur l'action magique et ses représentations (I^er^–II^ème^ siècles après J.C.)*. Publ. du Centre de Recherches d'Histoire Ancienne, Besançon 8 = *ALUBesançon* 146 (Paris).

Autexier, J.-Y. 1976. Cinq sépultures en coffre cinéraire provenant de la région d'Auzances (Creuse), *Revue Archéologique du Centre* 15, fasc. 1–2, 75–96.

Autexier, J.-Y., Moret, S. and Roche, J.L. 1978. La nécropole de Louroux (Creuse), *Revue Archéologique du Centre de la France* 65–66, 51–67.

Baradez, J. 1959. *Nouvelles fouilles à Tipasa. Dans une nécropole païenne* (Algiers).

Barber, B. and Bowsher, D. 2000. *The Eastern Cemetery of Roman London. Excavations 1983–1990* (London).

Belluci, G. 1919. *I chiodi nell' etnografia* (Perugia).

Bérard, G. 1961. La nécropole gallo-romaine de la Calade, à Cabasse (Var), *Gallia* 19, 105–58.

——. 1963. La nécropole gallo-romaine de la Calade, à Cabasse (Var). Deuxième campagne de fouilles (1962), *Gallia* 21, 295–306.

Bevilacqua, G. 2001. Chiodi magici, *Archaeologia Classica* 52, 129–50.

[60] Lombardi 1995, 342f; Maioli 2007, 108.

Black, E.W. 1986. Romano-British Burial Customs and Religious Beliefs in South-East England, *Archaeological Journal* 143, 201–39.
Blaizot, F. et al. 2004. L'ensemble funéraire de l'Antiquité Tardive et du Haut Moyen Âge de Sainte-Barbe à Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin), *Revue Archéologique de l'Est* 53, 85–188.
Bohak, G. 2008. *Ancient Jewish Magic. A history* (Cambridge).
Boldetti, M.A. 1720. *Osservazioni sopra i cimiteri de' Santi Martiri, ed Antichi Cristiani de Roma* (Rome).
Bourgeois, L. 1984. Les nécropoles gallo-romaines d'Ile-de-France: un état de la recherche, in VVAA, *Gallo-Romains en Ile-de-France* (Paris) 290–312.
Brelich, A. 1937. *Aspetti della morte nelle iscrizioni sepolcrali dell'Impero Romano* (Budapest).
Bruzza, L. 1874. *Iscrizioni antiche Vercellesi* (Rome).
Buchner, G. and Ridgway, D. 1993. *Pithekoussai, 1: La necropoli. Tombe 1–723 scavate dal 1952 al 1961* (Rome).
Caciola, N. 1996. Wraiths, Revenants and Rituals in Medieval Culture, *Past and Present* 152, 3–45.
Cagnat, R. and Chapot, V. 1920. *Manuel d'archéologie romaine*, 2 (Paris).
Cantilena, R. 1995. Un obolo per Caronte, *La Parola del Passato* 50, 165–77.
Cary, M. and Nock, A.D. 1927. Magical Spears, *CQ* 21, 122–27.
Castella, D. 1987. *La nécropole du Port d'Avenches* (Avenches).
Ceci, F. 2001. L'interpretazione di monete e chiodi in contesti funerari: esempi dal suburbio romano, in Heinzelmann 2001, 87–97.
Chapon, P. et al. 2004. Les nécropoles de Vernègues (B.-du-Rh.). Deux ensembles funéraires du Haut Empire à la périphérie d'une agglomération secondaire, *Revue d'Archéologie Narbonnaise* 37, 109–209.
Chausserie-Lapree, J. and Nin, N. 1987. La nécropole à incinération d'époque augustéenne de La Gatasse, commune de Martigues (Bouches-du-Rhône), in AA. VV., *Nécropoles à incinération du Haut-Empire. Table ronde de Lyon. 30 et 31 mai 1986* (Lyon) 77–85.
Chevillot, C., and Moissat, J.-C. 1980. Une sépulture gallo-romaine à incinération (II^{ème} siècle) au lieu-dit « Les grandes Terres », Commune de Neuvic. Réflexions sur les rites funéraires, *Bulletin de la Société Historique et Archéologique du Périgord Périgueux*, 107.3, 198–240.
Clarke, G. 1979. *The Roman Cemetery at Lankhills* (Oxford).
Colonna, G. 2001. Divinazione e culto di Rath/Apollo a Caere (a proposito del santuario in loc. S. Antonio), *Archeologia Classica* 52.2, 151–73.
Cumont, F. 1914. *Comment la Belgique fut romanisée* (Brussels and Paris).
——. 1922. *After-Life in Roman Paganism* (New Haven and London).
Cutroni, A. 1995. La Sicilia, *La Parola del Passato* 50, 189–216.
Delattre, V. and Magnan, D. 1998. *Vivus fecit* ou l'inhumation gallo-romaine en Pays meldois, in eaed. (eds.), *Profane et sacré en Pays meldois. Protohistoire gallo-romaine* (Meaux) 145–52.
D'Angela, C. 1995. Contesti tombali tardoantichi e altomedievali, *La Parola del Passato* 50, 319–26.
Dickie, M.V. 2003. *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York).
Doorselaer, A. van. 1967. *Les necropoles d'époque romaine en Gaule septentrionale* (Bruges).
Dungworth, D. 1998. Mystifying Roman Nails: *clavus annalis*, *defixiones* and *minkisi*, in P. Barker (ed.), *TRAC 97* (Oxford) 148–59.
Eibner, A. 2007. Figürlich verzierte Bronzebleche. Devotionalien der Eisenzeit. Ein Überlick über Opferrituale und ihre Hinterlassenschaften, in M. Hainzmann (ed.), *Auf der Spuren keltischer Götterverehrung* (Vienna) 81–102.

Ellis, R. 1911. *The Tenth Declamation of (Pseudo) Quintilian* (Oxford).
Elworthy, F.T. 1895. *The Evil Eye. The Origins and Practices of Superstition* (London; repr. 1970).
Evans, E., and Maynard, D.J. 1997. Caerleon Lodge Hill Cemetery: The Abbeyfield Site 1992, *Britannia* 28, 169–244.
Falzone, S., Olivanti, P. and Pellegrino, A. 2001. La necropoli di Fralana (Acilia), in Heinzelmann 2001, 127–38.
Faraone, C.A. 1991. Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of "Voodoo Dolls" in Ancient Greece, *Classical Antiquity* 10, 165–221.
——. 1992. *Talismans and Trojan Horses. Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New York and Oxford).
Felton, D. 2000, *Haunted Greece and Rome. Ghost Stories from Classical Antiquity* (Austin TX).
Fontvielle, M.E. 1987. Nécropole à incinération d'Alleans à Baugy (Cher), in AA.VV., *Nécropoles à incinération du Haut-Empire* (Lyon) 129–33.
Foresti, L.A. 1979. Zur Zeremonie der Nagelschlagung in Rom und Etrurien, *AJAH* 4, 144–58.
Frazer, J.G. 1933–6. *The Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion. Lectures given…at Trinity College, Cambridge 1932–33*. 3 vols. (London; repr. Richmond 1994 [= *Complete Works* vols. 21–3]; also London and New York 2003).
Galliou, P., and Jones, M. 1991. *The Bretons* (Oxford).
García Prósper, E., and Guérin, P. 2002. Nuevas aportaciones en torno a la necrópolis romana de la calle Quart de Valencia (s. II a.C.–IV d.C.), in D. Vaquerizo (ed.), *Espacios y usos funerarios en el Occidente romano* (Cordoba) 203–16.
Gazin-Schwartz, A. 2001. Archaeology and Folklore of Material Culture: Ritual and Everyday Life, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 5, 263–80.
Ghirardini, G. 1888. Intorno alle antichità scoperte nel fondo Baratela. Parte V. Ricerche e deduzioni, *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità (*Rome), 313–85.
Giuntella, A.M. 1990. Sepultura e rito: consuetudini e innovazioni, in AA.VV., *Le sepolture in Sardegna dal VI al VII secolo* (Oristano) 215–30.
——. 1999. *Cornus I.1: L'area cimiteriale orientale* (Oristano).
González, J. 2001. *El mundo funerario romano en el País Valenciano. Monumentos funerarios y sepulturas entre los siglos I a.C.–VII d.C.* (Madrid and Alicante).
Gordon, R.L. 1999. Imagining Greek and Roman Magic, in Ankarloo/Clark 1999, 159–276.
——. 2002. Another View of the Pergamon Divination Kit, *JRA* 15, 189–198.
Graf, F. 1997. *Magic in the Ancient World*. Tr. F. Philip (Cambridge MA; first publ. in French, Paris 1994).
Guillier, G. 1992. Une nécropole d'enfants d'époque gallo-romaine à Sommesous (Marne), *Revue Archéologique Sites* 52, 16–29.
Hachlili, R. 2005. *Jewish Funerary Customs: Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Leyden).
Hachlili, R., and Killebrew, A.E. 1999. *Jericho. The Jewish Cemetery of the Second Temple Period* (Jerusalem).
Hampartumian, N. 1978. Child-burials and Superstition in the Roman Cemetery of Sucidava (Dacia), in M.B. de Boer and T.A. Edridge (eds.), *Hommages à Maarten J. Vermaseren*. EPROER 68 (Leyden) 1: 473–77.
Heim, R.L.M. 1892. Incantamenta magica graeca latina, *Jahrbuch für classische Philologie*, Supplb. 19, 465–575. Also as separatum (Leipzig).
Heinzelmann, M. (ed.) 2001. *Römischer Bestattungsbrauch und Beigabensitten in Rom, Norditalien und den Nord-Westlichen Provinzen von den späten Republik bis in die Kaiserzeit/Culto dei morti e costumi funerari romani. Internationales Kolloquium, DAI Rom, 1–3 April 1998* (Wiesbaden).

Hope, V.M. 2000. Contempt and Respect: The Treatment of the Corpse in Ancient Rome, in eadem and E. Marshall (eds.), *Death and Disease in the Ancient City* (London and New York) 104–27.
Hoskins, M.E. 2005. Unquiet Graves: Burial Practices of the Roman Corinthians, in N.D. Schowalter and S.J. Friesen (eds.), *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Cambridge) 249–80.
Icard-Gianolio, N. 2004. Statues enchaînées. *ThesCRA* 2: 468–71.
Jobbé-Duval, E. 1924. *Les Morts malfaisants. Larvae, lemures d'après le droit et les croyances populaires des romains* (Paris; repr. Paris 2000).
Jorio, A. del. 1824. *Metodo per rinvenire e frugare i sepolcri degli antichi* (Naples).
Johnston, S.I. 1999. *Restless Dead. Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley and Los Angeles).
——. 2005. Delphi and the Dead, in eadem and P.T. Truck (eds.), *Mantikê. Studies in Ancient Divination* (Leyden) 283–306.
Jullian, C., Gaidoz, H. and Volkov, T. 1902. Cadavres percés de clous, *REA* 4, 300–1.
Kurtz, D.C., and Boardman, J. 1971. *Greek Burial Customs* (London).
Lacroix, B. 1956. Un sanctuaire de source du IV^{e} siècle aux Fontaines-Salées, *Revue Archéologique de l'Est et du Centre-Est* 7, 245–67.
Laet, S.J. de, et al. 1972. *La nécropole gallo-romaine de Blicquy (Hainaut-Belgique)* (Bruges).
Lagi de Caro, A. 1995. Dibattito, *La Parola del Passato* 50, 345–48.
Laubenheimer, F. 2004. La mort des tout-petits dans l'Occident romain, in V. Dasen (ed.), *Naissance et petite enfance dans l'Antiquité* (Fribourg) 293–316.
Lawson, J.C. 1910. *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion. A Study in Survivals* (Cambridge).
Leclercq, H. 1907. s.v. Amulettes, *DACL* 2.2, 1784–1860.
——. 1948. s.v. Chiusi, *DACL* 3.1, 1386–1402.
——. 1948. s.v. Clou, *DACL* 3.2, 2034–37.
LeGlay, M. 1987. La magie et la mort, in F. Hinard (ed.), *La mort, les morts et l'au-delà dans le monde romain: Actes du Colloque de Caen, 20–22 nov. 1985* (Caen) 245–48.
Lethbridge, T.C. 1935–6. Romano-British Burials at Linton, Cambridgeshire, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 37, 68–71.
Liverani, F. 1872. *Le catacombe e antichità cristiane di Chiusi* (Siena).
Lombardi, M. 1995. Dibattito, *La Parola del Passato* 50, 342–45.
Loridant, F. 1992. Les nécropoles du sud-ouest de Bavay d'après les fouilles de Maurice Hénault, *Revue du Nord—Archéologie* 74, 91–114.
Louis, R. 1938. Les thermes gallo-romaines des Fontaines-Salées à Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay (Yonne). Quatrième campagne de fouilles, *RA* n.s. 9, 233–318.
Maioli, M.G. 2007. Magia e superstizione, in J. Ortalli and D. Neri (eds.), *Immagini divine. Devozioni e divinità nella vita quotidiana dei Romani, testimonianze archeologiche dall'Emilia Romagna* (Bologna) 99–112.
Marshall, F.H. 1904. Antique Rings Pierced with Gold Nails, *JHS* 24, 332–35.
Martigny, J.A. 1877. *Dictionnaire des antiquités chrétiennes* (Paris).
Martin-Kircher, S. 2000. *Mors immatura* in the Roman World—a Mirror of Society and Tradition, in Pearce, Millett and Struck 2000, 63–77.
Martorelli, R. 2000. I materiali metallici: gli oggetti di corredo, in A.M. Giuntella (ed.), *Cornus. I. 2: L'area cimiteriale orientale. I materiali* (Oristano) 23–50.
Massoneau, E. 1934. *La magie dans l'Antiquité romaine* (Paris).
Mastrocinque, A. 2002. The Divinatory Kit from Pergamon and Greek Magic in Late Antiquity, *JRA* 15, 173–88.
Merrifield, R. 1987. *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (London).
Miro, E. de. 1989. *Agrigento. La necropoli greca di Pezzino* (Messina).

Mondanel, C., and Mondanel, D. c. 1988. *Sépultures et nécropoles gallo-romaines en Auvergne. Revue Archéologique Sites*, Hors-série 34 (n.p. [Avignon]).
Moreno, E. 2006. Manifestaciones funerarias de época altoimperial en *Colonia Patricia*, *Anales de Arqueología Cordobesa* 17, 225–58.
Morris, I. 1992. *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge).
Nuzzo, D. 2000. Amulet and Grave in Late Antiquity: Some Examples from Roman Cemeteries, in Pearce, Millett and Struck 2000, 249–55.
Ogden, D. 1999. Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds, in Ankarloo/Clark 1999, 1–90.
——. 2001. *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (Princeton).
——. 2002. *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman World: A Sourcebook* (New York and Oxford).
Orsi, P. 1899. Camarina (Campagna archeologica del 1896), *MonAL* 9, 201–78.
Ortelli, J. 2001. Il culto funerario nella Cispadana romana. Rappresentazione e interiorità, in Heinzelmann 2001, 215–42.
Paris, P., et al. 1926. *Fouilles de Belo (Bolonia, province de Cadix) 1927–1921, 2: La nécropole* (Paris).
Pascal, C. 1964. *The Cults of Cisalpine Gaul.* Collection Latomus 75 (Brussels).
Pascucci, P. 1990. *I depositi votivi paleoveneti. Per un'archeologia del culto. Archaeologia veneta* 13 (whole volume).
Pearce, J., Millett, M. and Struck, M. (eds.) 2000. *Burial, Society and Context in the Roman World* (Oxford).
Pellegrini, G.B., and Prosdocimi, A.L. 1967. *La lengua venetica, 1: Le iscrizioni* (Padua).
Pellegrino, A. 2001. La necropoli della via Ostiense ad Acilia, in Heinzelmann 2001, 123–25.
Petit, M. 1984. Les nécropoles de Lutèce, in L.-C. Feffer (ed.), *Lutèce : Paris de César à Clovis: Exposition Musée Carnavalet et Musée nationale… de Cluny, 3 mai 1984–printemps 1985* (Paris) 348–49.
Preisendanz, K. 1972. s.v. Fluchtafel (*Defixion*), *RfAC* 8, 2–30.
Quilici, L. and Quilici, S. 1998. Richerche di topografia per la forma urbana di Veroli, in eid. (eds.), *Città e monumenti nell'Italia Antica* (Rome) 157–224.
Raddatz, K. 1973. *Mulva I. Die Grabungen in der Nekropole in den Jahren 1957 und 1958* (Mainz).
Ratel, R. 1977. La nécropole gallo-romaine de 'Gratte Dos', Commune de Meuilley, Côte-d'Or., 1, *Revue Archéologique de l' Est et du Centre-Est* 28, 63–98.
Remesal, J. 1979. *La necrópolis sureste de Baelo* (Madrid).
Riquier, S. and Salé, P. 2006. La nécropole du Haut-Empire de Tavant (Indre-et-Loire), in *Ensembles funéraires gallo-romains de la Région Centre. I. Supplément à la Révue Archéologique du Centre de la France* 29 (Tours) 7–108.
Robinson, A. 1942. *Necrolynthia. A Study in Greek Burial Customs and Anthropology* (Baltimore).
Rubensohn, O. 1902. Paros III. Pythion und Asklepeion, *MDAI (A)* 27, 189–238.
Saglio, E. 1892. s.v. Clavus, *D-S* 1.2, 1238–42.
Salin, E. 1952. *La civilisation mérovingienne. D'après les sépultures, les textes et le laboratoire, 2: Les sépultures* (Paris).
Scherrer, P. 1998. Heiligtum oder Grabmal? Spurensuche nach 50 Jahren, in C. Ertel et al. (eds.), *Römermuseum Favianis—Skt. Severin, Mautern/Donau* (Mautern) 71–9.
Schneider, C. and Urlacher, C. 2004. Rationnel et irrationnel dans le *Sepulchrum incantatum* du Pseudo-Quintilien, in O. Bianchi and O. Thévenaz (eds.), Mirabilia. *Conceptions et représentations de l'extraordinaire dans le monde antique* (Bern) 99–113.

Shay, T. 1985. Differentiated Treatment of Deviancy at Death as Revealed in Anthropological and Archaeological Material, *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 4, 221–241.
Sillières, P. 1995. *Baelo Claudia, une cité romaine de Bétique* (Madrid).
Simmonds, A., Márquez-Grant, N. and Loe, L. 2008. *Life and Death in a Roman City. Excavation of a Roman cemetery with a mass grave at 120–122 London Road, Gloucester* (Oxford).
Simon-Hiernard, D. 1990. *Poitiers : la nécropole du quartier de Blossac-Saint-Hilaire (I^er^–III^e^ s. après J.-C.)* (Poitiers).
Soren, D. and Soren, N. (eds.) 1999. *A Roman Villa and a Late Roman Infant Cemetery. Excavation at Poggio Gramignano, Lugnano in Teverina* (Rome).
Spano, G. 1859. Chiodi di bronzo e di ferro che si trovano nelle sepulture, *Bollettino Archaeologico di Sardegna* 5.8, 122–3.
Squarciapino, M.F. (cur.). 1958. *Scavi di Ostia, III. Le necropoli. Parte I. Le tombe di età repubblicana e augustea* (Rome).
Stead, I. 1987. Garton Station, *Current Archaeology* 103, 234–37.
Storoni, L. 1973. *Iscrizioni funerarie, sortilegi e pronostici di Roma antica* (Turin).
Stramaglia, A. 1999. *Res inauditae, incredulae. Storie di fantasma nel mondo greco-latino* (Bari).
Testini, P. 1980. *Archeologia cristiana*[2] (Bari).
Toutain, J. 1920. *Les cultes païens dans l'Empire romain* (Paris).
Trachtenberg, J. 1939. *Jewish Magic and Superstition. A Study in Folk Religion* (New York; repr. Cleveland 1961; New York 1970; Philadelphia 2006 etc.).
Tupet, A.M. 1976. *La magie dans la poésie latine des origines à la fin du règne d'Auguste* (Paris).
——. 1986. Rites magiques dans l'antiquité romaine, *ANRW* II.16.3, 2591–675.
Uglietti, M.C. 1985. Materiali in ferro, in G. Sena and M.P. Lavizzari (eds.), *Angera romana. Scavi della necropoli 1970–1979*, 2 (Rome) 559–73.
Vaquerizo, D. 2004. *Immaturi et innupti. Terracotas figuradas en ambiente funerario de Corduba, Colonia Patricia* (Barcelona).
Vegas, M. 1988. *Mulva II. Die Südnekropole von Munigua. Grabungskampagnen 1977 bis 1983* (Mainz).
Veltri, G. 1998. The Rabbis and Pliny the Elder: Jewish and Graeco-Roman Attitudes toward Magic and Empirical Knowledge, *Poetics Today* 19, 63–89.
Vesly, L. de. 1909. *Les fana ou petits temples gallo-romains de la région normande* (Rouen).
Vollmer, A. and López, A. 1995. Nueva aproximación a la necrópolis romana de incineración de Les Corts (Ampurias), in *Actas del XXIII Congreso Nacional de Arqueología* (Elche) 2: 129–40.
Vtervrugt-Lentz, J. 1960. *Mors immatura* (Groningen).
Wagenvoort, H. 1927. *Sepulchrum incantatum*, *Mnemosyne* 55, 425–48.
Watson, S. 2003. *An Excavation in the Western Cemetery of Roman London: Atlantic House, City of London* (London).
Wernet, P. 1970. Les crânes cloués de la Butte Saint-Michel à Strasbourg, *Cahiers Alsaciens d'archéologie, d'art et d'histoire* 14, 5–26.
Whatmough, J. 1922. Rehtia, the Venetic Godess of Healing, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain* 52, 212–29.
Wilburn, A.T. 2005. *Materia magica: The archaeology of magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (diss. University of Michigan).
Wolters, X.F.M.G. 1935. *Notes on Antique Folklore. On the Basis of Pliny,* NH *XXVIII 22–29* (Amsterdam).
Wünsch, R. 1905. *Antikes Zaubergerät aus Pergamon*, JdI Ergänzungsheft 6 (Berlin).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MAGIC AT SEA: AMULETS FOR NAVIGATION[1]

Sabino Perea Yébenes

Introduction

The ancient Greek and Roman Lapidaries (i.e. books dealing with amuletic stones) are significant in the context of the subject of the Zaragoza conference in exemplifying the complex relationships between Greek and Latin texts (and indeed Babylonian and Arabic texts) on magical themes. For these pseudonymous or anonymous works were 'living texts', constantly borrowing from one another in search of authority and materials.[2] The most familiar extant source for the ancient post-Theophrastan literature of stones and their properties is of course Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* Books 36–37, referring to numerous earlier writers in Greek and one or two in Latin, but important additional information is supplied by the 774 hexameters of the Greek *Orphic Lapidary*,[3] and a number of related texts of uncertain but relatively late date which were first published as a group by Eugen Abel in 1881 (Abel 1881), followed by de Mély in 1898 (de Mély 1898), as part of his great joint work with C.E. Ruelle, *Les lapidaires de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Âge* (Paris 1898–1902).[4] This paper provides an introduction to

---

[1] I use the term Lapidaries to refer to the group of texts edited and translated in Halleux and Schamp 1985. The following special abbreviations have been used:
Damigeron-Evax = Damigeron, *De Lapidibus* as transl. into Latin by 'Evax', in Halleux and Schamp 1985, 230–90.
Kerygm. = *Orphei Lithika Kerygmata* (= Ὀρφέως λιθικὰ κηρύγματα) in Halleux and Schamp 1985, 146–65.
Lithika = *Orphei Lithica* = *Orphic Lapidary* in Halleux and Schamp 1985, 79–123.
Socr. et Dion. = Σωκράτους καὶ Διονυσίου περὶ λίθων in Halleux and Schamp 1985, 166–77.

[2] The textual tradition of Damigeron-Evax in particular is extremely complex.

[3] Schamp ap. Halleux and Schamp 1985, 57.

[4] See Halleux and Schamp 1985, vii–ix; on the *Lithika* in general, see still Rossbach 1910, 1101–15; Hopfner 1926; Wellmann 1935.

this diverse lore by taking a single short text about stones connected with the sea, the so-called *Nautical Lapidary*, of Byzantine date, which clearly borrows from some of the other known texts, especially Damigeron-Evax and the materials that lie behind Pliny's information and that of the *Orphic Lapidary*.

The *Nautical Lapidary* is an anonymous text preserved in three manuscript versions, all in Paris.[5] The only important one, *Paris. Gr.* 2424, also contains several writings on astrology and divination, including one by 'Astrampsychus'.[6] The *Lapidary* is found on f.190, in a column that also contains citations from the Pythagoreans and Posidonius on the formation of comets, a citation from 'Demostratus' on the magical properties of seal-fat, and extracts from Timothy of Gaza's bulky work on zoological curiosities.[7]

The text lists just seven or eight stones said to benefit navigation, and the amulets to be made to achieve this purpose. Almost all these stones have external physical properties that connect them metonymically with the sea: they may be transparent or green, or blue, or their fiery red colour connotes storms and lightning. This and other lapidaries ascribe to such amulets the property of warding off misfortunes at sea, or of allowing the victims to survive them. Ships are tacitly understood to be exposed to the negative influence of natural phenomena that originate in the depths and affect the surface (e.g. tsunamis); and to atmospheric phenomena that may harm or sink them, such as lightning, hailstorms, typhoons and hurricanes. In addition, there are dan-

---

[5] Text and introduction in Halleux and Schamp 1985, 179–89; cf. Hopfner 1926, 766. The Greek title is: Ὅσοι τῶν λίθων εἰς ἀνακωχὴν ζάλης καὶ τρικυμίας θαλάσσης. The mss. are: *Cod. Parisinus Graecus* 2424 (late XIVth cent.); *P. Graecus* 2421; *P. Graecus* 2422 (both XVIth cent. copies of 2424 on paper).

[6] He is mentioned by Diogenes Laertius, pr. 1, 2; and the *Suda* s.v. Astrampsychos, which claims he wrote a treatise on veterinary medicine and another on the interpretation of dreams. A number of surviving occult works are ascribed to him, including oracles and a *philtrokatadesmos* (*PGrMag* VIII 1–63), and texts on geomancy and on oneiromancy, of which 101 lines survive, cf. S. Montero, *Diccionario de adivinos, magos y astrólogos de la Antigüedad* (Madrid 1977) 83 (with bibliography). For the well-known *sortes Astrampsychi*, see G.M. Browne, The Composition of the Sortes Astrampsychi, *BICS* 17 (1970) 95–100; idem, *The Papyri of the Sortes Astrampsychi* (Meisenheim am Glan 1974).

[7] Halleux and Schamp 1985, 182. Damostratus (consistently spelled 'Demostratus' by Pliny and Aelian) was an alleged Roman senator under the early Empire who wrote amusingly, but at great length, on the denizens of the sea (*Halieutika*), the source of much of Aelian's lore on these matters, cf. M. Wellmann, s.v. Damostratos no. 5, *RE* 4 (1901) 2080f. Timothy of Gaza was a Byzantine grammarian active c. 500 CE, cf. S. Matthaios, s.v. Timotheos no. 14, *DNP* 12.1 (2002) 601.

gers due to human-beings, such as attacks by pirates or, in wartime, the enemy. The amulets are claimed to be effective against some or all of these negative forces.

1. *Stones and amulets listed by the* Nautical Lapidary

The Greek text of the *Nautical Lapidary* reads as follows:

1. Ἄνθραξ καὶ χαλκηδώνιος ἀπὸ παιδίου φορούμενος ναυαγήσαντας ὑποβρυχίους οὐκ ἐᾷ γενέσθαι.
2. Ἀδάμας καὶ ὁ γλαῦκος καλούμενος ὁ ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ περὶ τὸ Πάγγαιον ὄρος ὃς χαλάζῃ ἔοικεν ἀποτρόπαιος μεγίστου κλύδωνος καὶ τυφῶνος. Τὰ ὅμοια δὲ δύναται καὶ ὁ παρὰ Ἰνδοῖς εὑρισκόμενος, ὁ τῷ εἴδει πυρρὸς καὶ ἀργυροειδής. Κρείσσων δὲ ὁ σιδηρίζων.
3. Βήρυλλος ὁ διαυγὴς καὶ λαμπρὸς ὁ θαλασσόχρους. Γλυφέσθω ἐν αὐτῷ Ποσειδῶν ἐφ᾽ ἅρματι διπώλῳ βεβηκὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς διὰ θαλάσσης ὁδεύουσιν ἀπήμων ταῖς ταραχαῖς ἔστω.
4. Δρύοψ λίθος ἔχων τὸ μέσον λευκὸν ἁρμόζει καὶ αὐτὸς πρὸς εὔπλοιαν.
5. Κουράλιος σὺν δέρματι φώκης εἰς τὸ καρχήσιον τοῦ πλοίου περιαπτόμενος ἀντιπάσχει ἀνέμοις καὶ κλύδωσι καὶ ἀκαταστασίαις παντοίων ὑδάτων.
6. Ὀφιόκοιλος λίθος γενόμενος ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσι τῆς Αἰγύπτου ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ φολίδας διεζωσμένας καθάπερ ὄφεως κοίλια. Τοῦτον ἐάν τις ἔχῃ, ἀκίνδυνος ἐν ζάλῃ θαλάσσης διαφυλαχθήσεται.
7. Ὀψιανὸς λίθος μέλας οὐ λίαν, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπόχλωρος, εὑρισκόμενος ἐν τῇ Φρυγίᾳ καὶ Γαλατίᾳ ὃς καὶ πίσσα καλεῖται διὰ τὸ προστριβόμενον αὐτὸν ὀσμην παρέχειν πίσσης. Χρήσιμος δέ ἐστι φορούμενος τοῖς κατὰ θάλασσαν καὶ ποταμοὺς τὴν πορείαν ποιουμένοις.

Translation:

These are the stones that calm typhoons and the waves of the sea.

1. The carbuncle and the chalcedony, if worn from childhood, prevent you from going under if your ship is wrecked.
2. The diamond, particularly the type called 'blue-green' found in Macedonia near Mount Pangaeus, and which looks like a hailstone, protects against the biggest waves and typhoons. The same power is possessed by the variety found in India, of a reddish-silver colour. The most powerful one is the type that looks like iron.

3. The beryl, transparent and bright, the colour of the sea. An image of Poseidon in a chariot with two horses should be carved on it; and may anyone who travels by sea remain unharmed by the tumults of the waves.
4. The dryops, with a white spot in the middle, is also effective for a good voyage.
5. The coral, sewn into a piece of seal-skin and tied as an amulet to the top of the mast, serves to counter the winds, waves and turbulence in all manner of waters.
6. The snake-belly stone is formed (lit.: is generated) in the mountains of Egypt. It has scales laid out in rows like the belly of a snake. Whoever carries it with him will be thoroughly safe from danger during storms at sea.
7. The obsian stone (obsidian) is not completely black but has a greenish tinge. It is found in Phrygia and Galatia. It is also called the 'pitch' stone because of the smell of pitch it emits when rubbed. When worn, it helps those who travel by sea or on rivers.

It is worth providing a brief commentary here on the qualities of these eight stones, stressing the properties, particularly the aquatic or marine connections, that are assigned to them by other Lapidaries.[8]

1.1. *Anthrax and Chalcedony*

Anthrax, in Latin *carbunculus*, also known as *anthracites*,[9] is a 'false haematite', since it resembles that stone as regards its shine and black

[8] The term 'stone' is generic in the Lapidaries. No distinction is made between crystalline and amorphous rocks, vitreous rocks (such as obsian/obsidian) and organic gems (either fossil or animal, coral being the most important of the latter group).

[9] Pliny, *HN* 36.148, cites Sotacus as his authority for the name *anthracites*. Isidore explains the shade of difference between the two stones: "Of all the igneous gems, the main one is the carbuncle, so called because it has a glowing colour like coal, whose gleam even the night cannot reduce, as it shines in the dark in such a manner as to launch its rays into the eyes (*cuius fulgor nec nocte vincitur; lucet enim in tenebris adeo ut flammas ad oculos vibret*). There are twelve distinct types; the most notable are those that seem to shine and give off a type of fire. In Greek, the carbuncle is called *anthrax*. It is found in Libya, among the cave-dwellers. *Anthracitis* is so called because it has the colour of fire, like the carbuncle, but it has a white band round it. One of its properties is that when it is thrown onto the fire, it is extinguished as if it were lifeless; however, when it is sprinkled with water, it shines even more (*cuius proprium est quod iactatus igni velut intermortuus extinguitur, at contra aquis perfusus exardescit*)" (Isidore, *Etym*. 16.14.1).

colour, but not internally, or in terms of hardness. The name suggests that it is not a crystalline stone but fossil coal.[10] But coal is obviously not a precious stone, so we should assume, as is generally done, that the name was given, by extension, to stones that have a fiery red colour, resembling embers. It has been suggested that it might be a ruby,[11] though in his lengthy account of this stone Pliny makes no allusion to the sea (*HN* 37.92–98). It might also be a garnet or spinel. These stones are known as 'anthrax stones' because of their deep red colour.[12] However, here again there is no obvious link to water.[13] The *Lapidary of Socrates and Dionysius* claims that the chalcedony is flame-coloured (τὴν χροιὰν πυραυγής), just like the *anthrax*-carbuncle, which would explain why the *Nautical Lapidary* links them here.[14]

Although the *Nautical Lapidary* is the sole text to link the *anthrax-carbunculus* with life-saving at sea, two other Lapidaries specify that the chalcedony does precisely this. They also provide parallel, though distinct, instructions concerning the appropriate image to be engraved. The closest is Damigeron-Evax, which offers a direct translation of the *anthrax*-entry in the *Nautical Lapidary*: *Qui portaverit eum a pueritia numquam mergetur neque vexabitur* (27.2).[15] It also suggests another kind of connection with water: calchedony cures those suffering from dropsy (*aquaticos curat*), implying that it was supposed to have diuretic properties. The appropriate image to be engraved on the stone is an

[10] It has been suggested however that it is not coal but a true stone (unspecified), a mixture of magnetite and limonite, cf. Bouveret, in the Budé, *ad loc.*, p. 220. These two minerals are in fact 'related' to haematite: magnetite dust is black and limonite dust yellow. This may be the link with Sotacus-Pliny's claim that, when rubbed on a hone with water, one end produced a black mark, the other a yellow one (*HN* 37.148; cf. 18.261; 36.164f.). Sotacus himself explicitly did not classify his *anthrakites* as a haematite (*alterius generis quam haematitem*).

[11] King 1865, 51f., quoted by Halleux and Schamp 1985, 333.

[12] Epiphanius of Salamis, in the fourth century CE, refers to the red colour of the *anthrax* stone (*De gemmis* 1.4).

[13] Cf. n. 9 above.

[14] Socr. et Dion. 29.1f. It is further said to be a pure lignite or carbuncle, of the colour of blood (αἱματοειδής). Chalcedony however is not red, although this mineral does have a large number of iron silicate varieties. A "deep red chalcedony" is perhaps really a red jasper, with a dull shine, or more probably a cornelian of a bright watery-red colour.

[15] The passage continues: *Pulchrum quoque facit gestantem et fidelem et potentem et omnia perficientem*, "It renders the bearer handsome, able to keep his word, powerful, and in everything effective". Damigeron-Evax has two entries *Lapis chalcedonius*. Of these, §33 just says: *Lapis pertusus et aptatus ferro, qui eum portat vincit causas*, "If pierced and set in a ring, chalcedony gives success in lawsuits to the bearer".

"armed Mars or a virgin with a long [loose] dress holding a laurel branch" (27.4).[16] The *Lapidary of Socrates and Dionysius* provides the following account:

> If this stone be engraved with a standing Athena holding a bird called *erodios* (ὄρνεον τὸ λεγόμενον ἐρωδιόν) in her right hand, and a helmet in her left hand, and (the stone/seal) carried on the person after it has been consecrated, it will give to whoever carries it victory over his enemies and rivals. It will cause him to behave with kindness and understanding, and will enable him to carry out whatever he proposes, and survive shipwrecks (ναυαγίων ἀνερώτερον).
>
> Socr. et Dion. 29.3

The motif of Athena and the *erodios* is an implicit allusion to *Iliad* 10. 272–82, where Athena causes a bittern (*vel sim.*) to call as a reassurance to Diomedes and Odysseus on their night-raid:

> The two men, having put on their fearful armour, set off, leaving behind there all the most important chiefs. On their right, close to the path, Pallas Athena sent them an ἐρωδιός. In the darkness they did not see it with their eyes, but they heard its cry (ἀλλὰ κλάγξαντος ἄκουσαν). Odysseus was pleased with this omen. He prayed then to Athena:
>
> "Child of aegis-bearing Zeus, untiring goddess, hear me. You've always stood beside me in all sorts of troubles. I don't move without your watching me. But now especially be my friend, Athena. Grant that we two come back to the ships covered in glory, after doing something great, something the Trojans will be sorry for".[17]

Athough this particular iconography of Athena/Minerva is unknown on gems from the Roman period, a close parallel, with the helmet

---

[16] *Sculpere oportet in eo Martem armatum aut virginem stolatam, [vestem circumfusam] tenentem laurum. Vestem circumfusam*, which is found in three mss. [C, P, T], is rightly treated by Halleux-Schamp as a gloss. For the standard iconography of 'armed Mars', see E. Simon, s.v. Ares/Mars, *LIMC* 2.1 (1984) 505–59; 2.2 (1984) 378–425. I guess that the female figure with the laurel is an error for Victoria with the palm-branch; for Mars with Victoria, see Simon, ibid. nos. 301–18.

[17] See also Orpheus, *Argon.* 694ff. Aristotle recognizes three types of ἐρωδιός, generally identified as the Common Heron, the Egret and the Bittern (HA 8 [9] 1, 609b20; 18, 616b33–617a8), but none of them characteristically calls at night. In view of the notorious imprecision of ancient species-names, the bird most probably intended in the Homeric passage is either the Bittern or the Little Bittern; but both the Squacco Heron and the Night Heron characteristically call at dusk. The range of all four (today) covers northern Greece and the Bosporus. According to Eustathius, the omen was favourable because the *erodios* skulks in swamps and hunts by night, just as Diomedes and Odysseus were doing (*ad Iliad.* p. 804 l. 57); cf. H. Gossen, s.v. Reiher, *RE* 1A (1914) 515f.

replaced by a shield, does occur in V[a] contexts.[18] In all these cases however the bird appears to be an owl rather than a bittern.[19] We may conclude that the instructions of Damigeron-Evax evoke a standard iconography of victory over adversity, while Socr. et Dion. 29.3 invoke a tacit *historiola* from the *Iliad*, suggesting divine assistance in a tight spot, with an apparent reminiscence, or rather re-interpretation, of an old iconographic type.

1.2. *Diamond*

This was regarded in antiquity as the hardest and most precious of all stones, "the stone of necessity" (ἀναγκῖτις), *indomita vis*.[20] According to Theophrastus, the term ἀδάμας meant any kind of hard stone.[21] The pairing with ὁ γλαῦκος suggests to me that what was meant was a blue variety of diamond, which Pliny describes as an "almost sky-coloured stone" (*vergens ad aerium colorem*) found in Cyprus.[22] Regardless of the final observation ("The best one is the type that looks like iron"), I believe that the colour is what caused it to be included in the *Nautical Lapidary*.[23] Less plausibly, it may be identical to the *lapis*

---

[18] Demargne 1984 notes three examples of Athena standing, or half-sitting, and holding a bird: the "Elgin Athena" in the Metropolitan Museum (460–450 BCE), cf. Demargne 1984, 976 no. 205; and nos. 203 (Marion, Cyprus) and 204[a] (stater from Side). Athena Promachos appears as a figurehead on the prow of a vessel, on a series of coins (silver and bronze) from Arados in Phoenicia, beginning in mid-III[a] (*BMC Phoenicia* nos. 86–95, cf. Demargne 1984, 1013 no. 615 (also from Phaselis in Cyprus); later examples show a much larger Poseidon sitting amidships (*BMC Phoenicia* no. 300, from 134 BCE). On Athena and navigation, see also Detienne 1974, 233–41 (unaware of this imagery).

[19] The Bittern is typically a large bird (30" = 75cm); the Little Bittern and the Squacco Heron by contrast are relatively small (14" = 35cm, 18" = 40cm resp.).

[20] Damigeron-Evax 3.4; Pliny, *HN* 36.57; see further the entire section 36.55–64, based on Xenocrates of Ephesus; it is frequently mentioned elsewhere by Pliny, e.g. *HN* 33.12, 92, 130, 142, 166, 188, 196–99, 222, 238 etc. Barb 1969 remains the most valuable discussion.

[21] Theophrastus, *de lapid.* 19 with Halleux and Schamp p. 334 n. 3.

[22] Pliny, *HN* 37.58, reading *aerium* for ms. *aereum*, cf. 37.77 on *aeroides*; and 115 on the *aerizusa*, i.e. *aeri similem*, which Eichholz takes to mean a sky-blue stone, sapphirine calchedony. The same colour is referred to by Epiphanius of Salamis, *De gemmis* 2.1f. The variety from Macedonia, to which the *Nautical Lapidary* expressly refers, is also mentioned by Pliny, *HN* 37.57; and by Damigeron-Evax 3.2. An alternative identification is the corundum.

[23] Halleux and Schamp 1985, 334 n. 8 rightly refer to the "confusion" and ignorance of the author of the *Nautical Lapidary* in this connection, because in fact, the richest in iron, siderite, is considered by Pliny to be of little value (*HN* 37.58). However it does indicate that we are definitely not talking about the translucent diamond.

adamicos, described in Damigeron-Evax as "a moist translucent stone with a colour like the sea only darker, like a jacinth" (*lapis humidus est, lucidus, quasi marino colore nigrior, aut magis velut hyacinthus*).[24] According to Pliny, the therapeutic properties of the diamond as an amulet include that of neutralising the effect of poisons, "repelling attacks of madness and driving groundless fears out of the mind" (*atque inrita facit et lymphationes abigit metusque vanos expellit a mente*), but its general value in rendering the wearer *indomitum adversus inimicos* is no doubt what mainly prompted its inclusion here.[25]

1.3. *Beryl*

This is a very hard silicate (7–8) which was used in antiquity for intaglios. The name designates a type of precious stone in general "which has the green colour of the sea". It is hardly surprising that two varieties of beryl are the emerald and the aquamarine, darker in colour (θαλασσόχρους, greeny-blue) but equally translucent.[26]

This is the only entry in the *Nautical Lapidary* to indicate the image to be engraved on the stone: "Engrave on it Poseidon in a chariot with two horses", presumably two hippocamps. At Rome, this iconography is first found on a rare denarius of Q. Crepereius M.f. Rocus in 72 BCE, whose obverse shows the head of Amphitrite (?), and the reverse Poseidon driving a biga on the sea, drawn by two hippocamps (Plate 24).[27] It was then picked up on gems in the imperial period, notably by Octavian in celebration of the victory at Actium, or against Sextus Pompey (Plate 25),[28] where the association is highlighted by the inclu-

---

[24] Damigeron-Evax 62.2.

[25] Pliny, *HN* 37.61. Damigeron-Evax 3.6f. concurs, adding other values and concluding with: *quia in hoc enim lapide magnum est a deo auxilium* (3.8).

[26] Cf. Pliny, *HN* 37.76, on the most valuable beryls, *qui viriditatem maris puri imitantur*.

[27] Sydenham 1952 nos. 796–796a = *RRC* 399/1a, b = Simon & Bauchhenß 1984, 488 no. 50 (preferring to identify the female figure as Salacia Neptuni); the moneyer is *RE* s.v. Crepereius no. 8, though Crawford rightly sees him as the younger brother (rather than the son, as Münzer thought) of the senator M. Crepereius who was a judge at the trial of Verres in 70 (Cicero, *Verr.* 1.30). The imagery suggests links with the Italian *negotiatores* in the eastern Mediterranean with the same *nomen*.

[28] Sardonyx from Hadrumetum now in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, inv. no. 27.733: M.L. Vollenweider, *Die Steinschneidekunst und ihre Künstler in spätrepublikanischer und augusteischer Zeit* (Baden-Baden 1966) 51, pl. 49.2; Maderna-Lauter 1988, 454, 467 no. 247 (the drowning figure is Mark Antony); P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor 1988) 97 fig. 82 (either Antony or Sextus Pompey). See also Simon & Bauchhenß 1984, 489 no. 69.

sion of a trident, and also later, e.g. on a second-century CE jasper now in Nuremberg.[29]

The properties that the *Nautical Lapidary* attributes to the beryl are ascribed in the *Kerygmata* to the topaz, which is transparent and green, and thus the colour of the sea.[30] An image of Poseidon is likewise to be engraved on this stone to turn it into an amulet:

> Therefore take the (topaz) and engrave on it Poseidon on a yoked chariot, with the reins in his left hand and ears of wheat in his right hand. Amphitrite can also be engraved (standing) in the chariot. When consecrated, it gives to anyone who carries it success in love and provides him with a good deal of wealth. It will safeguard its wearer from the dangers of the sea and ensure him considerable profit in (maritime) trade (κατὰ θάλατταν ἀκίνδυνον τὸν φοροῦντα διατηρεῖ, καὶ κέρδη μεγάλα διὰ τὰς ἐμπορίας περιποιεῖται).
>
> *Kerygm.* 8.9–11.[31]

In the Archaeological Museum in Tarragona there is a gem that perfectly matches the image of Poseidon prescribed here.[32] The cutter has used the variegated undulations to enhance the effect of the waves.[33]

---

[29] Germanisches Nationalmuseum, inv. no. SiSt 1466 = Simon & Bauchhenß 1984, 489 no. 67.

[30] The topaz "looks like glass, being just as translucent, but is green (χλωρός), nearer the colour of beet(-root leaves: σεῦτλον = τεῦτλον), hard, compact, transparent" (*Kerygm.* 8.4f.). According to Pliny, *HN* 37.107, the topaz is appreciated precisely for its green colour (*e virenti genere*, conj. Mayhoff; *suo virenti* d, h; also Eichholz); later (109) he likens the colour to that of the leek. He also relates a story taken from Juba's work on 'Arabia' (cf. F. Jacoby, s.v. Juba II, *RE* 9 (1916) 2384–95 at 91f.) about the name *topazos*: it is supposedly the name of an island in the Red Sea far away from land, and often fog-bound, so the sailors had to 'search for' it, the word *topazin* meaning 'to hunt for' in the indigenous (Troglodytic) language (108).

[31] Some of the other magical properties of the topaz also connect it with water: "It helps those who suffer with their eyes, to the extent of curing ophthalmias. There is nothing more effective for this. It is a very powerful amulet and extremely effective in water-divining (hydromancy). If anyone drinks wine made from the sea-grape (σταφυλῆς θαλασσίας οἶνον) and goes mad, grind topaz on the whetstone and give it to the demented person to drink in water" (*Kerygm.* 8.12–16). Halleux and Schamp understand this as wine to which sea-water had been added (cf. ὁ τεθαλασσωμένος οἶνος ap. Dioscorides, *Mat. med.* 5.6.3, 3: 6.10–13 Wellmann).

[32] Inv. 6971. The best image is Ricomá i Vallhonrat 1982, no. 2. The piece was later published by Canós and Villena 2002, no. 170 (pp. 156–57, identifying the figure as Poseidon) with pl. LXIX (a poor quality photograph).

[33] The word ΑΝΑΓΚΕ, Necessity or Fate, is engraved above, cf. Perea Yébenes 2002, 28f. On the term ἀνάγκη in magic (papyri and *defixiones*) and in Hermetic texts, ibid., 30–52.

I incline to think that it is actually a stone taken from a ring/amulet for navigation.[34]

1.4. *Dryops*

No other lapidary mentions this stone.[35] The word δρύοψ is only otherwise attested as the name of a kind of woodpecker.[36] The white centre presumably evokes the idea of calm at sea.

1.5. *Coral*

Coral is one of the most intensively elaborated stones in the ancient lapidary tradition.[37] Interest in it was aroused primarily by its transition from its original state as a living creature to becoming a hard skeleton, effectively a 'stone' (one of its names was λιθόδενδρον), but also by its blood-red colour.[38] The idea of 'turning to stone' of course suggested an appropriate linkage to myth. The *Orphic Lapidary* 540–71 summarises the legend of Perseus and the Gorgon to explain the mythical origins of the properties of coral: having decapitated the monster, Perseus washed out the impurities from its blood in the sea, thus causing the surrounding under-water vegetation to take on the texture of "a hard stone" (στερεὴ λίθος, 569), while retaining much of its vegetal form (πάμπαν βοτάνης οὐκ ὤλεσεν εἶδος, 571).[39] To perpetuate the hero's glory, Athena gave the coral stone unlimited virtue:

---

[34] The gem is currently mounted in a gold chain with eight gems engraved with different mythological images (Ricomá i Vallhonrat 1982, fig. 14). The the fact that they are not of uniform size suggests that the goldsmith who made the necklace re-used stones from other jewels.

[35] It can hardly be the same as Pliny's *druitis*, which is said to resemble the bark of an oak-tree (*HN* 37.188). One might however assume a corruption of Pliny's *drosolithos*, 'Jupiter's gem', which is said to be white and soft (*HN* 37.170).

[36] Aristoph., *Aves* 304 with van Leuven's note *ad loc*. (app. short for δρυοκολάπτης, the Great Black Woodpecker); also A. Steier, s.v. Specht, *RE* 3A (1929) 1546–51. If the textual tradition is to be relied on, one might imagine a 'lithic' formation from the expression ἐκ δρυόχων, 'from the keel up'. Halleux and Schamp however think it must be a sort of onyx (1985, 335 n. 10).

[37] Cf. Rossbach 1912, 1100; Lagercrantz et al. 1922; Wellmann 1935, 119f. no. 22.

[38] Cf. Theophrastus, *De lapid*. 38; Dioscorides, *Mat. med*. 5.121, 3: 90f. Wellmann.

[39] Cf. *Kerygm*. 20.2–9: "Unbelievable things are told about it (this stone): that it changes sex. It grows like a green plant, not on dry land, but in the sea, like seaweed. When it is old, it deteriorates and the branches fall off. This plant, when it is uprooted, drifts in the depths of the sea until the waves drive it to the shore. In contact with the air, it dries and hardens. With time, it becomes totally petrified and we finally have a stone that keeps the same shape it had when it was a plant, with the branches

> It protects nations marching to dreadful war; and anyone setting out on a long journey carrying (coral) with him; or crossing the divine sea in a solid-decked ship.[40] [It enables one] to avoid the swift lance of the war-like Enyalius (i.e. Ares), murderous pirates' ambushes, and escape white (i.e. spumy) Nereus who whips up the waves.[41]
>
> *Lapid. Orph.* 578–584.

There follows a long list of the magical properties of coral, unrelated to the sea (594–604, cf. *Kerygm.* 20.11; 14; 26).

In much the same vein, Pliny picks up Metrodorus of Scepsis' name for coral, *gorgonia* or 'Gorgon's Stone'. This stone, he says, "is merely coral: it is called [*gorgonia*] because it goes hard after softening in the sea; it is supposed to counteract lightning and typhoons" (*HN* 37.164; cf. *Kerygm.* 20.13).[42] Though more detailed, Isidore's account is based on the same material:

> Coral is formed in the sea. It has branches and is green, but quickly goes red. Under water, its berries are soft, but when removed from the water they rapidly harden and turn red, and immediately become hard to the touch like stone (*tactuque protinus lapidescunt*). It is usually gathered

---

and bark, and it looks like a hawthorn or even like a little stone tree, which gives the onlooker no little pleasure to see".

[40] Cf. also Damigeron-Evax 7.3: *In nave hoc si habueris multum efficacior eris. Resistit autem ventis et tempestatibus et turbinibus.*

[41] By contrast to Poseidon, Nereus, "the old man of the Sea", has a generally positive image in mythology (e.g. Hesiod, *Theog.* 233–36 with West *ad loc.*; cf. G. Herzog-Hauser, s.v. Nereus, *RE* 17 (1936) 24–28), and in Latin poetry is frequently a metonym for the Ocean or the sea (e.g. *Paneg. Messal.* [Tibull. 4.1] 58; Ovid, *Met.* 1.187, 12.94 etc.). This must be the meaning here, but the allusion is apt since Nereus was usually considered to be a benevolent god for sailors, often shown with his family, the Nereids (Grimal, 1969 s.v. Nereus).

[42] Pliny in Books 36–37 often refers disparagingly to the Magi either explicitly, or, as here, tacitly (*adfirmant*). His targets are the generic texts sometimes cited under the pseudonyms Zoroaster, Ostanes, perhaps Zachalias, or named Greek authors, Sudines, Sotacus, Xenophanes of Ephesus, Demostratus, Ismenias, Zenothemis, etc. cf. Wellmann 1935, 135–49; Hopfner 1926, 747–50; Ernout, 1964, 190–95. It is now understood that the term 'Magi' is to some extent justified in that this material consisted in part of translations or adaptations of Babylonian lists of powerful stones, the Babylonian 'stone-books': Reiner 1995, 119–32; Dickie 2001, 172–77. Pliny, in this final section of his work, aspires to be the Latin Theophrastus, but that does not stop him from relating amazing anecdotes from Greek literary tradition. In connection with the sea, he notes the ring of Polycrates of Samos (*HN* 33.27; 37.3; also recounted in Strabo 14.1.16, 638C; Solinus 33.18; Val. Max. 6. 9 ext.5: *cui Neptunus anulum piscatoris manu restituerat*…), and the Cypriot story about the marble statue of a lion with emeralds for eyes that stood above the tomb of Hermias in a fishermen's quarter: the gems flashed their light into the sea "with such force that the tunnies were frightened away and fled" (*HN* 37.66).

> and extracted with nets, or else by cutting it with an iron tool, and for this reason is given the name of *corallius* (coral). The people of India have the same esteem for coral as we do for the precious pearls from India. The Magi claim, if they can be believed, that coral wards off lightning (*hunc magi fulminibus resistere adfirmant, si creditur*).
>
> *Etym.* 16.8.1.

He later adds, evidently referring again to the Magi: "Coral, they claim, can ward off storms and hail" (16.15.25).

The most elaborate account of coral's relation to the sea is however to be found in the *Kerygmata*:

> When consecrated, it offers maximum protection against every fear, against ambushes by bandits, and above all on journeys against attacks by robbers and every type of snakebite… He who carries it shall never …be struck down by a flash of lightning, a meteorite or an evil spirit (πονηροῦ δαίμονος)… It is also very beneficial for those who sail. If the stone is hidden in the boat and is placed on top of the mast, wrapped in sealskin, it is excellent protection that will ward off all danger and shipwreck, as it has the effect of driving away winds, waves and hardships of all types. Furthermore, crushed and mixed with seeds, it is planted and frees the land from ruin and all disastrous storms. It is said to have the power not only to ward off drought, hail or other elements of this type, but…even whirlwinds and lightning.
>
> *Kerygm.* 20.14; 17; 23–6.

The prescription of the *Nautical Lapidary*, to bind a piece of "coral, together with a seal skin, at the top of the mast, [to] protect one from the winds, waves and every type of turbulence in all waters" is thus quite conventional.[43]

Kerygm. 20.16f. recommends engraving the 'animal of Hekate' or a Medusa-head on coral as a θυμοκάτοχον.[44] Quite apart from the mythic

---

[43] Cf. Wachsmuth 1967, 442. On the magical value of seal(skin) see H. Gossens, s.v. Robbe, *RE* 1A (1914) 945–9 at 948f., cf. M. Detienne, Les pieds d'Héphaistos, in Detienne and Vernant 1974, 242–58 at 244–53. As everyone knows, Augustus always wore a seal-leather undergarment to protect himself against claps of thunder and bolts of lightning (Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 90). For the belief that human menstrual blood was a sovereign protection against dangers at sea, see the paper by Fernández Nieto below (p. 556 n. 10); on coral, ibid. n. 24.

[44] Cf. also Damigeron-Evax 7.3. The ζώδιον Ἑκάτης is probably the τρίγλη, the red mullet, as Halleux suggests on the basis of Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 7.126, 325a–d (Halleux and Schamp 1985, 327 n. 8); cf. A. Abt, *Die Apologie des Apuleius von Madaura und die antike Zauberei.* RGVV 4.2 (Gießen 1908) 67 n. 4 on *Apol.* 30.4 Hunink; or the μαίνη/μαινίς, a 'sprat' (Athen., *Deipn.* 7.92, 313bc); but conceivably the cow (Hathor-Hekate) or dog may be intended. On Hecate and magic, see Johnston 1990; 1991; 1999, 72–4,133; and more recently Perea Yébenes 2005.

link between Medusa and coral, the apotropaic nature of the Gorgon made it attractive to the designers of amulets (Nagy 2002). Particularly relevant here are examples in which triform Hecate is associated with the image of the Gorgon, sometimes with *voces magicae*.[45]

1.6. *The 'Snake-belly Stone' or Serpentine*

This rock is a green silicate, fairly soft (3–4), with streaks caused by mass scaly, fibrous aggregates that look like the underside of a snake (antigorite). In antiquity it was to be found in abundance in the eastern desert in Egypt, where it was used from very early times in royal tombs[46] and for small ornaments and/or amulets. It was also used in connection with cures for snake-bite.[47] In the Roman world, the stone was classed as a type of marble known as *ophites, cum sit illud serpentium maculis simile*, "since its markings resembles snakes" (Pliny, *HN* 36.55). However, none of the therapeutic values of *ophites* are explicitly related to navigation and the sea: it was again mainly used against snake-bite. The *Nautical Lapidary* perhaps prescribes it as a marine amulet on account of the wave-like whorls—according to Pliny, the markings of a related type of 'marble', the 'Augustan', are *undatim*, wave-like.

1.7. *Obsian (Obsidian)*

This is an amorphous volcanic rock, considered in antiquity as sort of inferior glass (it was indeed used for hanging mirrors), since it is sometimes translucent.[48] Pliny says it is very dark in colour (*nigerrimi coloris*), whereas Isidore, agreeing here with the *Nautical Lapidary*, says that "it is sometimes green and sometimes black" (*virens interdum et niger aliquando*). A possible connection with the sea is suggested by the use of obsidian to obtain fore-knowledge (ὄψομαι, ὄψις).[49]

Of the seven stones listed by the *Nautical Lapidary*, only two (*anthrax*/calchedony and coral) or three (if we count the topaz as a beryl) are

[45] See e.g. the list in Michel 2004, 268 s.v. 18.1.b.
[46] In the galleries of the step pyramid tomb of King Djoser (3rd Dynasty) in Saqqara were found thousands of beakers carved from hard and semi-precious stone, including serpentine.
[47] On serpentine in Egypt, see Wilkinson 1992/2003, 98–100.
[48] Pliny, *HN* 36.196–98; 37.177; Isidore, *Etym.* 16.16.5.
[49] *Orphic Lapid.* 288–90; *Kerygm.* 9.1.

elsewhere attested as possessing effective powers against dangers at sea. This itself attests to the under-determination of many such recipes or 'values', and confirms the status of such lists as living texts. Moreover, the oddity of the selection is underlined by the fact that there is scattered evidence for seven other types of stone in the same context that the *Lapidary* does not mention.

2. *Stones and Amulets for Navigation not mentioned in the* Nautical Lapidary

2.1. *Agate* (ἀχάτης)

In the magical tradition, according to Pliny, fumigations of burnt agates were used to ward off storms and waterspouts and halt the flow of rivers (*in Persis vero suffitu earum tempestates averti et presteras, flumina sisti*). To be effective, they had to be bound like amulets with lions' manes (*sed, ut prosint, leoninis iubis adalligandas*).[50] A πρηστήρ is a waterspout accompanied by lightning, often mentioned by ancient meteorologists.[51] Damigeron-Evax simply ascribes this stone a general power of protection (*in tutamentum erit*).[52]

2.2. *Jacinth* (ὑάκινθος)

This is probably to be identified with the sapphire (blue corundum) or some varieties of amethyst.[53] To make an amulet from it, Socr. et Dion. 27.1–2 prescribe a variant of the image of Poseidon:

> Engrave…Poseidon standing on a dolphin with a trident in his right hand. After consecrating it, wear it always in your ring, as it has all the effects of an emerald. It also protects sea-going traders from storms (τοὺς διὰ θαλάσσης ἐμπορευομένους ἀπὸ κλύδωνος ῥύεται).

Halleux and Schamp must be right to suggest that the link to Poseidon and so the dangers of the sea is routed through the colour.[54] An

[50] *HN* 37.142, cf. Isidore, *Etym*. 16.11.1.
[51] E.g. *Placita philos.* 3.3.1 Diels; Aristotle, *Meteor.* 3, 371a16; Lucretius, *De rerum nat*. 6.423–50.
[52] Damigeron-Evax 17.5; against unspecific illness: *Orphic Lapid*. 628f.; *Kerygm*. 21.5f. against scorpion-stings.
[53] See Eichholz ap. Pliny, *HN* 37.125; also Halleux and Schamp 1985, 328 n. 8.
[54] Halleux and Schamp, ibid.

analogous motif is prescribed by Damigeron-Evax 60.4 for using the *lapis alcinio* (allegedly a type of jacinth, otherwise unidentifiable) as an amulet: *Sculpis in eum Neptunum super bigam*.[55] Despite this, however, the extremely scrappy entry makes no reference to its use in marine contexts.

2.3. *'Memnon stone'* (λίθος τοῦ Μέμνονος, lapis memnonius)

This stone is hard to identify or compare with any more familiar stone (or name).[56] As an amulet, it is incredibly powerful, and acts among other things as a θυμοκάτοχος, a restainer of wrath. *Et naufragio facto enatabit Neptunum et Nereum deos maris contempnens*, "In the case of shipwreck, (the bearer) will be enabled to save himself by swimming, spiting Neptune and Nereus, the gods of the sea" (Damigeron-Evax 4.10f.).

2.4. Lapis ceraunius *or* ceraunia

This stone does not correspond to any single modern variety of stone. Pliny mentions one variety from Carmania (Eastern Persia) that was bright and colourless but with a blue sheen (*HN* 37.134, cf. 132). Sotacus apparently registered two other forms, one black, the other red, which "resemble axe-heads", *similes eas esse securibus*, and have different magical properties (135).[57] The 'Magi' counted a further variety of *ceraunia*, quite rare, only found where lightning had struck: *quoniam non aliubi inveniatur quam in loco fulmine icto* (ibid.).[58] For its part, Damigeron-Evax equates the *ceraunius* with the stone called in Egypt 'emerald' (*smaragdus*) and, ignoring the other varieties, avers

---

[55] The stone is distinguished from the beryl, dealt with in §61.

[56] Pliny, *HN* 37.173, calls it *memnonia*, and says bluntly *qualis sit, non traditur*. Himerius ap. Photius, *Bibl.* 373a (vol. 6, p. 113f. Henry), assumed that, like the statue of Memnon, it would emit human-like sounds and even speak when exposed to the sun(-rise) (ὁμιλήσας ἡλίῳ); cf. Halleux and Schamp 1985, 239 n. 3.

[57] A good example is the incident when twelve (flint) axes appeared after a lake in Cantabria was struck by lightning, which was taken as an impressive divine sign in favour of Galba's bid for the throne in 68 CE (Suetonius, *Galba* 8.2). Pre-historic axes were occasionally re-used in the Roman period as amulets, and inscribed with magic images and texts: A. Mastrocinque, *Studi sul Mitraismo* (Rome 1998) 26 no. 2 with fig. 3 (from the Argolid, now in the National Museum, Athens); 59–71 with fig. 15 (from Mentana, now in Coll. Zeri).

[58] Cf. also *HN* 37.176: *cadere cum imbribus et fulminibus dicitur*.

bluntly that it is (only) to be found "where lightning has struck".[59] By implication, it comes directly from heaven, and thus enjoys particular authority.[60] Carried in their pure state, such stones ward off lightning. Moreover, "if taken on a sea journey, the bearer will avoid the risk of being affected by lightning or a whirlwind".[61] It seems clear that this power to ward off lightning at sea derives from the Magian claim and has little or nothing to do with colour.

2.5. *Emerald* (lapis smaragdus)

Since neither Pliny nor the *Cyranides* provide any information about the medicinal and other value of the emerald, there is no corroboration for the claim by Damigeron-Evax that it wards off storms, *liberat a tempestatibus* (6.3). But here colour must have been decisive.

2.6. *Chelonite* (χελωνίτης, lapis chelonites)

Damigeron-Evax describes chelonite as resembling the sea-turtle; it calms rainstorms, hailstorms and tempests. "If it is placed in rainwater or seawater and then into the fire, calm will come immediately".[62] The name of the stone is of course derived from the Greek word for a tortoise/turtle, χελώνη.[63] Pliny confirms that the magical tradition, which mainly valued the stone for its prophetic powers, also recommended it for *vaticinationes*, perhaps here incantations, *ad tempestates sedandas*; but adds that one particular variety, speckled with golden speckles,

---

[59] *Invenitur… in illis locis ubi fulminis ictus* (12.1).

[60] Damigeron-Evax actually offers a quasi-meteorological explanation for its creation: *Narratur tamen ex contritione nubium inter se fieri*, "it is said to be produced by friction between the clouds" (12.2).

[61] *Praeterea si habuerit eum aliquis navigans, non periclitabitur per fulmen aut per turbinem* (12.5).

[62] *Chelonites lapis fortis est et gravis, similis testudinis marinae… Imbres et grandines evertit et tempestates. Si eum mittis in aquam pluvianam aut marinam et postea eum miseris in ignem, continuo erit serenitas* (57.1–4); *cf.* Isidore, *Etym.* 16.15.23.

[63] Pliny, *HN* 37.155, claims that the stone is in fact the eye of the Indian (land-) tortoise, while allowing there are other varieties. Like modern German (Schildkröte), French (tortue), Spanish (tortuga) and Italian (tartaruga), however, Greek did not ordinarily distinguish between tortoise and turtle, though specialists like Aristotle, *PA* 540a29, *HA* 590b4, when they needed to make the distinction, would add θαλαττία.

might be used in the inverse manner, to raise storms, *tempestates commovere*, if dropped into boiling water with a scarab-beetle (37.155).[64]

2.7. *Heliotrope* (ἡλιοτρόπιος, lapis heliotropius)

The heliotrope may be listed here, though its marine value is wholly negative. The sole lapidary to link it with the sea is Damigeron-Evax 2.1–6, which mentions a variety from Cyprus, Ethiopia and Lybia, emerald-green in colour, with red veins:

> When dropped into a silver vessel full of water and placed in the sun, it causes it to change and become blood-coloured and cloudy. Once it has been consecrated, you will witness its divine power: for the bowl immediately causes the water to bubble, and the air to become disturbed by thunder and lightning, rain and storms (*turbidus et aer cum tronitruis et fulgoribus et pluviis et procellis*); even the ignorant are amazed and terrified by its power.[65]

Part of this account is taken from Pliny, or rather a common source; the remainder of Pliny's entry is quite different, concentrating upon the stone's value in tracking solar eclipses, and denouncing the 'Magian' tradition for suggesting it can make people invisible.[66] In this connection, Damigeron-Evax says only that "they", presumably the 'Magi', use it for prophecy (*vaticinantur*), and *praenuntiant futura per fluvios perennes* (2.8). In the absence of parallels, it is quite uncertain what Damigeron-Evax intended by this expression.[67]

3. *The Relation between the Lapidaries and surviving Amuletic Gems*

In the field of Classical Archaeology, there is a sub-field known as 'magical amulets', constructed essentially by the American gemmologist Campbell Bonner in his *Studies in Magical Amulets* (*SMA*) in

---

[64] Wellmann showed (1935, 134f.) that Pliny and Damigeron-Evax were probably using the same source here, each to his own purpose.

[65] The provenances and description of the effect of sunlight on the stone in water are taken from Pliny, *HN* 37.165 or a common source.

[66] Pliny, ibid.; Isidore, *Etym*. 16.7.12.

[67] Halleux and Schamp 1985, 237 n. 3, think that this is a reference to *PGrMag* XIII 772, referring to Ocean; but they must have been consulting the first ed. of *PGrMag*, because the second reads at this point τὸ ἀέννναον κωμαστήριον. One might think of a mechanical contrivance such as the zodiacal *anaphorika* described by Vitruvius, *Arch*. 9.8.8; Ctesibius' water-clock used semi-precious stones bored through for the outlet (9.8.4).

1950.[68] This specialism focuses primarily on amulets, mainly for personal protection and well-being, which carry Egyptian or Graeco-Egyptian motifs, though it also includes some other types, such as the 'Seals of Solomon'.[69] Árpád M. Nagy has recently challenged the assumption that Bonner's category, which has now established itself in the production of museum catalogues in this area, does indeed cover the totality of gems engraved in antiquity for magical purposes, in particular healing (Nagy 2009). Part of his reasoning relates to the lack of correspondence between the Graeco-Roman Lapidaries and Bonner's category, which seem to occupy completely separate realms. He calls attention to the fact that the Lapidaries almost invariably prescribe images of perfectly familiar Graeco-Roman gods for amuletic (healing) purposes. Conversely, this implies that some, perhaps many, 'ordinary' gems bearing images of such gods may in fact have been sold as amulets for more or less specific purposes, and have been considered as such by their owners.

We may use the theme of maritime amulets to follow up Nagy's point. The Lapidaries prescribes three images in all to be engraved on such amulets, those of Poseidon/Neptune, Amphitrite and a Medusa-head. Poseidon/Neptune is prescribed three times in the Lapidaries for danger-free navigation.[70] Given his realm, this choice is in a sense self-explanatory, the god's ambivalent connotations notwithstanding.[71] Amphitrite, daughter of Nereus and the Oceanid Doris, and *paredros* of Poseidon, is recommended as a complement to the latter in *Kerygm*. 8 (see p. 465 above). In the Principate, sarcophagi make much use of Tritons and Nereids to express the idea of joy, relaxation and

---

[68] A. Delatte, Études sur la magie grecque, 3 et 4, *Musée Belge* 18 (1914) 5–20, 21–96 showed that the hitherto usual term 'gnostic' was inappropriate, but did not himself use the term 'amulettes magiques'.

[69] For a recent overview, see Michel 2004.

[70] Socr. et Dion. 27.1 (trident and dolphin); *Lap. nautic.* 3 (in biga); *Kerygm*. 8.9 (ἐν ἅρματι ἱππικῷ, reins in r.h., ear of grain in l.h.). Admittedly, the role of copying in this tradition means that no particular conclusion can be drawn from this predominance.

[71] See E. Wüst, s.v. Poseidon, *RE* 22 (1954) 446–557; F. Schachermeyr, *Poseidon und die Entstehung des griechischen Götterglaubens* (Munich 1950); Detienne and Vernant 1974, 85f., 176–200, 208–15, 221–24; on his numerous cult-sites in the Peloponnese, J. Mylonopoulos, Πελοπόννησος οἰκητήριον Ποσειδῶνος: *Heiligtümer und Kulte des Poseidon auf der Peloponnese*. Kernos Suppl. 13 (Liège 2003). Brief accounts: Grimal 1969, s.v.; R.L. Gordon, s.v. Poseidon, in *DDDB* 659–62; J.N. Bremmer, s.v. Poseidon, *DNP* 10 (2001) 201–05. For the iconography see Wünsche 1979; Walter-Karydi 1991; Simon 1994; Simon & Bauchhenß 1994; Klöckner 1997.

happiness; among these are occasional depictions of the marriage of Poseidon and Amphitrite.[72] Finally, the Gorgon. Although there is a mythological connection between Medusa and Poseidon, since she was raped by him, and produced the giant Chrysaor and the winged horse, Pegasus,[73] this connection is evidently not the basis of the instruction in *Kerygm*. 20.16 to use a Medusa-head on a coral-amulet against wrath (see p. 468 above). The marine powers invoked as images by the Lapidaries thus reduce to two, Poseidon and Amphitrite.

A fair number of engraved gems depicting Poseidon with his attributes has survived, though only one type exactly coincides with the instructions to be found in the Lapidaries.[74] This is the motif of standing Poseidon holding trident and dolphin, which established itself from the Hellenistic period.[75] The J. Paul Getty Museum possesses a fine I^p example of this type on a carnelian set in a silver ring, with Poseidon resting his foot on a small rock (Plate 26).[76] The immediate inspiration for gem-cutters here may have been late-Republican, and more especially Hadrianic coins.[77] Then again, Poseidon's 'sea-chariot' is usually represented on gems as a hippocamp on which the god rides or sits: the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna has a particularly

---

[72] P. Zanker and B.C. Ewald, *Mit Mythen leben: Die Bilderwelt der römischen Sarkophage* (Munich 2004) 117–34.

[73] Cf. O. Jessen, s.v. Chrysaor 1, RE 3 (1899) 2484; G. Türk, s.v. Pegasos 1, *RE* 19 (1937) 56–62; Gantz 1993, 20f, 314–16. For some V^a images linking Poseidon and the Gorgon (none of them relevant here), see Simon 1994, 468 nos. 196–98. Poseidon is linked to Pegasus etymologically, since πηγαί are the waters of the rivers and streams, consecrated to Poseidon. P. Philippson attempted to defend the 'equine' aspect of Poseidon by establishing a functional link between Poseidon Hippios and the Gorgon-Pegasus: *Thessalische Mythologie* (Zurich 1944) 25–36.

[74] In view of the excellent collection of material by Erika Simon in *LIMC*, to which I refer the reader, I need only take a few illustrative cases.

[75] Cf. e.g. a stater from Tenos, III-II^a: *BMC Crete & Aegean* 128 no. 7, pl. 28.16 = Simon 1994, 455 no. 74. The same iconography (apart from a Boeotian shield below) on a Theban drachma, dating from 244–197 BCE: Simon 1994, 456 no. 97. More distant parallels are Simon & Bauchhenß 1984, 488 nos. 56 and 58.

[76] Spier 1992, 107 no. 268, inv. no. 78.AN.322.3. Such stones are common: the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid owns a similar piece (Casal n.d. no. 166); examples found in England include one from Woodeaton, Oxon (Henig 1974 no. 18) and another from Great Walsingham, Norfolk (J. Bagnall Smith, Votive Objects from Great Walsingham, *Britannia* 30 [1999] 37 no. 34). The motif was turned into a celebration of Octavian's victory by exchanging the rock for an *aplustre*, the front half of a warship: Maderna-Lauter 1988, 454, 467 no. 249.

[77] See e.g. den. of Sextus Pompeius, 42–40 BCE (*RRC* 511/3a); Flavian den. 69–70 CE, P. with dolphin: *BMCRE* 2.3, nos. 14f.; Hadrianic sest., P. with a trident in one hand, a dolphin in the other, resting one foot on the prow of a boat: *BMCRE* 3, 430, nos. 1286–1293. For Neptune on Roman imperial coinage, see Arnaldi 1994.

fine late-I^{p} example in cornaline (Plate 27).[78] Amphitrite is often found with Poseidon in this context;[79] but sometimes also alone.[80] So far as I know, there is no archaeological parallel at all for the image of Poseidon prescribed by *Kerygm*. 8.9, carrying an ear of grain.[81]

According to the version of the Cycladic myth of Amphitrite recorded by Eustathius, she was violated by Poseidon after he saw her dancing with the other Nereids on Naxos; the influential version of Eratosthenes recounted how she fled from him, but was persuaded to return by a dolphin, who took her back to the god.[82] This dolphin was directed by Eros; and there are a number of mosaic and glyptic images of him apparently directing its search, for example one that appeared on the US antiquities market in 2005 (Plate 28).[83] As with the image of Poseidon and/or Amphitritite in a sea-car or borne on a hippocamp, we may take such designs as representing the idea of a successful voyage directed or overseen by a god. The Lapidary image thus acts in effect as a *historiola*, the citation of an appropriate (and appropriately vague) precedent or model.

We may also invoke a range of indirect iconographic allusions to sea-journeys. When the trident appears by itself on gems (ring-stones), it is presumably a synecdoche for Poseidon. The Capricorn is also relevant in this connection. Two gems in The Hague carry images of boats with large Capricorns.[84] The motif must ultimately derive from

---

[78] Simon & Bauchhenß 198, 488 no. 63 (inv. no. IX B 304). Again, the main glyptic model was coin-images, e.g. a gold drachma from 211–09 BCE (ibid. 725, no. 6) closely connected to a glass-paste gem now at Debrecen, Hungary (ibid. 6a).

[79] There are numerous representations in Roman art of the marriage 'celebration' of Amphitrite and Poseidon, cf. Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1981, 730 nos. 68–74a.

[80] See e.g. Icard-Gianolio and Szabados 1992, 792 nos. 75 and 77. The motif is ancient, cf. Thetis on a hippocamp on a late V^{a} bronze ring from Asia Minor in the Getty Collection: Spier 1992, 42f. no. 73.

[81] Like the poppy-seedhead, the ear of grain was a standard token of prosperity in Augustan and later iconography. It has here become a 'floating signifier', without regard to its incongruence in the context of a marine god.

[82] Naxos: Eustath. + Σ Hom. *Od.* 1.52; dolphin: Hyginus, *Astr.* 2.5. The most convenient summary of the many mythic variants is still K. Wernicke, s.v. Amphitrite, *RE* 1 (1894) 1963–67; more recently, F. Graf, s.v., *DNP* 1 (1996) 624. There were numerous cults of Amphitrite in the Cyclades.

[83] From the sale-catalogue of The Barakat Gallery, North Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills, CA, 25th July 2005. A variation is provided by a red jasper from Aquileia, where Eros, astride a dolphin, is casting a net into the sea: Buora 1996, no. 130. Another, of lower quality, is held by the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid: Casal n.d., no. 262, with numerous references to parallels.

[84] Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, nos. 621f.; the one on the prow, the other on the deck.

the role of the Capricorn in Augustan imagery, where it is deployed in contexts well beyond a mere reference to the birth sign.[85] For example, on a cistophorus minted at Pergamon in 27/26 BCE it appears with the horn of plenty, loosely suggesting the advent of the golden age. More immediately relevant, a carnelian in the Metropolitan Museum shows the capricorn simply with a trident;[86] another at Hanover shows the beast upon a globe, with a trident half-hidden behind (Plate 29); both allude to Octavian's crushing victory at Actium and the sole rule that it made possible.[87] By implication, such maritime capricorns may have been intended to ensure safe journeys. In other cases, the goat's head becomes a horse's head, thus increasing the resemblance to a hippocamp, as on a triple-hued sardonyx in the Archaeological Museum in Sofia.[88] This iconographical development can in turn be related to the image of a Triton, again at Sofia, escorted by a dolphin.[89] All of these examples can properly be regarded as amuletic, Augustan models being taken up and re-used, perhaps considerably later, for private purposes. The immediate conclusion must be that many of the ring-stones (and not merely those with maritime motifs) that are usually considered purely ornamental actually served as amulets. Another implication is that the marine images prescribed by the Lapidaries represent just a small, and in many ways deviant, sub-set of the surviving amuletic evidence connected with sea-journeys.

On the other hand, I would say it is unclear whether finger rings with the bare image of a sailing ship, or an anchor, or even a hippocamp, are amulets intended to ensure a safe journey, rather than familiar motifs that simply appealed to their wearers (who might, for

---

[85] A fine example of Capricorn as an astrological symbol: Richter 1956, 90 no. 403. The topic has been widely studied: Kraft 1967; Dwyer 1973; Abry 1988; Brugnoli 1989; Schütz 1991; Weiss 1994; Barton 1995, 33–51.

[86] Richter 1956, 90 no. 402.

[87] *AGDS* 4 (1975) no. 1145 pl. 154; Maderna-Lauter 1988, 458, 470 no. 262 (late I^a/I^p). Another version, from Gaul, shows the same image as the carnelian in Hanover, with the addition of a dolphin: see Guiraud 1988 no. 964, and the earlier study by Coeuret and Guiraud 1980. The British Museum owns a sardonyx with a capricorn, globe, dolphin, palm tree and ship's prow: Henig 1974 no. 408. The basic motif in turn corresponds to a range of analogous images in Augustan and Julio-Claudian coinage, e.g. *BMCRE* 1 pl. 5 nos. 15ff.; pl. 7 nos. 1ff. etc.

[88] Dimitrova-Milcheva 1979 no. 158. There is an exact parallel in the collection of the University of Valencia (Alfaro Giner 1996 no. 17).

[89] Dimitrova-Milcheva 1979 no. 159, originally from Ratiaria. The same collection contains another gem with the same motif, although of lower quality and not so well preserved: ibid. no. 160.

example, have had some professional link with the sea, particularly through maritime trade).[90] It is equally unclear how we are to take the images, traditional since the Archaic period, of eyes painted on the prows of boats, which are very common in Roman paintings and reliefs.[91] It is probably fanciful to think of them as a figure for the *pronoia* of the steersman, ever on the look-out against the perils of the sea.[92]

There is just one other archaeological find worth calling to the reader's attention. These are the Roman anchor stocks found in 1905 off the coast of Cabo de Palos (Costa Calida, prov. Murcia), not far from Carthago Nova, two of them inscribed in Greek with the names Zeus Kasios *Sozon* and Aphrodite *Sozousa*.[93] In my view, they are not exactly votives; rather the aim was to ensure protection for a safe voyage before setting out: the divine names were engraved in the casting-shop. Zeus *Kasios* is the later (Greek) name of the Ugaritic Baal who presided over Mt. Zaphon at the mouth of the Orontes, over against Seleucia in Pieria, which home-coming sailors used to sight far off on the horizon.[94] The other divinity, Aphrodite, must be some sort of female counterpart, perhaps, as some have suggested, influenced by the semitic goddess Athirat(u) or (Hebr.) Asherah.[95]

---

[90] The British Museum has a Roman gem of red jasper, octagonal in shape, with the image of a ship with its sails unfurled (Marshall 1907/1968 no. 1200). There is clearly an eye in the bow, but there is no specific inscription or other clue to support its reading as an amulet. Hippocamp without a rider, e.g. Aquileia: G. Sena Chiesa, *Gemme del Museo Nazionale di Aquileia* (Aquileia 1966) nos. 1227–9; Ashmolean, inv. no. 1890.283: M. Henig, The Origin of some Ancient British Coin-types, *Britannia* 3 (1972) 220 with pl. XIII F.

[91] Painting: e.g. Odysseus and the Sirens from Pompeii, c. 70 CE, now in British Museum, inv. no. 1876.5–8.1354; photo in Andreae 1999, 301, upper right; a Roman funerary relief in the Museo della Civiltà Romana, EUR shows the image of a Roman warship with the crude but unmistakable image of an eye at the bow (Thubron 1981, 109).

[92] Cf. Detienne 1974, 214f. They are usually taken as counters to the evil-eye.

[93] Cf. Perea Yébenes 2004. The other inscriptions are in Hebrew and Latin. For a photo of the four stocks soon after discovery, see G. Mora et al., *Comisión de antigüedades de la Real Academia de la Hispania: Catalogo e indices* (Madrid 2001) 56f. fig. 11. This cape and the surrounding islands have always been dangerous; the most famous wreck was that of the Italian SS Sirius in Aug. 1906, with the loss of more than 200 lives.

[94] See briefly A. Adler, s.v. Kasion 2, *RE* 10 (1919) 2265–67; H. Nier, s.v. Zaphon, in *DDDB* 927–29.

[95] Friedrich 1978, 81. The epithets Euploia, Pontia and Limenia are recorded for Greek Aphrodite. On Syrian presence in Hispania, cf. M. Bendala Galán, Die orien-

4. *Creating and Using Amuletic Stones*

Perhaps the most important contribution of the *Nautical Lapidary* is the insight it provides into the tacit rules informing the practice of preparing amulets, rules which taken together constitute the implicit rationality of the praxis. In the first place, we can discern a hierarchy of 'lithic authority'. The most powerful stone in maritime contexts is coral, a stone that 'grows' organically in the sea, a sort of petrified marvel. When its power is reinforced, or rather directed, by the seal-skin, famous for its power to avert lightning, it requires no additional assistance from myth and is simply attached to the ship's mast.

Less inherently powerful are amulets of semi-precious stones. These cannot be chosen at random, but need to have a natural or intrinsic metonymic link to some feature of the maritime world as represented (i.e. unpredictable and dangerous). The privileged metonymic link at this lower level is clearly colour. The choices of the *Nautical Lapidary* turn out to be of three types:

- transparent (colour of water)
- green or blue (colour of the sea)
- vivid red (colour of fire/lightning).

Colour however is merely a beginning. Once selected, the stone had to undergo a process of ritual consecration, which was closely connected with the process of engraving.[96]

The 'theory' of consecration, i.e. its imputed aim, clearly varied. Some texts seem to assume that the aim is to get a superior god to confer virtue on the stone and thus underwrite its power; others seek to confer a divine status upon the stone e.g. by offering it food, a gesture only meaningful on the assumption that the gem is rendered divine by the consecration; others appear to seek to 'animate' it through incantation.[97] All such claims amount to explanations for the traditionally-accepted power of stones. Other texts, however, such as *Cyranides* Bk I,

---

talischen Religionen Hispaniens in vorrömischer und römischer Zeit, *ANRW* II.18.1 (1986) 345–408 (erroneous note on the Cabo de Palos anchors on p. 406).

[96] The precise order in which these two operations were performed is admittedly unknown, and was no doubt arbitrary or at least under-determined.

[97] The basic discussion is still S. Eitrem, Die magischen Gemmen und ihre Weihe, *SymbOslo* 19 (1939) 57–85; see also Hopfner 1926, 759f., 761–63. W. Waegeman, *Amulet and Alphabet* (Amsterdam 1987) is a simple, unreflective presentation of *Cyranides* Bk 1, one of the most important surviving texts in this area.

appear to be quite uninterested in theory at all; taking refuge in the genre of the recipe, they are completely silent on the matter of how stones exercise their effects. The *Orphic Lapidary*, by contrast, offers all too many tacit theories, no doubt distantly based on theurgic (telestic) practice:

> For thirteen days, so I believe, Helenus refused to lie with women or take a bath in public, and remained untainted by meat. In an ever-flowing spring he bathed the inspirited stone; and let it grow, as if it were a child, in fine wrappings. Having gained the affection of the god by mingling prayers with sacrifices, he breathed life into the stone by means of powerful incantation. In the purified megaron, lit by torches, he caressed the divine stone, like a mother holding her baby in her arms.[98]
>
> *Lithika* 366–75.

At least in the Lapidaries, the relation between the purpose of the amulet and choice of a particular divine image is straightforward enough. The tacit rule is to select an image linked to the relevant mythical literature. There were numerous possibilities here. In order to ensure a safe sea voyage and avoid danger, for example, one might select any of a range of types of Poseidon or Amphitrite, whose relevance to the end desired was massively guaranteed by the wider culture. At the other extreme, one could select a relatively obscure reference, such as the image of Athena causing an *erodios* to call, in order to signal to Diomedes and Odysseus that they would be successful on their night-raid, or the link, made famous by Metrodorus, between coral and the Gorgon's blood. Such choices imply something about the horizon of expectation of the compilers of these texts—obscurity correlates with authority.

Virtually nothing is known about the pragmatics of Graeco-Roman amulets. The magical papyri assume a reader familiar with a small number of stones and the ritual of consecration; and that the practitioner has direct access to an engraver capable of carrying out his instructions. The designs of Graeco-Egyptian amuletic gems, though in detail different from those of the *PGrMag*, likewise imply the existence in Roman Egypt of knowledgeable specialists and competent workshops. As for other amuletic traditions, it is clear from Pliny the Elder that a considerable specialist literature on the more or less mar-

[98] The passage is a description of the ritual preparation of *siderites* in order to 'animate' it, i.e. endow it with divine power. On the role of Helenus in the poem, see Halleux and Schamp 1985, 34–38.

vellous properties of precious and semi-precious stones was available already in the Hellenistic period, some of it conveniently organised in alphabetic lists.[99] The Lapidaries represent a sub-set of this type of information, ranging from the elevated opacity of the *Orphic Lapidary* (roughly datable to the first half of II^{p}), its combination of instruction and artifice firmly in the tradition of Hellenistic high didactic poetry, to the busy prose vademecum of 'Damigeron-Evax', which is a V–VI^{p} translation into Latin of a Greek text, an earlier version of which was already known to Pliny. Judging from the archaeology, however, such books, closely related to the *mirabilia*-tradition, hardly provided practical advice to the range of professions, δακτυλιογλύφοι, *gemmarii*, doctors, *iatromathematici*, diviners and other Graeco-Roman specialists who made use of gems in their praxis. The Lapidary tradition has indeed almost no direct link with the producing workshops, the *officinae gemmariae*. Rather, their role, as more or less prestigious written texts (e.g. 'Orpheus'; κηρύγματα = Proclamations; 'Damigeron'; the incipit of the Latin transl.: *Evax Rex Arabiae Tiberio imperatori salutem*) was to underwrite the claim that stones were, or might be, alongside plants and animal-parts, highly effective members of the wider class of *materia magica*.

5. *The Question of Magic*

Among the amulets described here, coral is of particular interest for its undeniable marine origin. For the ancients, it was the amulet-stone for safe navigation *par excellence*. Its special status was grounded, first, in its 'nature' as a sea-creature that turned to stone, and then in its connection with the petrification-myth *par excellence*, that of Perseus and Medusa. This double claim served to make it what Aristotle would call a 'dualiser', and therefore a profitable node for further speculation, supplying answers to the questions that immediately arise from its ambivalent classification: what is the larger significance of the transformation of the coral from plant to stone?[100] Is its red colour a sign

[99] Diocles of Carystus seems to have incorporated some stone-lore in his Ῥιζοτομικόν, cited by Theophrastus, *de lapid.* 28; cf. Rossbach 1912, 1103.

[100] On dualisers in Aristotle's biology, see G.E.R. Lloyd, *Science, Folklore and Ideology: Studies in the Life-Sciences in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1983) 44–53. As far as I know, there is no evidence for such interest in coral until Metrodorus of Scepsis in the second half of II^{a}, cf. W. Kroll, s.v. Metrodorus 23, *RE* 15 (1932) 1481f.

of some kind? What can be made of the fact that it grows in the sea? Such questions are of course at one level specific and individual to the case; but they acquire meaning as questions against the institutional background of the exploitation of the natural world for medico-magical purposes (the Hippocratic search for effective herbal remedies is almost entirely a systematic and determined rationalisation of rhizotomic lore). They cannot be dismissed one by one as 'superstitions'; just as in the case of the project of divination, even if there is plenty of evidence for scepticism about individual claims, the system as a whole remained an essential component of the practice of iatromedicine. Indeed, in the work of pseudo-Democritus during the later Hellenistic period it acquired its own theory, adapted from Stoicism, namely the idea of natural sympathy (Dickie 1999).

If possible, any 'interesting' item in the natural world would be located within the vast inter-locking scheme of Greek myth, panhellenic or purely local, and thus obtain a further set of associations (in the case of coral, with Medusa). Such key or 'nodal' items would then legitimate the search for analogous natural substances, motivated by metonymic indicators such as colour or typical provenance.[101] These in turn could be fitted into the schemes devised for the representation of the divine world in art, yet another form of objectification and authentification. The act of engraving the stone underlined and focused the amuletic end envisaged by specifying the deities represented as θεοὶ ἐπηκόοι, *di praestantissimi*, as deities capable of effective intervention. Stones in this mode do not work physiologically or as *substances* (even though this aspect was important in their use in iatromedicine, usually crushed or burned to powder); but nor does their effectiveness lie simply in the trust that is put in them. That is a typically modern explanation, one which simply substitutes a psychological claim for the old idea of 'superstition'. But it is a mere tautology: sailors used amulets because they believed in them. Where does that get us?

I have argued that the answer lies in the existence, behind and beyond either individual stones or amuletic stones as a category, of a series of interlocking institutionalised commitments to the positive role

[101] It is hardly surprising that the Syrtes sapphire (*lapis syrtius qui et sapphirus appellatur*), a stone "found on the edge of Libya, near the Syrtes", is of no use in warding off storms at sea, because such stones had been "thrown out of the sea by storms" (*expulsus a mari per tempestates*) (Damigeron-Evax 22. 2). A beached stone cannot be prescribed as an amulet against shipwreck.

of natural substances in human life, itself merely one aspect of a more general adherence to the view that the divine world is fundamentally well-disposed to humankind, and reveals that beneficence through the bounty of nature. In purchasing an amulet, one bought into a specific sector of that series of assertions. The tacit assumption, as Augustus' seal-skin undergarment indicates, was that such a purchase gave one a special claim either on the gods' goodwill in refraining from creating adverse conditions (in our case, at sea) or on divine intervention in a dangerous situation. An equally viable alternative would have been to undertake a vow before a sea-voyage.

Nevertheless, risks remained. No one who bought a specific amulet believed it would act *absolutely*, any more than in the case of a votive. Against that, effort invested, and the price paid, weighed positively in the balance. The seal-skin undergarment worked; Augustus was never struck by lightning—the investment in his case paid off. Individuals might consider going further up this road and consulting a diviner, a specialist in stones, a 'magician'. However, to go beyond normal precautions, whatever in a given area they might be, meant running the risk of exposing oneself to ridicule, even to the charge of 'consulting a magus'. The very fact that Suetonius comments on Augustus' seal-skin undergarment suggests some uneasiness. We have here then to do with what we might call 'low-intensity' or 'soft' magic, where the part played by the specialist practitioner is minimal or non-existent, but where considerations of due measure, propriety and social status played an important role in personal and collective judgements.

There is however a quite different sense in which the use of such amulets was magical, namely the frequency with which Pliny in this context cites the Magi, i.e. the Lithic tradition from Sotaces, and especially the writers who, in the Hellenistic period, after the (partial) translation of these texts, took material from the Babylonian *abnu šikinšu* (lit.: *The nature of the stone is*…) and its congeners (see n. 42). Coral is a case in point, for, according to Isidore, it was the Magi who claimed it warded off lightning, and storms and hail (p. 468). Pliny views the Magian texts as like Metrodorus: untrustworthy, liable to exaggeration and inclined to love of the marvellous for its own sake. Yet the Lapidary tradition (and indeed Pliny himself in this case) drops all mention of the Magi when dealing with coral: the substance moves into the zone of 'accepted if marvellous facts'. This process of routinisation or domestication of the marvellous seems characteristic of the Lapidaries as a whole. I would therefore understand their overall role

as a sustaining one, implicitly underlining the claim that divine favour could be bought irrespective of considerations of personal morality. Indeed, we might go so far as to see them as a minor but interesting contribution to the maintenance of the traditional view that wealth itself is a mark of divine favour. There were, after all, no simple fishermen scouring the *Nautical Lapidary*, or its earlier forebears, for advice about how to save themselves from the vagaries of the elements. Even if they could read, they were simply too poor to play the game.

Bibliography

Abel, E. 1881. *Orphei lithica* (Berlin) 15–38 (*Lithica*); 138–153 (*Lithica kerygmata*).

Abry, J.H. 1988. Auguste: la Balance et le Capricorne, *REL* 66, 103–21.

Alfaro Giner, C. 1996. *Entalles y camafeos de la Universitat de València* (Valencia).

Andreae, B. 1999. *Odysseus: Mythos und Erinnerung. Ausstellungskatalog, München, 1. Okt. 1999–9. Jan. 2000* (Mainz).

Arnaldi, A. 1994. Neptunus nella monetazione imperiale romana, in *L'Afrique, la Gaule, la religion à l'époque romaine, Mélanges M. Le Glay* (Brussels) 3: 583–597.

Barb, A.A. 1969. Lapis adamas—Der Blutstein, in J. Bibauw (ed.), *Hommages à M. Renard*. Collection Latomus, 101–03 (Brussels) 1: 67–86.

Barton, T. 1995. Augustus and Capricorn: astrological polyvalency and Imperial rhetoric, *JRS* 85, 33–51.

Blake, R.P., De Vis, H. and Lake, K. & S. 1934. *Epiphanius, De gemmis*. Studies and Documents (London).

Bonner, C. 1946. Magical Amulets, *HThR* 39, 25–53.

Buora, M. et al. 1996. *Römische Gemmen aus Aquileia / Gemme romane da Aquileia* (Trieste).

Brugnoli, A. 1989. Augusto e il Capricorno, in *L'astrologia a Roma nell'età augustea* (Lecce) 17–31.

Calvo Delcán, C. 1990. Opiano, *De la caza; De la pesca*. Anónimo: *Lapidario Órfico* (Madrid) 345–409.

Calvo, J.L. and Sánchez, Mª D. (tr.) 1987. *Textos de magia en papiros griegos* (Madrid).

Canós i Villena, I. 2002. *L'epigrafia griega a Catalunya*. Hungarian Polis Studies 9 (Debrecen 2002).

Casal, R. n.d. *Catálogo de Glíptica del Museo Arqueológico Nacional.* Serie de entalles romanos, 2 vols. (Madrid).

Coeuret, G. and Guiraud, H. 1980. Une intaille au capricorne à Pouillé (Loir-et-Cher), *Revue Archéologique du Centre* 73, 29–34.

Demargne, P. et al. 1984. s.v. Athena, *LIMC* 2.1, 955-1044 ; 2.2, 701–65.

De Mély, F. 1898. *Les lapidaires de l'antiquité et du moyen âge*, vol. 2.1, *Les lapidaires grecs* (Paris).

Detienne, M. 1974. La corneille de mer, in Detienne and Vernant 1974, 201–41.

Detienne, M. and Vernant, J.-P. 1974. *Les ruses de l'intelligence: La mètis des Grecs* (Paris).

Dickie, M.W. 1999. The Learned Magician and the Collection and Transmission of Magical Lore, in D.R. Jordan et al. (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First international Sam Eitrem Seminar, Athens 4–8 May 1997* (Bergen) 163–93.

Dimitrova-Milcheva, A. 1979. *Antique Engraved Gems and Cameos in the National Archaeological Museum in Sofia* (Sofia).
Domínguez García, A. and Riesco, H.B. 1993. *Plinio el Viejo: Lapidario* (Madrid).
Dwyer, E.J. 1973. Augustus and the Capricorn, *MDAI(R)* 80, 59–67.
Ernout, A. 1964. La magie chez Pline l'Ancien, *Hommages à J. Bayet*. Coll. Latomus 61 (Brussels) 190–95.
Festugière, A.-J. 1944/1950. *La révèlation d' Hermes Trismégiste. 1 L'astrologie et les sciences occultes* (Paris). Repr. Paris 1986.
Friedrich, P. 1978. *The Meaning of Aphrodite* (Chicago).
Gantz, T. 1993. *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to the Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore).
Grimal, P. (ed.) 1969. *Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine*[4] (Paris).
Guiraud, H. 1988. *Intailles et camées de l'époque romaine en Gaule (Territoire français)* (Paris).
Halleux, R. and Schamp, J. 1985. *Les lapidaires grecs: Lapidaire orphique; Kérygmes lapidaires d'Orphée; Socrates et Denys; Lapidaire nautique; Damigéron-Évax* [Collection Budé] (Paris, repr. 2003).
Henig, M. 1974. *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstone from British Sites*. B.A.R. British Series 8 (Oxford).
—— 1994. *Classical Gems: Ancient and Modern Intaglios and Cameos in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* (with D. Scarisbrick & Mary Whiting) (Cambridge).
Hopfner, T. 1926. s.v. Λιθικά, *RE* 13, 747–69.
Icard-Gianolio, N. and Szabados, A.V. 1992. s.v. Nereides, *LIMC* 6.1, 785–824; 6.2, 456–515.
Johnston, S. I. 1990. *Hekate Soteira*. American Philosophical Association, Classical Studies 21 (Atlanta).
—— 1991. Crossroads, *ZPE* 88, 217–24.
—— 1999. *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley and Los Angeles).
Kaempf-Dimitriadou, S. 1981. s.v. Amphitrite, LIMC 1.1, 724–35; 1.2, 576–92.
King, C.W. 1865. *The Natural History, Ancient and Modern, of Precious Stones and Gems, and of the Precious Metals* (London).
Klöckner, A. 1997. *Poseidon und Neptun. Zur Rezeption griechischer Götterbilder in der römischen Kunst*. Saarbrücker Studien zur Archäologie und Alten Geschichte 12 (Saarbrücken).
Kraft, K. 1967. Zum Capricorn auf den Münzen des Augustus, *Jahrb. für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte* 17, 17–27.
Lagercrantz, O. et al. 1922. s.v. Koralle, *RE* 11, 1373–77.
Maaskant-Kleibrink, M. 1978. *Catalogue of Engraved Gems in the Royal Coin Cabinet, The Hague: The Greek, Etruscan and Roman Collections* (The Hague and Wiesbaden).
Maderna-Lauter, C. 1988. Glyptik, in AA.VV., *Kaiser Augustus und die verlorene Republik. Ausstellung im Martin-Gropius-Bau 7. Juni–14. Aug. 1988* (Berlin) 441–73.
Marshall, F.H. 1907/1968. *Catalogue of the Finger Rings, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman, in the Department of Antiquities, British Museum* (London). Repr. 1968.
Mastrocinque, A. (ed.) 2002. *Gemme gnostiche e cultura ellenistica. Atti dell'incontro di studi, Verona 22–23 ott. 1999* (Bologna).
——. (ed.) 2003. *Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum*. Bollettino di Numismatica, Monografia 8.2.1. (Rome).
Michel, S. 2004. *Die magischen Gemmen: Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln auf geschnittenen Steinen der Antike und Neuzeit.* Studien aus dem Warburghaus 7 (Berlin).
Nagy, Á.M. 2002. Gemmae magicae selectae. Sept notes sur l'interprétation des gemmes magiques, in Mastrocinque 2002, 153–79.

——. 2009. *Daktylios pharmakites.* Magical Healing Gems and Rings in the Graeco-Roman World, in C. Burnett and I. Csepregi-Vardabasso (eds.), *Ritual Healing in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages* (London).
Perea Yébenes, S. 2000. *Mitos griegos e historiografía antigua* (Seville).
——. 2002. *El sello de Dios (2). Ceremonias de la muerte. Nuevos estudios sobre magia y creencias populares grecorromanas* (Madrid).
——. 2004. Zeus Kásios Sózon y Afrodita Sózousa, divinidades protectoras de la navegación. A propósito de dos cepos de anclas romanas procedentes de Cabo de Palos, *Mastia* 3, 95–112.
——. 2005. Un capítulo de la teúrgia antigua: Los oráculos de Hécate y la cuestión de las 'estatuas parlantes', *MHNH* 5, 189–240.
Reiner, E. 1995. *Astral Magic in Babylonia.* Trans. Am. Phil. Soc. 85.4 (Philadelphia).
Richter, G.M.A. 1956. *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems, Greek, Etruscan, Roman: Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Rome).
Ricomá i Vallhonrat, R.M. 1982. *Les gemmes del Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona* (Tarragona).
Rodríguez López, I. 1999. *Mar y Mitología en las culturas mediterráneas* (Madrid).
Rossbach, O. 1910. s.v. Gemmen, *RE* 7, 1052–115.
Schütz, M. 1991. Der Capricorn als Sternzeichen des Augustus, *Antike und Abendland* 37, 55–67.
Schwartz, J. 1981. *Papyri Magicae Graecae* und magische Gemmen, in M.J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römerreich*. EPROER 93 (Leyden) 485–509.
Simon, E. 1994. s.v. Poseidon, *LIMC* 7.1, 446–79; 7.2, 352–78.
Simon, E. and Bauchhenß, G. 1994. s.v. Neptunus, *LIMC* 7.1, 483–500; 7.2, 379–93.
Spier, J. 1992. *Ancient Gems and Finger-Rings: Catalogue of the J. Paul Getty Collection* ('Malibu' CA).
Sydenham, E.A. 1952. *The Roman Republican Coinage* (London).
Thubron, C. 1981. *The Seafarers: Ancient Mariners* (London).
Wachsmuth, D. 1967. ΠΟΜΠΙΜΟΣ Ο ΔΑΙΜΩΝ. *Untersuchungen zu den antiken Sakralhandlungen bei Seereisen* (Berlin).
Walter-Karydi, E. 1991. Poseidons Delphin. Der Poseidon Loeb und die Darstellungsweisen des Meeresgottes im Hellenismus, *JDAI* 106, 243–59.
Weiss, C. 1994. Virgo, Capricorn und Taurus. Zur Deutung augusteischer Symbolgemmen, *JDAI* 109, 353–69.
Wellmann, M. 1935. Die Stein- und Gemmenbücher der Antike, in *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Medizin* 4. 4, 86–110.
Wilkinson, R.H. 1992. *Reading Egyptian Art: Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture* (London). Tr. into Spanish as *Magia y símbolo en el arte egipcio* (Madrid 2003).
Wünsche, R. 1979. Der Gott aus dem Meer, *JDAI* 94, 77–111.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A PRAYER FOR BLESSINGS ON THREE RITUAL OBJECTS DISCOVERED AT CHARTRES-*AUTRICUM* (FRANCE/EURE-ET LOIR)[1]

Richard Gordon, Dominique Joly and William Van Andringa

The ritual objects presented here were discovered as the result of a fortunate accident that occurred on 20th July 2005. Terracing-work for the construction of an entrance stair-way to the underground car-park in the Place des Épars in Chartres, where an excavation had been conducted about a year earlier, had revealed about three metres of occupational strata, including a thick burned layer (Text-fig. 13).[2] Caroline de Frutos and Frédéric Dupont, members of the technical section of the Archaeological Service of the municipality of Chartres, went to carry out a routine check and decided to make a section through it and remove one or two sherds from the layers thus exposed.

During the following hour the fragments of pottery were washed, revealing that one of them bore a text in Latin and that others were fragments of unusual vessels decorated with moulded snakes, and whose handles carried finials in the shape of miniature bowls. These finds at once recalled the fact that a sanctuary of Roman date had been uncovered in the course of the earlier excavations nearby, and were enough to cause us to return to the site at once and take a closer look at this destruction-level. A sounding immediately produced the complete incense-burner that is the main object of this study, and it was removed for conservation.

On the same day, in accordance with the regulations, we informed the Ministry of Culture (DRAC Centre—Service régional de l'Archéologie) and the mayor of Chartres of this exceptionally important discovery. Measures were taken to protect the site, which is immediately adjacent

---

[1] A different version of this paper is due to appear in French in *Gallia*. R.L.G. wishes to express his gratitude to Bernard Mees of the University of Adelaide, who is writing a book on the Gaulish *defixiones*, for sending the text of Lambert 1998–2000, and other help with these texts.

[2] The original excavation was conducted by Hervé Sellès, Inrap.

to a public right of way. A rescue excavation under the general direction of Dominique Joly was conducted between 5th September and 11th October 2005 by Caroline de Frutos and Frédéric Dupont, the archaeologists who made the original discovery.

1. *The Ensemble*

A Group of Ritual Objects Stored in a domestic Cellar

The incense-burner (in fact there turned out to be fragments of three in all) was part of an entire set of ritual equipment that we managed successfully to recover from this small site. All the remains lay collected together in the tiny subterranean cache or cellar (1.70m × c. 2m) of a house that had collapsed after a fire. The ensemble was preserved by the fallen débris (Plate 30). It could be inferred that at an earlier stage access to the cache had probably been by means of a small wooden ladder resting on a pair of masonry steps. Two of the cellar-walls were constructed of solid stone masonry that had been white-washed; the north wall consisted of a revetment of wooden planks nailed to beams (the wall to the south, together with part of the cellar, had been destroyed in the course of the terracing-work in July 2005). At some later point, the floor-level was raised, thus covering the lower of the two masonry steps. The fire that destroyed the cellar occurred during this second phase, while more or less the entire floor-area was still in regular use.

The incense-burners proved to form part of an assemblage of ritual equipment that included three snake-vases, a broad-bladed knife of the type typically used for sacrifices (*culter*) and two stamped factory-lamps (Plate 31).[3] The remainder consists of more than a dozen ceramic items (jars, flasks and bottles), broken fragments of glass vessels and a small assortment of carbonised animal-bones.[4] The cellar also contained a wooden chest or box whose doors were fitted with bone hinges and the corners reinforced with iron angles.

Without totally ignoring the possibility of a relationship with the small shrine nearby, we think it more probable that the collection

[3] Lamps are known to have been used in certain magical rituals, particularly for a certain type of divination, e.g. *PGrMag* VII 540–78.

[4] All this material is being studied and will be published shortly.

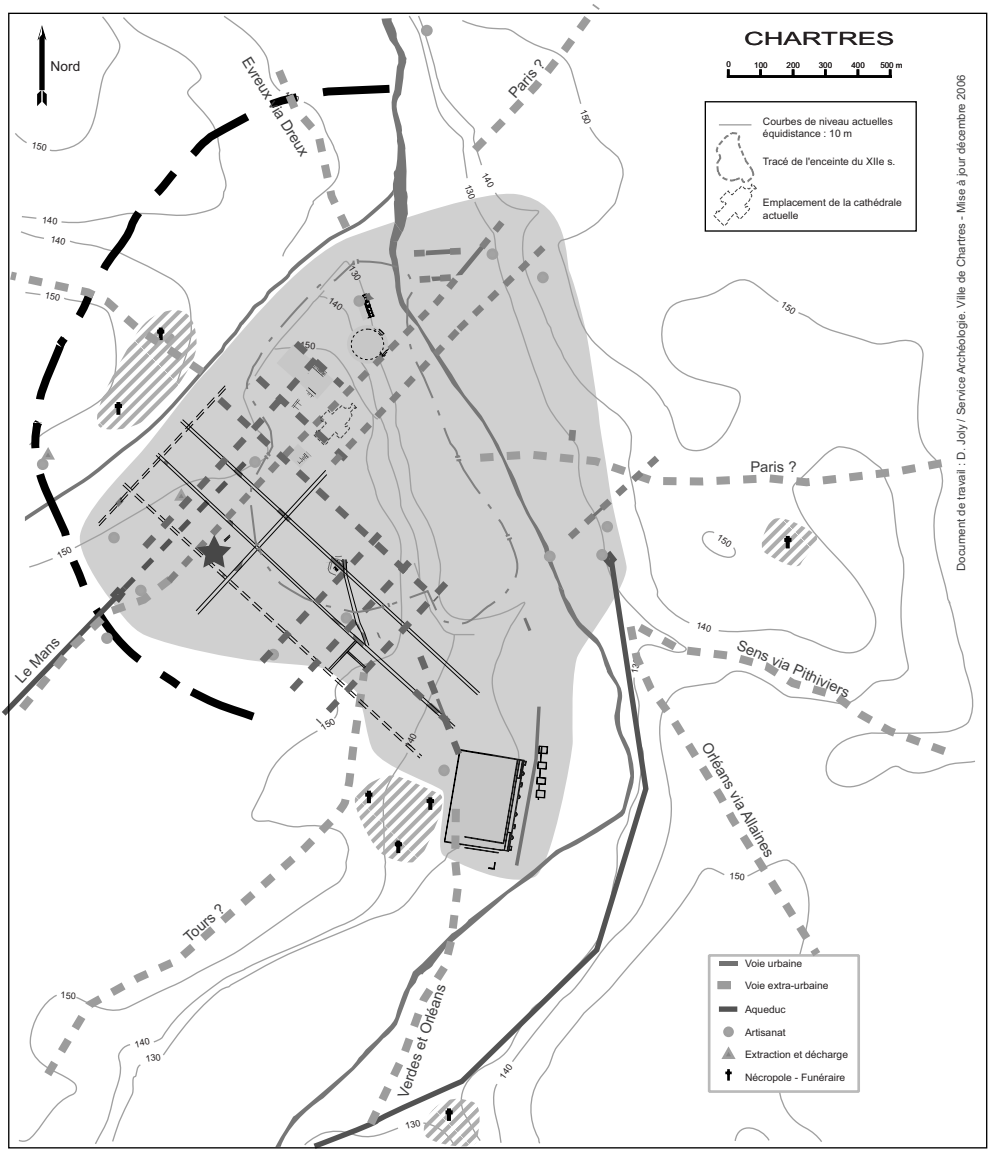

Fig. 13. Plan of Autricum/Chartres. The site of the Roman cellar in the Place des Épars is marked ✷.

belonged to the owner, or tenant, of the house, who may have been C. Verius Sedatus himself. The magical equipment had been carefully deposited under the stairway, discreetly hidden from view.[5] It is possible that the cellar served as a domestic shrine but the destruction of a large section of it by later building operations means that we are not in a position to take a decision one way or the other.

Three probable incense-burners

As already stated, the excavation produced three objects in terracotta, probably similar in overall appearance, and carrying the same inscribed text. Their small size (h: 0.23m) suggests that they were portable items that could easily be put away after use. The first one to be found (object A) is almost perfectly preserved, although the fire has altered some of the surface. Of the second (object B), we possess only a sizeable fragment of the upper rim, enough to show that it was closely similar to the complete example, though somewhat larger. The third (object C), just a small sherd with a flange between the upper rim and the cylindrical body, seems to have been closely similar.

The shape of object A raises the question of whether they were intended for ritual use. It has a circular base that supports a cylindrical shaft flared successively through two flanges and surmounted by a relatively deep bowl (depth: 0.045m, diam. 0.14/0.147m) (Text-fig. 14). So far as we know there are no precise parallels for such a design. Nevertheless the bowl and the overall shape strongly suggest that the object is to be identified as a *thymiaterion* or *turibulum*, at any rate as a utensil for burning the incense or perfume that would have accompanied the invocation of the *omnipotentia numina*.[6] In domestic and votive contexts, incense-burners usually have the form of a small cup or bowl mounted on a cylindrical base.[7] Our *turibulum* is more elabo-

[5] At his trial, Apuleius was accused of having hidden magical equipment (*instrumenta magiae*) in a cloth, and kept it in his lararium (*Apol.* 53f.).

[6] It may also have been used to sacrifice a small creature, such as a chicken; a sacrificial knife did after all form part of the ensemble.

[7] There are many simple votive examples from Archaic and Republican Italy, e.g. more than one hundred found at the sanctuary of Minerva at Lavinium, though their only resemblance to our object is the round base and the dish at the top: *ThesCRA* 1 (2004) 374 nos. 422–25 (I. Edlund-Berry); cf. D. Ugolini, Tra perirrhanteria, louteria e thymiateria. Nota su una classe di ceramica di San Biagio della Venella (Metaponto), *MEFR(A)* 95 (1985) 465–88; L. Ambrosini, *Thymiateria etruschi in bronzo di età tardo, alto e medio ellenistica* (Rome 2002); E. Fabbricotti, Bracieri e cosidetti thymiateria

rate than that, though its size may simply be a function of the plan to write the four texts on the outside wall. At any rate, it seems clear from the texts that Sedatus' *turibula* were especially commissioned to enable him to perform the rites he envisaged. One possibility raised by the confirmed existence of three such utensils in the ensemble is that they were intended to mark out a ritual space: the idea may have been to place them at each cardinal point, to evoke the *numina* and enable Sedatus to prevail upon them. That would imply that there were originally four.

The Texts

The graffiti were inscribed in the wet clay before firing. The same prayer (with the exception of the headings, each of which denotes a cardinal direction) has been written out four times down the exterior wall of the *turibulum*, from the top flange to the shaft, each block being separated from the next by a vertical line (Text fig. 15). There are however very slight differences between them. For example, in three cases *omnipotentia* occurs in full in l. 1, but in Oriens it is divided between ll. 1 and 2; in two cases *numina* is divided, in the others not; in three cases Sedatus' praenomen is given, in one it is omitted. In three cases *vester custos* has been placed below the flange marking the division between bowl and shaft. It is possible that this last variant is not casual, but serves as a stress-marker.

The lettering is in capitals with some tendency towards cursive, particularly in the case of *b, o* and *d*. The letter-forms are similar to those of the first-century Gallo-Roman graffiti from Châteauneuf (dép. Savoie), La Graufesenque or l'Hospitalet-du-Larzac (both dép. Aveyron), and are consistent with the archaeological context of the ensemble, which we would date to late I^{p}-early II^{p}.[8]

---

fittili, in J. Swaddling (ed.), *Italian Iron-Age Artefacts in the British Museum: Papers of 6th British Museum Classical Colloquium* (London 1986) 185–91. Some idea of the range of fine Archaic and Etruscan thymiateria is provided by A. Testa, *Candelabri e thymiateria.* Cataloghi: Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie. Museo Gregoriano Etrusco 2 (Rome 1989).

[8] Cf. C. Mermet, Le sanctuaire gallo-romain de Châteauneuf (Savoie), *Gallia* 50 (1993) 95–138; R. Marichal, *Les graffites de La Graufesenque*, Gallia Supplément 40 (Paris 1988); M. Lejeune et al., *Le plomb magique du Larzac et les sorcières gauloises* (Paris 1985).

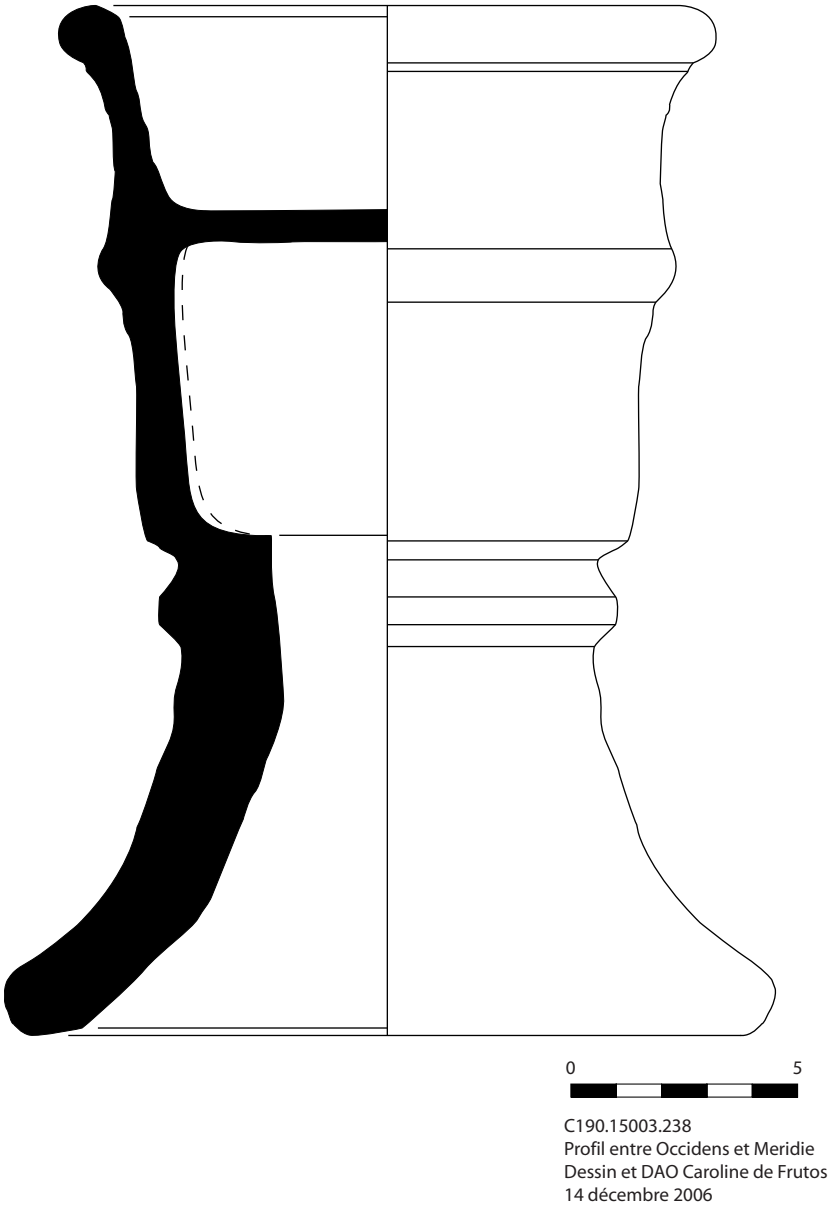

Fig. 14. Profile drawing by Caroline de Frutos of *turibulum* A, between *Occidens* and *Meridies*. Service Archéologique municipal de Chartres.

Oriens	Meridie<s>	Occidens	Septemtrio
Vos rogo omnipot[e]n-	Vos rogo omnipotentia	Vos rogo omnipotentia [n]u-	Vos rogo omnipotentia nu-
tia numina ut omnia	numina ut omnia bona	mina ut omnia bona	mina ut omnia bona confe-
bona conferatis Verio	conferatis C(aio) Verio	conferatis C(aio) Verio	ratis C(aio) Verio Sedato quia
Sedato quia ille est	Sedato quia ille est	Sedato quia ille est	ille est vester custos
(flange)	(flange)	(flange)	(flange)
vester custos	vester custos	vester custos	Echar Aha
Echar Aha	Echar Aha	Echar Aha	[Br]u Stna
Bru Stna	Bru Stna	Bru Stna	[Bros] Ḍru
Bros Dru	Bros Dru	Bros Dru	[Chor Ḍ]ṛax
Chor [Dr]ạx	Chor Drax	Chor Drax	[Chos]
Cos	Chos	[Ch]os	(flange)
(flange)	(flange)	(flange)	Halcemedme
Halcemedme	Halcemedme	Halcemedme	Halcehalar
Halcehalar	Halcehalar	Halcehalar	Halcemedme
Halcemedme	Halcem(e)dme	Halcemedm[e]	

Fig. 15. The four texts from *turibulum* A set in parallel (K. Meinking).

Object A (complete)

The texts are presented in clockwise order, starting arbitrarily with Oriens, and then moving to Meridies, and so on.

Column 1 (Plate 32):

Letter heights (range: 1.15 → 0.35cm): Line 1: 0.75/0.8cm; line 2: 0.35/0.55cm; line 3: 0.4/0.7cm; line 4: 0.35/0.9cm; line 5: 0.35/0.7cm; line 6: 0.45/0.85cm; line 7: 0.55/0.9cm; line 8: 0.45/0.85cm; line 9: 0.5/1.00cm; line 10: 0.45/0.55cm; line 11: 0.6/0.7cm; line 12: 0.65/1.3cm; line 13: 0.7/1.15cm; line 14: 0.7/1.3cm.

Oriens
Vos rogo omnipot[e]n-
tia numina ut omnia
bona conferatis · Verio
Sedato quia ille est
(flange)
vester custos
Echar Aha
Bru Stna
Bros Dru
Chor [Dr]ax
Cos
(flange)
Halcemedme
Halcehalar
Halcemedme

Column 2 (Plate 33):

Letter heights (range 1.55 → 0.35cm): Line 1: 0.7/1.00cm; line 2: 0.35/0.8; line 3: 0.35/0.6; line 4: 0.35/0.7cm; line 5: 0.4/0.8cm; line 6: 0.45/0.8cm; line 7: 0.4/0.8cm; line 8: 0.4/0.7cm; line 9: 0.45/1.00cm; line 10: 0.5/0.9cm; line 11: 0.5/1.6cm; line 12: 1.00/1.55cm; line 13: 0.65/1.5cm; line 14: 0.7/1.4cm.

Meridie<s>
Vos rogo omnipotentia
numina ut omnia bona
conferatis C(aio) Verio
Sedato quia ille est
(flange)
vester custos

Echar Aha
Bru Stna
Bros Dru
Chor Drax
Chos
(flange)
Halcemedme
Halcehalar
Halcem<e>dme

Column 3 (Plate 34):

Letter heights (range: 2.2 → 0.3cm): Line 1: 0.5/0.65cm; line 2: 0.35/0.65cm; line 3: 0.35/0.6cm; line 4: 0.35/0.7cm; line 5: 0.4/0.7cm; line 6: 0.45/0.7cm; line 7: 0.55/0.75cm; line 8: 0.45/0.65cm; line 9: 0.5/0.85cm; line 10: 0.5/1.1cm; line 11: 0.55/0.85cm; line 12: 0.65/2.7cm; line 13: 0.65/1.35cm; line 14: 0.85/1.3cm.

Occidens
Vos rogo omnipotentia [n]u-
mina ut omnia bona
conferatis C(aio) Verio
Sedato quia ille est
(flange)
vester custos
Echar Aha
Bru Stna
Bros Dru
Chor Drax
[C]hos
(flange)
Halcemedme
Halcehalar
Halcemedm[e]

Column 4 (Plate 35):

Letter heights (range: 2.00 → 0.35cm): Line 1: 0.7/0.8cm; line 2: 0.35/0.9cm; line 3: 0.35/0.6cm; line 4: 0.35/0.7cm; line 5: 0.4/0.65cm; line 6: 0.55/1.1; line 7: 0.5/0.6cm; line 8: 0.6/0.8cm; line 9: 1.00/1.00cm; line 10: –; line 11: 0.7/2.00cm; line 12: 0.7/1.5cm; line 13: 0.7/1.6cm.

Septemtrio
Vos rogo omnipotentia nu-
mina ut omnia bona confe-
ratis C(aio) Verio Sedato quia
ille est vester custos
(flange)
Echar Aha
[Br]u Stna
[Bros] Dru
[Chor D]rax
[Chos]
(flange)
Halcemedme
Halcehalar
Halcemedme

Object B, sherd (Plate 36)

The fragment of the second *turibulum* carries the same inscription (apart from the final formula) in capitals with a more definite tendency to cursive, especially in the text of the prayer. The mise-en-page too is different from that of object A, since the names are written out not in columns but in a linear list. The line-breaks are shown *exempli gratia.*

Letter heights (range: 0.85 → 0.3cm): Line 1: 0.65/0.75cm; line 2: 0.35/0.85cm; line 3: 0.3/0.7cm; line 4: 0.35/0.7cm; line 5: 0.35/0.85cm; line 6: 0.7cm.

Septem[trio]
[Vos] rogo omnipot[entia numina ut omnia]
[b]ona conferatis [C(aio) Verio Sedato quia ille est]
vester custos.
[Ec]har, Bru, Bros, Cho[r, Chos, Aha, Stna,]
[Dru,] Drax
(flange?)
[Halcemedme, Halcehalar, Halcemedme]

The order of the names here is that obtained by reading down the first column in A, then the second.

Object C, sherd (Plate 37)

Another fragment carries four letters of the list of magical names. As on Object B, they are not set out in columnar form but in a line. The flange above the text shows that the fragment belongs to the section separating the upper flare from the cylindrical shaft.

Echar,] Aha, B[ru, Stna –

The order of the names here is different from that of either A or B: each line in the two columns seems to have been read across from left to right.

Caius Verius Sedatus

The *nomen* Verius is most probably a calque on the *cognomen* Verus, which is common in Gaul and the two Germanies (e.g. *CIL* XIII 412; 2147; 2456; 2471; 3035 no. 47; 5708 l. 11 [*Testamentum civis Lingonum*] etc.).[9] The *nomen* however is recorded only once in Lugdunensis, as the name of a freedman at Lugdunum itself (*CIL* XIII 2201, *praenomen* possibly Sex]t(us), conj. Allmer), and is in fact more common in Narbonensis.[10] Sedatus is well-attested as a *cognomen* in the three Gauls (e.g. *CIL* XIII 846; 2706 (?); 4609; 5551; 5988; 11587). It is thus simplest to suppose that C. Verius Sedatus came from Gallia Lugdunensis, no doubt from the area of Chartres itself, though we cannot exclude the possibility that he, or his family, had come from farther South. In view of the other magical documents found in Gaul, particularly the famous Gaulish text from L'Hospitalet-du-Larzac, which confirm the presence there of magical specialists, there is nothing particularly

[9] We might compare a funerary from Chartres that may offer a parallel case of a *nomen* calqued on a *cognomen* (Veranius ← Veranus: *CIL* XIII 3056, though the reading is problematic). It cannot be quite excluded, however, that it is a mere variant on Verrius/Verreius, common in Italy and in Narbonensis (cf. *CIL* VIII 17036).

[10] *CIL* XII 127; 1597; 2699; 3291; 5690 no. 127; 709 (Veria), cf. *OPEL* s.v. The Verius Felix of *CIL* VI 2548, who was in the Praetorian Guard at Rome, may, like his friends named there, have been a Batavian. The praenomina of the only recorded persons with the same *nomen* of any rank, a *praef. coh. mil.* at Housesteads (*RIB* 1586) and a decurion of the colony of Nemausus (*CIL* XII 3291) are different (Q. and M. respectively). However our Sedatus has the same praenomen as C. Verius Primulus of Alba Helviorum (Aps), in the Rhône valley S. of Vienne (*Atlas* 17 D4), so that his family may conceivably have originated from there.

surprising in the thought that he may have been a specialist of this kind from the city of the Carnutes.[11]

2. *Commentary on the Prayer*

A Magical Prayer

The burden of the prayer is simple enough. C. Verius Sedatus requests blessings from the omnipotent powers on the grounds that he is their guardian (*quia ille est vester custos*). There appears to be no precise parallel for such a request. Any suggested context therefore involves an element of speculation, and we do not claim to have found a wholly satisfactory solution. C. Verius Sedatus, whoever he was, seems to have been a sort of religious bricoleur, drawing upon strands of different traditions to create his own personal ritual idiom. If we assume a degree of individual creativity or originality of this kind, we are unlikely to be able to assign either the prayer or the implied ritual definitively to a single context.

Despite its brevity, three features of the prayer suggest some connection with the ritual-magical procedures known to us mainly from the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri. First, Sedatus must have considered the unintelligible 'words' that follow *vester custos* to be the secret or powerful names of the *omnipotentia numina*, i.e. not their usual or 'official' names, and that it was this knowledge that gave him special authority over them. These are the basic assumptions of learned Graeco-Egyptian magic, but not those of the Italo-Roman folk or 'traditional' healing magic represented for us by, say, Cato's remedy for dislocated joints (*De agr.* 140), where the unintelligible words are understood not as secret names but as markers of the special

[11] For the L'Hospitalet-du-Larzac text, see n. 8 above. The most interesting Gallic *defixio* (*DTAud* 111f. = *ILS* 8752 = *ILAquit. Santones* 104a, b), from the *ager Santonum* (Charente Inférieure), is mentioned in n. 14 below. Because of its provenance, the simple gold *charakter*-phylactery found in a cremation tomb in the Limousin (Kotansky *GMA*, 44f. no. 10, I/II^{P}) is more important in the present context than the two II^{P} amulets against hail-storms, in Greek with identical wording and mise-en-page, from near Avignon, and the Vaucluse, which Kotansky *GMA*, 46–53 no. 11 rightly reckons were mass-produced in the area (see also Fernández Nieto's discussion, p. 562 below). Though of course phylacteries are easily transportable, the poor quality of the Limousin example shows it was made far from any important centre of Graeco-Egyptian learned magic.

nature of the ritual.[12] Second, except in the learned antiquarian tradition of the 'secret name' of Rome, itself almost certainly invented by Verrius Flaccus, secret names play no part in Roman public (or private) religion.[13] The claim that one deserves to be listened to because one is the 'guardian' of such powers is however an explicit version of a thought normally implicit in the magical papyri—though it is documented there—that knowledge of divine names must be kept secret and divulged to no one else. Third, the four cardinal directions, which seem to play a central part in Sedatus' ritual practice, are invoked in Graeco-Egyptian prayers to the Agathos Daimon to provide, as here, concrete blessings. There is therefore a thematic parallel in the magical papyri.

On the other hand, the Agathos-Daimon rituals are not only in Greek but represent relatively complex and elaborate examples of incantation. Sedatus' text by contrast is brief, indeed rudimentary. Moreover, the date of the prayer is very early for a text based, however remotely, on Graeco-Egyptian practice (see below). Only one of the malign magical texts (*defixiones*) of this period from the north-western provinces, for example, shows any such influence and is probably several decades later.[14] For this reason, before we look at the case for a Graeco-Egyptian context, it seems advisable to explore the obvious alternative possibility, a ritual performance within the context of Gallo-Roman religion.[15]

---

[12] Cf. R.L. Gordon, The Healing Event in Graeco-Roman Folk-Medicine, in Ph.J. van der Eijk et al. (eds.), *Ancient Medicine in its Socio-Cultural Context* (Amsterdam1995), 2: 363–376.

[13] Cf. J. Rüpke, *Die Religion der Römer* (Munich 2001) 134–6 (= pp. 132–34 of the ET).

[14] The well-known puppy-*defixiones* from the *ager Santonum* (see n. 11 above), which are the only Gallic *defixiones* to use *nomina magica*, are probably to be dated to the second half of II^{p}. However they do confirm that *some* awareness of ritual magical forms was available in the far west of Gaul by that time, however it arrived there. As Faraone and Kropp point out elsewhere in this volume (p. 385), it also uses the twisting of the dead puppy's body as an ostensive link between the literal and metaphoric uses of *aversum*. The *ager Santonum* was exposed to outside influences through the busy port of Burdigala and the important city of Mediolanum, cf. AA.VV., *Villes et agglomérations antiques du Sud-Ouest de la Gaule: Deuxième colloque Aquitania, Bordeaux 13–15 sept. 1990*. Aquitania Suppl. 6 (Bordeaux 1992) 154–63.

[15] C.A. Faraone suggested to us that we should consider this possibility. Being committed to a particular model of the dynamic relationship between Hellenistic Greek magic and Egyptian temple-magic (cf. Handbooks and Anthologies: The Collection of Greek and Egyptian Incantations in Late Hellenistic Egypt, *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 2 [2000] 195–213), he remains sceptical of any Graeco-Egyptian context.

i. *A 'Druidic' Ritual?*[16]

Apart from the find-spot, Autricum, a site relatively far from direct Roman influence and with few inscriptions, the main reason for suspecting a Gallo-Roman background is the presence of the cardinal directions on at least two of the *turibula* (assuming that that is what they are), and presumably also on the very fragmentary third example.

Two scenarios are possible. The first is that only one *turibulum* was used for any given ritual, and that the less well-preserved ones represent older or broken models that Sedatus chose to retain in the cellar, with the other cult vessels, rather than discard.[17] The second possibility, which we have already mentioned, is that there were originally four objects in the set, and that no trace has yet been found of the last. The cellar had after all been badly disturbed by the construction of street-drains long before the building of the underground car-park and the steps. On this account C. Verius Sedatus had four similar *turibula* made, which were intended to delimit a sacred or effective spot, at the centre of which he would have stood. The different manner of listing the names, particularly between objects B and C, would then simply result from the carelessness so often found in ancient copying. These differences suggest moreover that, though Sedatus provided the original text on a wax tablet or leaf-tablet (we may assume text A), the texts we have were written by someone in the workshop, for whom neither the order of the names nor the mise-en-page was important, and that Sedatus either did not notice this or had to accept the fait-accompli.

There is no first-order evidence concerning the possible religious significance of the cardinal directions from the Gallo-Roman period. Such evidence as survives is pre-Roman—or Irish. Given the sharp differences of opinion between those, such as C.-J. Guyonvarc'h and Françoise Le Roux, or Miranda Green, who claim that it is legitimate to use Irish material, despite its late date and its insular origin, to supplement archaeology, and those, most notably J.-L. Brunaux, who exclude such 'evidence' in favour of what can be deduced from the

[16] F. Marco Simón independently made the same suggestion as Faraone. We are most grateful to him for bibliographical advice and other help in this section.

[17] For an analogous effort to keep old or broken sacred items, note the case of the late phase of the mithraeum at Bonn/Sechtem, where parts of disused statues were placed in receptacles in the podia: C. Ulbert, J.-C. Wulfmeier and I. Huld-Zetsche, Ritual deposits of Mithraic cult-vessels: new evidence from Sechtem and Mainz, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 17 (2004) 354–70.

archaeology, where supported by the classical sources, we prefer to use inferences that can be made from excavated sites or objects only.[18] The elaborate divinatory scenario suggested by Guyonvarc'h and Le Roux on the basis of Irish traditions, with the observer facing East, keeping North to his left and South to the right, a division that supposedly corresponds to that between the living (S.) and the dead (N.), must then be dismissed as pure speculation.[19] Cicero at any rate makes no allusion to the possible significance of the cardinal directions in relation to the *auguria* of the Aeduan Druid Diviciac.[20] Nor can one make much of the fact that Vercingetorix, when he surrendered to Caesar after Alesia, rode a circuit around him on horseback.[21]

Then there is the possibility that the Celtic Gauls conceptualised their world in terms of four quarters, or divisions, orientated towards the cardinal directions, a representation of space that, comparatively speaking, is common enough. For example, the late IV[a] 'omphalos' from Kermaria (Pont-l'Abbé, Pointe de Penmarch), now at St. Germain-en-Laye, which is decorated on all four faces, carries an X-shaped cross incised on the top, that might be interpreted in this sense.[22] It is however difficult to see any regular application of such ideas in the orientation of excavated shrines of pre-Roman date; though square in plan, they do not seem to be carefully orientated towards the cardinal points.[23] In relation to the site he excavated at Gournay-sur-Aronde

---

[18] Guyonvarc'h and Le Roux 1986; M. Green, *The World of the Druids* (London and New York 1997) 124–37; Brunaux 2000, 17–21. Despite his affirmation of principle, Brunaux himself is not above appealing to Irish materials when it suits him (e.g. p. 175).

[19] Guyonvarc'h and Le Roux 1986, 299.

[20] Cicero, *De div*. 1.90 (Q. Cicero is made to say that he actually knew this man, from his period of service with Caesar). Artemidorus ap. Strabo 4.4.6, 199C likewise makes no mention of orientation in relation to the crows of 'Two-Crow island'. Despite Brunaux' claim that the augural practices of the independant Gauls were "en effet, tout à fait similaires" to Roman methods (p. 94), his discussion reveals that they were in fact completely dissimilar (pp. 163f.; 175f.).

[21] Plutarch, *Caes.* 27.9, 721c: Guyonvarc'h and Le Roux 1986, 303.

[22] M.-Y. Dayre and A. Villard, Les stèles de l'Age de fer à décors géometriques et curvilignes: état de la question dans l'Ouest armoricain, *Revue archéologique de l'Ouest* 13 (1996) 123–56; W. Kruta, *Les Celtes. Histoire et dictionnaire des origines à la romanisation et au christianisme* (Paris 2000) 695f. fig. 104 (the arms of the X do not in fact point in the same direction as the four faces, and of course nothing is known of the original orientation of the stone). For what it is worth, the three tribes of Galatai of Asia Minor were traditionally organised into tetrarchies (Strabo 12.5.1, 567C).

[23] Cf. the brief accounts of S. Piggott, *I Druidi: sacri maghi dell' antichità* (Rome 1982) 44–60; A. Haffner, Allgemeine Übersicht, in idem 1995, 9–42 at 21–32.

(Oise), however, Brunaux argues that, whereas the original temple was oriented East by North East, the alignment was shifted to face due East in early III[a]. He claims that this was due to a preference for an 'astronomical' alignment, with the entrance to the shrine, and the axis of the hollow altar, facing the point at which the sun rose at the summer solstice.[24] If this were considered to be the 'true' or most authentic East, the remaining sides of the altar would also have been orientated, at least conceptually, towards the cardinal directions. There is, however, considerable doubt whether this was in fact the purpose of the re-orientation; nor does Brunaux appear to have done any research into the actual alignment of sunrise at the solstice at this latitude at the date in question. In other cases, however, such as the various phases of the massive 'trophy' site at Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme), it seems to have been the angles of the complex rather than the walls themselves that were oriented towards the cardinal directions.[25] The fact that this orientation was preserved throughout the history of the site, including the Augustan, Flavian and even late-antique rebuilding after the destruction at the end of the third century, might suggest that, at least in southern Belgica, the principle remained conscious. On this argument, Sedatus would have been attempting to reproduce in the design of his *turibula* an authentically Gaulish concern for cardinal alignment: they were to form was to be a sort of miniaturised and portable four-square temple-site. However it must be stressed that this is quite speculative: Gallo-Roman temples for example do not seem to reveal any marked concern with orientation at all, let alone any attempt at exact alignment.[26] Sedatus' concern with alignment could just as easily have been inspired by Roman practice. Vitruvius in fact recommends that temples and the cult-statues in them should face West, if practicable, so that the sacrificants at the altar in front shall be able to face both East and the statue; the altar itself should face East.[27]

---

[24] Brunaux 1995, 60–62; Brunaux 2000, 94. Caesar notes the Druids' interest in the stars and their movements (*BG* 6.14.6).

[25] Brunaux 1995, 66–74; idem et al., Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme): bilan préliminaire et nouvelles hypothèses, *Gallia* 56 (1999) 177–283.

[26] Cf. e.g. I. Fauduet, *Les temples de traditions celtique en Gaule romaine* (Paris 1993) esp. 33 (Gué de Sciaux at Antigny, Vienne); 46 (Aubigné Racan, Sarthe); 98 (Civaux, Vienne); 123 (St.-Pierre Bellevue, Creuse); 134 (Les Tours Mirandes, Vendeuvre-du-Poitou, Vienne). Since most of her plans do not include an indication of orientation, we may assume that in her view such temples had no directional preference.

[27] *De arch.* 4.5.1, cf. 4.9.1. However he clearly has a number of supplementary rules whose underlying concern is the public visibility of the facade of the temple, e.g.

The main difficulty with such a contextualisation is the claim to be the guardian of the gods' (secret) names, which is the feature of the text that most obviously suggests a magical context. Why not simply address the gods by name, as usual? Why list the secret names? Here we might perhaps appeal to the notion of invented tradition.[28] Druidism may have been formally abolished in Gaul by Tiberius and again by Claudius, but its aura remained alive.[29] Pliny's account of the *anguinum/urinum*, famous among the Druids, refers to a case in the reign of Claudius, in which an *eques Romanus* of Vocontian origin (Gallia Narbonensis) was executed for keeping such a thing on his person during a law-suit, as a *niketikon*, an amulet to ensure success.[30] During the revolt of Civilis in 70 CE, 'the Druids' notoriously interpreted the burning of the Capitoline temple as a sign of the end of Roman power and its passing to the Gauls (Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.54). They were also credited with knowledge of lore regarding the medicinal use of certain plants, and their use as amulets or phylacteries against harm (*contra perniciem omnem*).[31] By the time of Pliny the Elder, aspects of this lore, albeit in fragmentary and heavily distorted form, had evidently come to be written down by Greek and Roman writers on medicine, and perhaps also by those, such as Nigidius Figulus, interested in *physiologia*.[32] For many Romans, such knowledge meant 'magic'. Indeed, in his

---

from a river, or the street. The temple of Capitoline Jupiter in Rome, for example, faced SSE.

[28] E. Hobsbawm, Inventing Traditions, in idem and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983) 1–14.

[29] Cf. Pliny, *HN* 30. 13; Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.5; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 4. 54, and the 'Druidic' prophecies allegedly given by wise-women to third-century emperors: *HA Severus Alex.* 60.6; *Aurelian* 44.4f.; *Carus* 14.2–15.3 (to Diocletian). See also Marco Simón 2002, 195f. and the chart in Webster 1999, 3f.

[30] Pliny, *HN* 29.52–4 with Marco Simón 2002, 193f. (fossilised sea-urchins?). The belief that such 'eggs' brought luck must have been routed through the Greek name 'wind-egg' (ᾠὸν οὔριον), οὔριος meaning both 'windy' and 'favourable'. A *defixio* from just N. of Béziers (Hérault) seeks to prevent the targets from joining in the ceremony of the *Masitlatida* (meaning unknown) and the ceremonies for the dead (*concinere Necracantum*, a hapax translating a Gaulish term), apparently by analogy with the Druidic sanction (Caesar, *BG* 6.13.6) of barring individuals from sacrifice—in an area that had been under Roman rule for 150 years: *AE* 1981: 621 (mid-I^{p}) with R. Marichal, Une tablette d'exécration de l'oppidum de Montfo (Hérault), CRAI (1981) 41–51.

[31] Pliny, HN 24.103 (on *selago*); they also claimed that an infusion of mistletoe would cause a sterile animal to become fertile, and work as an antidote to poisons (16.251). Cf. also *HN* 16.95; 24.112.

[32] In twenty-eight cases Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, includes the 'Gaulish' names of the plants listed, though it is impossible to say when they were added to the text. This is fewer than the names given either in Egyptian or in 'African', but by no

account of mistletoe, Pliny states baldly that the Druids are the *magi* of Gaul—*ita suos appellant magos* (*HN* 16. 249).[33]

We can be certain that Sedatus was completely ignorant of Gaulish language and likewise of genuine Druidic tradition (if we believe that any knowledge of it was still available in the early second century CE). There are several reasons for claiming this. For example, the names he gives to the four cardinal directions: *oriens, occidens*, *meridie(s)*, *septemtrio*, are those that entered Latin in the late Republic/early Principate under the influence of astronomy/astrology.[34] They are different from the traditional Latin names given, for example, by Aulus Gellius as: *exortus*, *occasus, meridies, septentriones*, by Seneca as: *ortus*, *occasus*, *meridies*, *septentrio*.[35] Sedatus' names are in fact the 'modern' terms that were more or less standard in the Roman world by the first quarter of II^{p}, and there is nothing remotely Gaulish, or even Gallo-Roman, about them.

Then again, *rogo* seems to have become popular in informal prayers under the influence of the language of secular petitions and testamentary dispositions.[36] Epigraphically, the style is mainly attested in brief private prayers such as this,[37] but also in prayers for justice and malign

---

means a negligible showing. Gaulish plant names also occur in Celsus, ps-Apuleius and of course Marcellus Empiricus: Marco Simón 2002, 197–99.

[33] Webster 1999, 16f. distinguishes between two Roman traditions, one emphasising the politico-religious power of the Druids, the other their 'magic'.

[34] E.g. Vitruvius, *Arch.* 1.1.10: *ex astrologia… cognoscitur oriens, occidens, meridies, septentrio*; cf. Pliny, *HN* 4.19 (*septentrio, occidens, meridies, oriens*) and 5.102 (*oriens, occidens, septentrio, meridies*). On the development of mathematical and astronomical geography at this period, see briefly C. Nicolet, *L'inventaire du monde* (Paris 1988) 77–95.

[35] Aulus Gellius *NA* 2.22.3; Seneca *NQ* 5.16.1; cf. Livy 21.30.4; Caesar, *Gall.* 1.16f.; Pliny, *HN* 2.143; 17.19; 84f. In his intermediate system, Pliny uses *oriens, meridies, occasus, septentriones* (*HN* 2.119), but was clearly aware of the terms *occidens* and *septentrio* (e.g. 4.102); at 3.3, however, he uses *occasus solis* for *occidens*, perhaps implying that Agrippa's world-map did so too. *Septentriones* occurs first in Plautus, *Amph.* 273; *septentrio*, like *occidens*, is first found in the very late Republic, cf. Varro *LL* 7.7, with A. Le Boeuffle, *Les noms latins d'astres et de constellations* (Paris 1977) 88.

[36] A wide variety of Latin prayer formulae is known: cf. G. Appel, *De Romanorum precationibus*, RGVV 7.2 (Gießen 1909). By the early Principate the commonest in official or semi-official contexts is *precor et quaeso*. Appel p. 66 lists only a handful of literary examples of *rogo* (Seneca, *Agam.* 511; *De ben.* 5.25.4; Martial 1.39.6; 8.8.3), but there are many others, e.g. Catullus 13.13; Livy 7.203.3; Seneca, *QN* 2.33. *Rogo domine* in a petition: *CIL* IX 2438 = *AE* 1983: 331; *peto et rogo* e.g. *AE* 1894: 148; *CIL* VIII 1966 = *ILAlg* 1.3310 (testamentary dispositions); *rogo iubeoque: AE* 1945: 136 = 1949: 196.

[37] E.g.: *Lari patrio Ladronius Avitis filius votum solvit. Propitius sis rogo*: *AE* 1973: 319; and the prayer of Cascellia Elegans from S. Stefano, Rome: *domine aeterne rogo te Cascelia Elegans….*: *AE* 1973: 51.

magical prayers. Although it occurs only twice in one of the largest finds of the former, in the Sacred Spring at Aquae Sulis (Bath, England), there is plenty of evidence that it was a standard formula in the western provinces (especially in Hispania) for requests for the restoration of stolen objects now ceded to the divinity.[38] The general form of the prayer is thus purely Roman.

As for his attempt at creating secret 'names', although some concern for aural effect has gone into their creation (see below), they bear no resemblance to, say, the names of genuinely Gaulish divinities, nor do they betray the kind of familiarity with the phonetics of Gaulish that could be expected of one who could speak the language.[39]

Nevertheless, there are several reasons for thinking that Sedatus may have believed, or wanted to believe, that his invented praxis was a continuation, or revival, of Druidic practice. The first is the magical word *Dru* in text A, *Oriens* l.9, col. ii etc. He may have believed that this was the Gaulish word for Druid, although it is certain that the word was actually *druis*.[40] If so, he was surely working on the basis of the etymology, given by Pliny, from the Greek word for 'oak', δρῦς.[41] Going on from there, it seems that he had made an effort to make his 'names' appear Gallo-exotic. There is a clear bias in favour of plosives (/b/, /d/, /k/), compound plosives (/k^{h}/, /ks/), the alveolar fricative /s/,

[38] E.g. *DTAud* 122 (Emerita); *AE* 1988: 727 = *IRBaelo* 1 = *RICIS* 602/0101 (Baelo Claudia, Baetica); *AE* 2001: 1135 (Alcácer do Sal, Lusitania); *CIL* II 2476 = *AE* 1981: 527 = 1993: 1027 (Braga); *AE* 1984: 623; *rogo subruptus sit Uruanus*…: *AE* 1992: 911 (Sardinia); J. Blänsdorf, The curse tablets from the sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz, *MHNH* 5 (2005) 11–26, p .21 no. 9 (= Text no. 7, p. 172 above).

[39] Compare the genuine Gaulish of the Châteaubleau tile, for example, published by Lambert 1998–2000 = *RIG* 2.2 no. 93, which is completely different. Sedatus surely did not understand his *nomina* 'etymologically'. If he did not receive them as a list from someone else, the likeliest scenario in our view is that he 'heard' them in dreams. He could only trust their power if he had a personal means of guaranteeing their divine status.

[40] See the etymological appendix of Guyonvarc'h and Le Roux 1986, 425–32; also Marco Simón 2007, 154 n. 9 (favouring *dru-uides*, linking Celtic **wid-*, knowledge with the root *vidu-*, tree or wood). It used however to be thought that the Gaulish word was indeed *dryw* (J. Vendryes, *Les Religions des Celtes*. Collection Mana 2.2 [Paris 1948] 291, 295) or *dru* (A. Holder, *Altkeltischer Sprachschatz* [Leipzig 1896–1907] s.v. druidas). Apart from [Aristotle] *De magia* (frg. 35 Rose = Diog. Laert., *praef.* 1), Caesar is the only ancient author to report the Gaulish name correctly.

[41] *HN* 16. 249. The etymology is implicit in Lucan, *Bell. civ.* 1. 451, 453f.: *Dryadae*…. *nemora alta remotis incolitis lucis*; Maximus of Tyre, *Diss.* 2.8; cf. Schol. Bernensis to Lucan, p. 33 ed. H. Usener (repr. 1967): *driadae philosophi Gallorum dicti ab arboribus quod semotos lucos incolant*, and in the form usually found in late-imperial sources, *dryad-*, cf. M. Ihm, s.v. Druidae, *RE* 5 (1905) 1736.65ff.

and the alveolar trill /r/, which alone occurs six times in five words. Except in the case of *Stna*, nasals (m,n), labial and palatal fricatives and glides are all absent. As for the clusters, initial /*dr*/ is unknown in Latin except the personal name Drusus/Drusilla etc. (all the words so beginning are Greek or Gaulish, e.g. *draucus, druidae, Drunemeton*). Initial /*br*/ is very rare in Latin apart from the *brevis*-group incl. *bruma*, but common in Gaulish and loan-words from Gaulish (*bracae, Brix-, brocchus, Brannogenos, Brennus* etc.); initial /*stn*/ is impossible in Latin.[42] Turning to the vowels, ĕ occurs only once (in *Echar*) and ĭ is conspicuous by its absence, as are diphthongs; open /a/ and the weighty long vowels /u/ and /o/ are preferred.

Thirdly, Lucan notes—ironically of course—that the Druids alone know *deos et caeli numina* (*Bell. civ.* 1. 452). The second part of the phrase is presumably a reference to their interest in astronomy or to *physiologia. Omnipotens* is found occasionally as an elevated epithet of the Roman gods taken together,[43] and frequently of individual deities (particularly Jupiter, because that was the official pontifical form for prayers to him).[44] But the most natural reference of Sedatus' phrase *omnipotentia numina* would be to the stars, or perhaps specific constellations, conceived, as usual, as visible divinities. We might think here either of (a selection of) the stars and constellations that were normally used in parapegmata, such as Arcturus, Leo, Pegasus, the Pleiades, Orion and so on, as in the Calendar of the Quintilii,[45] or, in view of Sedatus' twelve names, of the zodiacal constellations (possibly equated with the twelve gods). In this connection, we should

---

[42] On the phonetic features of Gaulish, cf. P.-Y. Lambert, *La langue gauloise*² (Paris 1995); idem 1998–2000, 72–7.

[43] E.g. *di inmortales omnipotentes*: Plautus *Poen.* 275; *CIL* VIII 20246; 8457a (CE 288); *HA Gord.* 25.1.

[44] Of Jupiter, e.g. Ennius, *Ann.* 315 B. = 458 V. (ap. Serv. *ad Aen.* 1.254); Lucilius 326 B. = 444 M. (ap. Nonius Marc., *comp.* 204.17); Valerius Soranus frg. 2 Courtney (with commentary, pp. 65–68); frg. incert. 15, p. 460 Courtney = 29 M.; Lucretius, *RN* 5. 399; Catullus 64.171; Vergil, *Aen.* 1.60; 2.689 etc.; Ovid, *Met.* 1.154; 2. 304 etc.; Val. Max. 1.6.12; *AE* 1908: 242; 1946: 44; pontifical form: Servius, ad *Aen.* 4.577. Of Juno: Vergil, *Aen.* 4. 693; cf. *CIL* III 10841 = *AIJ* 536; of Aither: Vergil, *Georg.* 2. 325; of Sol and Luna: *CIL* II 2407a; *[invicto] deo Soli [omnip]otenti Caelesti numini praesenti*…: *AE* 1909: 21. Other examples: *TLL* 9.2 (1968–81) s.v., cols. 604f. (Reikircher).

[45] Cf. W. Gundel, s.v. Sternbilder und Sternglaube, *RE* 3A (1929) 2412–39 at 2433. In the prologue to Plautus' *Rudens*, the star Arcturus tells the audience that the constellations come down to earth during the day in order to find out what is happening there (*prol.* 6–8). On parapegmata, the article by A. Rehm, s.v. Parapegma, *RE* 18.4 (1949) 1295–1366, is still standard.

recall Hans-Günther Gundel's observation: "Dabei dürfte der Grad der Verehrung sehr unterschiedlich und meistens recht persönlich bestimmt gewesen sein".[46] Alternatively, the *omnipotentia numina* of the prayer might be a high-sounding way of referring to *di omnes*, or to a local pantheon of Gallo-Roman divinities, virtually all of which might be invoked to grant prosperity, agricultural fertility, protection against impotence and sterility—in short, *omnia bona*.[47]

Finally we may mention what may well have been the decisive consideration for Sedatus, namely Caesar's observation that in his day all the Druids of Gaul used to meet for a synod on holy ground in the territory of the Carnutes *quae regio totius Galliae media habetur* (*BG* 6.13.10).[48] Autricum-Chartres was, along with Cenabum-Orléans, a chief city of the *ager Carnutum*, conceptually if not topographically its centre, and Caesar's claim, whether true or not, must have been a well-known part of local tradition. Perhaps, indeed, it was common knowledge in Autricum that their territory lay 'in the dead centre of Gaul', and that their city could claim to be the centre of that centre.[49] Is it then too far-fetched to think that Sedatus believed that the rituals he performed at his *turibula* took place literally at the centre of Gaul, and that his main motive in inscribing the four cardinal directions on each was to emphasise the authority and ritual power that such a location gave him? Concretely of course he may have borrowed his conceptual scheme from, say, the surveying procedures of the Roman *agrimensores*, which must in part have been common knowledge, since centuriation involved the erection of a cylindrical stone at the point

[46] H. Gundel, s.v. Zodiakos, *RE* 10A (1972) 462–709 at 545; cf. on the calendar of the Quintilii, see still F. Boll, *Griechische Kalender, 2: Der Kalender der Quintilier und die Überlieferung der Geoponica*, SB der Heidelberger Akademie, phil.-hist. Kl. 1911, Abh. 1 (Heidelberg 1911).

[47] P.-M. Duval, *Les dieux de la Gaule*[4] (Paris 1993) 121.

[48] On the role of *BG* 6.11–28 in the economy of the work see H. Schadee, Caesar's Construction of Northern Europe: Enquiry, Contact and Corruption in *De Bello Gallico*, *CQ* 58.1 (2008) 158–80 at 175–78.

[49] Cf. Marco Simón 2007, 154 n. 9. However, apart from those at Bu and Hanches, the Gallo-Roman *fanum*-sites in Eure-et-Loir mapped by I. Fauduet, *Atlas des sanctuaires romano-celtiques de Gaule: Les fanums* (Paris 1993) 22, are in the south of the Département, around Orléans. The modern département Eure-et-Loir, whose capital is Chartres, is actually part of the artificial modern Région "Centre", but lies at its north-easterly rim. On the Celtic interest in omphalic-original 'centres', as expressed e.g. in the name *Mediolanum*, see F. Le Roux, Le *Celticum* d'Ambigatus et l'*omphalos* gaulois. La royauté suprême des Bituriges, *Celticum* 1 (1961) 159–84; Marco Simón 2007, 171f.

where *cardo maximus* and *decumanus maximus* met, with the diagram inscribed on top (Text-fig. 16).[50] He may nevertheless have thought of himself as in reality recapitulating a Druidic, which for him meant a magical, rite.

On this reading, C. Verius Sedatus' text and the implied ritual praxis would represent merely the tip of an iceberg, one of perhaps numerous attempts in the Gallo-Roman context to draw on the authority of a submerged tradition in order to set oneself up as an 'authentic' religious specialist on the margins of the civic cults dominated by the interests of the local élite.[51] This understanding of Druidism would have stood in direct contrast to the anti-Roman prophetism that figures in our sources, which has been compared to the religious revitalisation movements, notably in North America, that have occurred in various cultures after conquest.[52]

ii. *An ultimate Source in the Tradition of learned Graeco-Egyptian Magic?*

An alternative hypothesis is the one that first occurred to us, namely that Sedatus' use of magical names, the claim to be their 'guardian', the evident appeal to secrecy and the deployment of the cardinal directions in a ritual context imply some awareness of learned ritual magic. Now it must be admitted at the start that virtually nothing is known of the extent to which a learned syncretistic tradition of magic was available in the Mediterranean world during the first two centuries

---

[50] Cf. e.g. Hyginus, *Constitutio [limitum]* p. 131 T. = 166 L. = 134.15–19 Campbell; O.A.W. Dilke, *The Roman Land Surveyors: An Introduction to the Agrimensores* (New York 1971) 88–93. Although claims have been made for certain areas in Normandy, Bassin de Rennes and Brittany, the only certainly-attested areas of centuriation in Roman Gaul are in Narbonensis; the nearest *colonia* was as far away as Lugdunum. On archaeological evidence for the penetration of Roman artefacts esp. in rural areas of Gaul, see O. Buchsenschütz, Les Celtes et la formation de l'Empire romain, *Annales HSS* 59.2 (2004) 337–61.

[51] On the role of local elites in constructing local panthea, Cf. T. Derks, *Gods, Temples and Ritual Practices: The Transformation of Religious Ideas and Values in Roman Gaul*. Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 2 (Amsterdam 1998). The existence of *defixiones* written on lead in Gaulish, which we have already alluded to, for example those from Chamalières, L'Hospitalet-du-Larzac, and at least two from the Rouergue/Aveyron (P. Gruat, *Croyances et rites en Rouergue des origines à l'an mil*. Catalogue Musée de Montrozier [Montrozier 1998] nos. 296 (La Granède), 297 (Mas Marcou)) might be interpreted in the same sense (for rather problematic readings of these texts, insofar as they have been deciphered, see P.-Y. Lambert, *RIG* 2.2 [2003]). On the Gaulish tradition of cursing, and more generally of magical practice, they imply cf. Marco Simón 2002.

[52] Webster 1999, 14–18.

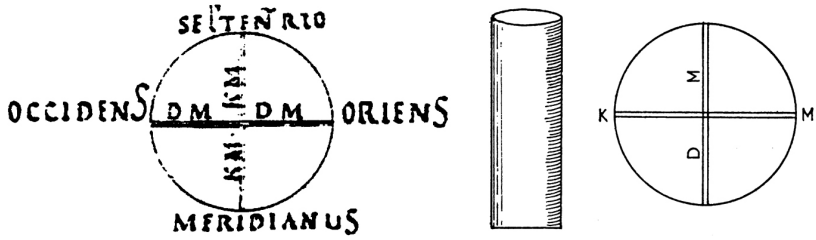

Fig. 16. Diagrams of the graphic on a central centuriation-stone, according to Hyginus, *Const.* <*limitum*> p. 131/134 Thulin = 134/138 Campbell. From B. Campbell (ed.), *The Writings of the Roman Land-Surveyors*. JRS Monographs 9 (London 2000) 290 fig. 66 + 291 fig. 79 (adapted).

after Christ, or even what it may have looked like. The main evidence consists of the magical papyri found in Egypt, which represent a highly specific, idiosyncratic, local tradition, which was at the same time both extremely self-confident and continuously innovative in its techniques and its ambitions.[53] Up to about the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Latin *defixiones* show no influence from this tradition (the Mainz texts, discussed elsewhere in this volume by Jürgen Blänsdorf, p. 141, are a case in point). We are left with the phylacteries on thin sheets of precious metal, which are found widely over the Empire, but in small numbers, and the magical gems (amulets), some of which have certainly been found in Italy, but which were mainly manufactured in the eastern Mediterranean. Very few of either can have existed in the late I^{p}.[54]

It seems best to deal in the form of a brief commentary with the main features of the text that imply some knowledge of learned magic.

Omnipotentia numina

Omnipotens may be a translation of *pantokrator*.[55] Such formulae are adaptations of the language of late Hellenistic piety. In the Orphic

[53] R.L. Gordon, Shaping the Text: Theory and Practice in Graeco-Egyptian Malign Magic, in H.E.J. Horstmannhoff, H.W. Singor, F.T. van Straten & J.H.M. Strubbe (eds.), *Kykeon: Studies in honour of H.S. Versnel*. RGRW 142 (Leyden 2002) 69–111.

[54] Of the 32 phylacteries on precious-metal lamellae collected by Kotansky *GMA* and found in the Latin-speaking provinces only nos. 2, 10, 13 and 29 are dated I–II^{p}, and a handful of others to II^{p} (cf. Introduction, p. 42 n. 112). Not all show Graeco-Egyptian influence (e.g. no. 2 seems to be mainly Jewish, and its *charakteres* are atypical; no. 13 [Antaura] mentions Artemis of Ephesus), and most, but not all, are relatively primitive.

[55] E.g. *DTAud* 271 l.8–10: ὁρκίζω σε τὸν μέγαν θεὸν τὸν αἰώνιον καὶ ἐπαιώνιο[ν] καὶ παντοκράτορα τὸν ὑπεράνω τῶν ὑπεράνω θεῶν (compulsive love magic). On *pantokrator* as an expression of 'oriental' religiosity, a formulation which oddly suppresses

Hymns, for example, Pluto, god of the Underworld is addressed as παντοκράτωρ, Persephone as παντοκράτειρα.[56] At Cyrene, we find Isis too addressed as πάντων μεγίστην τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ θεῶν.[57] Outside magical contexts, however, such expressions are informal and limited in number until the period of Christian domination of the epigraphic record.

It is in the magical papyri, where hyperbole has obvious value, that omnipotent deities abound. The 'Omni-functional spell of the Great Wain', for example, invokes the 'assistants of Typhon' in a terrific list of 61 recherché epithets ending with παντοκράτορας, ἁγίους, ἀκαταμαχήτους.[58] Although named divinities, e.g. Hermes and Typhon, are sometimes accorded the epithet, the identity of 'the omnipotent god' may also be concealed for greater effect, to suggest familiarity with the hierarchy of influence among the numberless inhabitants of the Other World.[59] The proper context of *omnipotentia numina* is thus the sonorous, hyperbolic language of the magical papyri and associated texts.

Omnia bona

In the context of prayer, *bona* are 'blessings' or 'boons'.[60] Here again however we may suspect a (probably indirect) translation from Greek, specifically from the context of the magical papyri or analogous texts. Πάντα τὰ ἀγαθά are commanded in a recipe for a general Helios-ritual, and specified a little later: "give me … sustenance, health, safety, wealth, the blessing of children, knowledge, a ready hearing, goodwill, sound judgement, honour, memory grace, shapeliness, beauty in the

---

the familiar Latin usage, cf. H.W. Pleket, Religious History as the History of Mentality: the 'Believer' as Servant of Deity in the Greek World, in: H.S. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship*. SGRR 2 (Leyden 1981) 152–92 at 171–74.

[56] *HymnOrph* 18.17; 29.10; also Physis: 10.4f.; Rhea: 14.7; Hera: 16.2. Note also, as early as II[a], Διὶ τῶι πάντων κρατοῦντι (with Cybele) at Delos: *Syll.*[3] 1138 (not in *RICIS*). As so often, however, the usage is a revival of much earlier thoughts, e.g. Sophocles *Trach.* 127: ὁ πάντα κραίνων βασίλευς of Zeus (lyr.).

[57] *RICIS* 701/0103 = M. Totti (ed.), *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis- und Sarapis-Religion* (Hildesheim 1986) 13 no. 4, l. 8; also at Megalopolis: *RICIS* 102/1702 l. 6 (II/III[p]).

[58] *PGrMag* IV 1331–89 at 1345–76, epithets related to those in VII 348–59.

[59] *PGrMag* VII 668 (Hermes); 692, IV 272, XIV 17 (Typhon); III 218, XXIIa19 (Helios); concealed: IV 968; 1552f.

[60] E.g. Plautus, *Amph.* 41–44, 46–49; *Men.* 558; *Persa* 492; *Poen.* 1216; cf. Livy 3.56.10; 23.18.10f.; cf. *TLL* 2 (1900–06) s.v., §VII.1 (Sinko). Different possible contents of the category are listed by e.g. Terence, *Heaut.* 193f.; Cicero *ep. fam.* 2.3.1; *ILS* 8393 (*Laudatio 'Turiae'*) 1.30f.

eyes of all who look upon me".[61] Similar requests appear elsewhere: Sarapis, for example, is asked to "increase my life; and [may I enjoy] many good things (ἐν πολλοῖς ἀγαθοῖς); an alternative rite in the same book prescribes the request-formula: 'also be with me always for good, a good god dwelling in a good man (ἀγαθὸς ἐπ᾽ ἀγαθῷ)…giving me health no magic can harm, well-being, prosperity, glory, victory, power, sex-appeal…".[62] A phylactery on copper from near Syracuse (II–III^{P}), which invokes Moses and the burning bush, requests protection from fever and the evil eye, but also asks positively for blessings, ἀγαθά (Kotansky *GMA*, 128–54 no. 32).

Vester custos

Although this expression has no precise parallel in the magical papyri, the practitioner is sometimes enjoined in the 'secondary text' to keep recipes secret.[63] The clearest case is: "For this is the true [rite], and the other versions, that are widely circulated, are lies and mere empty words. So keep this safe in a secret place, since it is a great mystery (ὃ καὶ ἔχε ἐν ἀποκρύφῳ ὡς μεγαλομυστήριον). Hide it, hide it!"[64] The analogy here between acquiring magical expertise and initiation into a mystery-cult is thematised several times in the longer, more self-conscious recipes.[65] For example, in the 'Eighth Book of Moses' we read: "Without [the prescribed *nomina magica*] the god will not listen, but will refuse to receive you as uninitiated (ὡς ἀμυστηρίαστον), unless you emphatically say in advance the [names of] the lord of the day and the hour…for without these you will not accomplish even one of the things you find in [this book]".[66] Elsewhere piety itself is presented as a qualification, as when the seven powerful (μεγαλοκράτορες) guardians of the Pole "send out thunder and lightning and jolts of earthquakes and thunderbolts against the nations of impious people, but to me,

---

[61] *PGrMag* III.544f., 577–80 (tr. W.C. Grese, adapted); 'all good things': PDM xiv 317 (Demotic) = *GMPT* 214.

[62] Resp. *PGrMag* XIII 633–37; 800–4; cf. XXXV 22–26; XXXVI 223–28.

[63] 'Secondary text' is useful term (from drama theory) for the authorial commentary that occasionally comments on the recipe's efficacy as a rite.

[64] *PGrMag* XII 320–22; 334f. Other examples: I 41; 146; IV 922; 1252 etc.

[65] *PGrMag* IV 475–85 with Betz 2003, 91–100; cf. H.D. Betz, Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri, in id., *Hellenismus und Urchristentum. Gesammelte Aufsätze, 1* (Tübingen 1990) 209–29; F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*. Trans. F. Philip (Cambridge, MA 1997) 96–117.

[66] *PGrMag* XIII 56–60 = 427–32, cf. 379f. The entire 'Eighth Book' is presented as 'sacred and secret' (XIII 344; cf. 731–34; 1057; 1078; IV 1115).

who am pious and god-fearing (ἐμοὶ δὲ εὐσεβεῖ καὶ θεοσεβεῖ ὄντι), may you send health, soundness of body, acuteness of hearing and seeing, and calmness in the present good hours of this day".[67] By connecting his role as guardian of the names to his authority to ask for blessings, Sedatus seems therefore to be making explicit an idea that in the magical papyri is merely implicit. The fact that the *turibula* were found in the least conspicuous part of the cellar implies an intention of keeping the *nomina magica* secret.

It was surely the offer of special authority that made magic attractive to Sedatus in the first place. The importance of 'guardianship' for him is emphasised by the decision in three of the four cases in text A (which seems to have been the definitive version) to separate the two words *vester custos* from the rest of the text by placing them below the flange, thus demonstrating visually to the implied reader the closeness of the link between himself and the *nomina*.

The twelve nomina magica

In text A, the *nomina magica* (cf. Apuleius, *Apol.* 38.7f.) are divided into one list of nine items, where all but two items are monosyllabic; and a subjoined list of three items containing two 'names' of four syllables in the pattern a,b,a. Such a division must have made some sense to Sedatus, since he could easily have invented ten, or twelve, short 'names', but it makes little to the non-initiate.[68] However it seems reasonable to respect his categorisation in the discussion. We therefore begin with the first nine items.

1) *The List of Nine*

As we have pointed out, Sedatus' identification of his *nomina magica* as the secret or true names of the *omnipotentia numina* marks a clear distance from 'traditional' beneficent magical usage. Such a claim is typical of Graeco-Egyptian practice. However, the overall impression given by Sedatus' first list of nine is that they bear very little resemblance to the hundreds of *nomina* known from the Graeco-Egyptian

[67] *PGrMag* IV 681–87 with Betz 2003, 179f.

[68] The obvious possibility is that 3 is a factor of both 9 and 12. It is true that the list in text 1 is divided 5 and 4, not into groups of 3; but there seems to be a simple stress-rhythm, assuming that *Stna* was in fact pronounced /stᵉná/ : ˘ ˊ ˊ ˊ ˊ ˘ ˊ (˘) ˊ ˊ ˊ .

tradition. They are too short, too monotone, too uninventive.[69] Sedatus, or his instructor if one believes that he obtained the names from someone else, had only a very sketchy understanding of how 'authentic' *nomina* ought to sound.[70] His names can thus be considered incompetent from the perspective of Graeco-Egyptian practice, exactly as one would expect of someone resident so very far from the centres of that tradition.[71] The hint of Gaulish phonetic influence suggests that they are his own invention, albeit indirectly, through a legitimately 'divine' source, namely dreams.

2) *The List of Three*

The two quadrisyllabic names *Halcemedme* and *Halcehelar* are clearly of a different order. The first syllable reveals the intention of creating an impressive, outlandish name (/ʰal-/ occurs as the first syllable in no Latin word except *halo, halitus*).[72] The disyllables χαλχα- or χαλκου- occur in a small number of authentic Graeco-Egyptian 'names', the name μεεμε occurs as a 'true name' of Seth/Typhon, and there are a handful of such 'names' ending in -λαρ (e.g. ειλεσιλαρ).[73] But the overall impression is that, like the first nine, they bear little resemblance to

[69] At the Figura conference at Paris in June 2008, J.-D. Dubois suggested that they might be 'estranged' words in Egyptian or Coptic, or Hebrew. All the experts in these languages we have consulted are sceptical/incredulous.

[70] Oddly enough, however, the name *Stna* might be a corruption of, or otherwise related to, the name Στεναχτ[α] in the Sidi Kaddou text against hail and other natural disasters (*SEG* 44: 859 = Kotansky *GMA* under no. 11 l. 2) cited by Fernández Nieto elsewhere in this volume, p. 561. Although there are also nine names there, none of the others is remotely similar to Sedatus'; nevertheless it is conceivable that such texts against agrarian misfortune were one inspiration for his entire enterprise.

[71] On 'incompetence' in this sense, see R.L. Gordon, Another View of the Pergamon Divination Kit, *JRA* 15 (2002) 189–98 at 197f.; id., Competence and 'Felicity Conditions' in two Sets of North African Curse-Tablets, *MHNH* 5 (2005) 61–86, at 74–76. The *nomina magica* used by the author of the somewhat later puppy-*defixiones* from the Charente Inférieure (see nn. 11, 14 above), viz. *atracatetra catigallara precata egdarata hehes celata mentis ablata*, are considerably more adventurous albeit cut with Latin. Marcellus Empiricus transmits a handful of Gaulish or 'Gaulish' charms, two of which run: *In mon derco marcos axatison* (8.171 = Heim no. 182) and *Xi exucri cone xu criglion aisus scrimusio velor exucri cone xu grilau* (15.106 = Heim no. 192b) which have tested the ingenuity of the philologists of Gaulish; see Marco Simón 2002, 196f. Apart from Heim's other healing charms (including Cato's), the only comparable nomina magica in a Latin phylactery are those in the eye-amulet from Ripe S. Ginesio (Kotansky *GMA* no. 31, II^{P}), which are likewise cut with Latin: *toginama marem nam fallum tolof famon exaton male margan*.

[72] Cf. Plautus' attempt at an outlandish word: *halagora* (*Poen.* 1313).

[73] See *PGrMag* V 78, VII 824; IV 284; VII 815.

Graeco-Egyptian coinages. However their polysyllabism indicates both a different origin from the first nine and a loftier ambition. At the same time the rather feeble recurrence in *Halcemedme* of the same syllable /me/ separated by an euphonic /d/, as well as its simple trochaic rhythm (′ ˘ ′ ˘), suggests no great competence or confidence.[74] This conclusion can be compared with the low level of technical competence shown by the earliest of the Gallo-Roman phylacteries from near Limoges, cited above (p. 498 n. 11) which consists almost entirely of poor-quality magical signs (*charakteres*). It does employ an authentic 'name', *Semese(i)lam* (normally applied to the powers of Helios-Phre)—but only one. The repetition of *Halcemedme* must be deliberate, to give the impression of a finale.

Rituals directed to cosmic Powers

The most intriguing feature of Sedatus' texts however is the repetition of a prayer to obtain blessings in each cardinal direction. There are several references in the magical papyri to the four winds of the cosmos that are directed or ruled over by a supreme god. In several cases this god is identified as the all-powerful Agathos Daimon, or Agathodaimon.[75] This Agathos Daimon is not, or is not just, the Classical and Hellenistic spirit of benevolent chance, nor the Alexandrian deity of success and plenty.[76] The deity invoked in the magical papyri (also referred to in the Hermetic and alchemical texts) is far more than this, a compound being, lord of the entire kosmos in all its six dimensions, east, west, north, south, up, down. His value to the learned (and inventive) composers of the magical papyri lay in this combination of ancient creative divinities with several aspects of the Sun, rising

[74] One is reminded of the feeble *nomen sarbasmisarab* in an 'incompetent' series from Hadrumetum (*DTAud* 272–74; *AE* 1905: 171).

[75] E.g. *PGrMag* IV 1605–42, which is related to XIII 761–792, where Agathos Daimon is called παντοκράτωρ. At XIV 8f., Agathos Daimon is described as (gen.) παντοκράτορος, τετραπροσώπου δαίμονος ὑψίστου, 'omnipotent, highest daimon, with four faces', which is a physical expression of his control over the four quarters, i.e. the cosmos seen as a whole (but see Fauth 1995, 24f. for another interpretation).

[76] On Greek and Graeco-Egyptian Agathodaimon, cf. F. Dunand, Les représentations de l'Agathodémon: À propos de quelques bas-reliefs du Musée d'Alexandrie, *BIFAO* 67 (1969) 9–48; eadem, s.v. Agathodaimon, in *LIMC* 1.1 (1981) 277–82; 1.2, 203–7; P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford 1972) 209–11; G. Sfameni Gasparro, *Daimon* and *Tuche* in Hellenistic religious experience, in Per Bilde et al. (eds.), *Conventional Values of the Hellenistic Greeks*. Studies in Hellenistic Civilization 8 (Aarhus 1997) 67–109, at 78–82.

and setting, and (through Sarapis) with the underworld.[77] At the same time, this grand cosmic deity also incorporated functions directly linked to ordinary individuals, for in Egypt Agathos Daimon assimilated one of the traditional divinities who controlled individual fate or fortune, Pshai(s) or Shai.[78] It is this association that explains the regular invocation of 'Aionian' Agathos Daimon in recipes for well-being, favour, worldly success.[79]

Although it would be easy to imagine, if one considered only the Great Paris magical codex (*PGrMag* IV) or the 'Eighth Book of Moses' (*PGrMag* XIII), that Graeco-Egyptian magic operated exclusively at a high level of skill and theological knowledge, in fact there was always in Egypt, from Dynastic times, a wide range of magical skills on offer.[80] Thanks to Giovanni Anastasi's activities in Egypt before 1828, we happen to possess some high-level examples; but subsequent finds suggest that most Graeco-Egyptian magic was of a far more hum-drum, banal kind.[81] The process of simplifying and banalising the elaborate invocations of Agathos Daemon is therefore likely to have taken place already in Egypt: the recipes of the magical papyri are themselves in some cases 'miniaturisations' of grander temple rituals. Some of these transformations may have dropped all reference to the 'Aionian' deity in favour of a direct appeal to 'names'.

It seems to us therefore that, despite the obvious lack of authenticity in Sedatus' prayer, and despite the early date, we cannot rule out the possibility of an indirect dependence on the Graeco-Egyptian tradition. However, the version available to Sedatus bore only the faintest resemblance to the 'original' appeal to Agathos Daemon as lord of the six quarters. To judge from his prayer, the sole features of Graeco-Egyptian magical practice that had reached Autricum by the Domitianic-Trajanic period were: the representation of the totality of the

---

[77] Cf. esp. Fauth 1995, 69f., 72f., 105, 108.

[78] J. Quaegebeur, *Le dieu égyptien Shaï dans la religion et l'onomastique*. Orientalia Lovanensia 2 (Louvain/ Leuven 1975) 170–76. In this late period, Shai was also considered a manifestation of the Sun- and creator-god (ibid. 88–91).

[79] E.g. *PGrMag* XII 254f.; XIII 780–84.

[80] Even a text such as *PGrMag* XIII contains a variety of low-grade rituals that have been incoporated into the grand scheme. Among simple Graeco-Egyptian texts to obtain blessing and success (excluding phylacteries), note: *PGrMag* VII 390–93; 1017–26 (*niketika*); XXI; XXIIa (*charitesion*); XLVIII; LXX; LXXVIII; LXXXI; *SupplMag* nos. 63, 64 (*charitesia*); 87.

[81] Cf. W. Brashear, The Greek Magical Papyri: an Introduction and Survey, *ANRW* II, 18.5 (1995) 3380–684 at 3398–412.

kosmos by means of 'four quarters' (instead of six), the invocation of 'all-powerful' spirits, and the associated use of their secret *nomina* to compel divine attention or help; and, by inference, the use of specifically-induced dreams to acquire knowledge of the true 'names'.

The Ritual Context

It remains briefly to indicate how we are to envisage the *turibulum*, or *turibula*, being used. One possibility is offered by a recipe in the Great Paris magical codex:

> Rise up, and clothe yourself in white garments and burn on an earthen censer uncut grains of incense, and say: 'I have been attached to your holy Form, I have been given power by your holy name, I have been able to partake in your outpouring of good things (ἐδυναμώθην τῷ ἱερῷ σοῦ ὀνόματι, ἐπέτυχόν σου τῆς ἀπορροίας τῶν ἀγαθῶν), Lord, god of gods, master, daemon, αθθουϊν θουθουϊ ταυαντι· λαω απτατω.[82]

The association between ritual purity, the burning of incense, knowledge of divine names and successful magical request could scarcely be more clearly expressed. There are however a small number of recipes in the corpus, some of them quite elaborate, that prescribe a 'total' ritual requiring the practitioner to turn successively in different directions. A straightforward one to obtain a direct vision reads:

> Having drawn in spirit with your senses, say the first 'name' in one breath to the east, the second to the south, the third to the north, the fourth to the west.....[83]

We may suppose that Sedatus had been told of, or read about, a ritual of this kind that he could use to obtain personal blessings. The corpus of magical papyri however also contains a few recipes for granting success and prosperity to a house or a business, all of which involve the modelling of a divine image, which is to be activated from time to time by means of a blood-offering and a libation, and by the recitation of the appropriate *nomina magica*.[84] We should perhaps envisage Sedatus also from time to time performing a similar ritual to ensure his prosperity.

---

[82] *PGrMag* IV 213–17 (tr. E.N. O'Neil, adapted).

[83] *PGrMag* XIII 640–45 (tr. M. Smith); cf. II 104–15; III 273–76; IV 3172–87; XIII 824–43; 854–71. In Sedatus' case, however, all twelve names are evidently to be spoken in each direction.

[84] E.g. *PGrMag* IV 2359–72; 2373–440; 3125–71.

Conclusion

A reasonable case can thus be made in favour of two quite different contexts for Sedatus' prayer. If we interpret it as ultimately Graeco-Egyptian, we may add it to the phylactery from near Limoges as the earliest testimony in Lugdunensis to the influence of such magical practice for beneficent ends. However, the absence of one of the typical features of that tradition, *charakteres*, implies that there must have been other, indirect, types of transmission to the western Empire.[85] Sedatus surely had no written model in front of him: we may perhaps think of him as using an oral, living text. Alternatively we may prefer to argue that Sedatus was influenced by an essentially Roman view of the Druids, and saw himself as part of an invented tradition of 'authentic' Druidism, even though he had no other language than Latin in which to express it.

It may be however that these positions are not in fact as far apart as they appear. Even if he believed himself to be acting like a Druid, there can be no question that Sedatus' idea of what an elevated magical praxis would be like—again, we need to remember how different his prayer is from the forms of 'traditional' healing magic—was itself influenced by a template that derived ultimately from Hellenistic Egypt.[86] His 'Druidic' magic drew its inspiration from the eastern Mediterranean. From this perspective we can view him as a humbler, Gallic Nigidius Figulus, fascinated by the possibility of obtaining ritual power through magical praxis. Sedatus' apparent social standing and cultural horizon indeed confirms the impression we have from other sources that the practice of magical ritual was by no means confined to the illiterate and socially marginal. Such rituals were evidently passed around pragmatically, without much attention being paid to their origin and status.[87] In this case, Sedatus clearly thought of his prayer, whatever its origin, as a form of true, and especially effective, piety.

---

[85] However, *characteres* can only be said to be typical of certain magical genres, not by any means of all.

[86] The shift from a 'natural' list in text B (one written across the page) to a list in columnar form (text A) is suggestive here: the columnar list of *nomina magica* was an important technique of Graeco-Egyptian magic.

[87] The fourfold (or rather 16-fold) repetition of his name makes it clear that there were (usually) no sanctions against this type of magic, whether or not Sedatus chose to conceal his ritual equipment. The phylactery against hail from near Avignon, which is

Bibliography

Betz, H.D. 2003. *The 'Mithras Liturgy': Text, Translation and Commentary* (Tübingen).
Brunaux, J.-L. 1995. Die keltischen Heiligtümer Nordfrankreichs, in Haffner 1995, 55–74.
——. 2000. *Les religions gauloises: nouvelles approches sur les rituels celtiques de la Gaule indépendante*[2] (Paris).
Haffner, A. (ed.). 1995. *Heiligtümer und Opferkulte der Kelten* (Stuttgart).
Fauth, W. 1995. *Helios Megistos*. RGRW 125 (Leyden).
Guyonvarc'h, C.-J. and Le Roux, F. 1986. *Les Druides*[4] (Rennes).
Lambert, P.-Y. 1998–2000. La tuile gauloise de Châteaubleau (Seine-et-Marne), *Études celtiques* 34, 57–117.
Marco Simón, F. 2002. Magia literaria y prácticas mágicas en el mundo romano-céltico, in A. Pérez Jiménez and G. Cruz Andreotti (eds.), *Daímon Páredros. Magos y prácticas mágicas en el mundo grecorromano* (Madrid and Malaga) 189–219.
——. 2007. Celtic Ritualism from the (Graeco-)Roman Point of View, in J. Scheid (ed.), *Rites et croyances dans les religions du monde romain.* Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt 53 (Vandœuvres) 149–77 (text); 178–88 (discussion).
Webster, J. 1999. At the End of the World: Druidic and Other Revitalization Movements in Post-Conquest Gaul and Britain, *Britannia* 30, 1–20.

---

actually in the form of a *tabula ansata*, names the owner of the land: Iulius Pervincus (see p. 498 n. 11 above).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MITHRAISM AND MAGIC

Jaime Alvar Ezquerra

1. *Introduction: Magic, Religion and Mysteries*

The plethora of recent studies on Greek and Roman magic is but one expression of the growing scholarly interest in modes of relating to the supernatural outwith the control of institutions. I do not propose here to discuss the cultural factors underlying that interest, the tacit or unconscious influences that affect our ideological constructions of the past (and of course our own present). We should nevertheless at least be aware of that wider context, which inevitably influences both the choice to work in a particular field and the type of arguments considered plausible and persuasive. Perceptions of past (and present) relationships with the supernatural are particularly subject to such invisible cultural influence.

I start from the position that religion is one of the complex institutions that arise out of the process of state-formation.[1] As such, it was from the beginning under the control of the various politico-social élites, and tended to be identified with their interests. Cosmology and bodies of organised knowledge relating to the heavens and to the future, most obviously in Babylonia and Egypt, with their large professional priesthoods, but also in Greece and at Rome, developed in this context. These knowledge-practices were controlled by religious rules, and so by those who administered and interpreted them. The internal conflicts of the ruling group were, at any rate to some degree, reflected in the divergences and contradictions within these bodies of knowledge. In the ancient Near-East, where magical practice was heavily institutionalised, it was primarily a matter of specially-qualified priests

[1] Alvar 2001, 165–168. A revised edition in English under the title *Romanising Oriental Gods: Myth, Salvation and Ethics in the cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras*. RGRW 165 appeared in 2008 (= Alvar 2008). The final version of this paper owes a good deal to the help of Richard Gordon, but the argument remains my responsibility.

protecting or defending the King or superior individuals against attack by evil powers, or human enemies, whether these worked naturalistically or by spiritual attack: we may think of the Egyptian definition of *heka* (who is also a goddess) as "the weapon given humans by the gods against the effect of events", deployed through the skill of the *wab*-priests; or the role of the *ašipu*, exorcist-priest, in Babylonia.[2] The negative use by human-beings of the same power to attack these figures was identified as witchcraft; defence against such attack was provided in Egypt by a variety of means, including the so-called magic ivories (apotropaea made of sawn hippopotamus-tusks) from the Middle Kingdom, and in Babylonia by the official *maqlû*-texts.[3]

Although they lacked an organised and self-conscious priestly caste, the Greek cities and Rome alike considered religious practice not sanctioned by the politico-religious élite more or less illegitimate. One aspect of this category was magic, which covered a heterogeneous set of beliefs and practices linking the individual with the supernatural through channels outside the established norms.[4] When magic was identified as a depository of uncontrolled religious thought and practice, its boundaries became blurred until it became a phenomenon that was difficult to understand and hard to categorise; the various classifications of Antiquity were no more generally valid than the changing criteria of today.[5]

Of course not all religious practice outside official and legitimate private (family) cult was considered magical. In late-Republican and imperial Rome, for example, a specific category was negotiated for cults that lacked the institutional sanction of the college of the *XVviri*. They were grouped together under the category of *peregrina sacra*, foreign worship. But the boundary between *peregrina sacra* and magical practice was not clearly defined; indeed, the idea was that it should not

---

[2] For Egypt see e.g. Étienne 2000, 13; Sauneron 1966, 30–34; Kákosy 1985, 25f.; Ritner 1993, 14–28; *wab*-priests: Koenig 1994, 21–34; for Babylonia, E. Reiner, La magie babylonienne, in Condominas 1966, 67–98.

[3] H. Altenmüller, *Die Apotropaia und die Götter Mittelägyptens* (Munich 1965); Koenig 1994, 85–98; Kákosy 1985, 87 with 88 fig. 24; Étienne 2000, 60 with Cat. no. 216; Babylonian witchcraft and the *maqlû*-texts: T. Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature.* Ancient Magic and Divination 5 (Leyden 2002); Hittite: M.-C. Trémouille, Les rituels magiques hittites: aspects formels et techniques, in Moreau-Turpin 1: 77–94.

[4] Graf 1996; Bernand 1991, 41–155; Carastro 2006.

[5] R.L. Gordon, Imagining Greek and Roman Magic, in Ankarloo/Clark 159–275 at 162f.

be. Mystery-cults, being Greek in origin, could like 'foreign worship' be considered phenomena that were potentially disturbing or problematic. This did not necessarily mean that their practices were identified as magic, although the conflicts of interest made it easier to accuse the followers of mysteries precisely of such practice.

However, the history of mystery-cults at Rome was linked not so much to the evolution of magic as to their transformation into practices tolerated by the system. The process of integration was problematic, which is why in the mid-Republic the cult of Dionysus/Bacchus was persecuted all over Italy, and later, in the late Republic and early Julio-Claudian period, that of Isis, and restrictions imposed upon aspects of the cult of the Mater Magna.[6] However in the early imperial period measures were gradually implemented to incorporate them into the dominant system, and they were given new profiles in exchange for the abandonment of certain features that were less acceptable. Over a span of three centuries, this process of assimilation ended with the mystery-cults becoming a key aspect of the pagan answer to the challenge of Christian argument.[7]

2. *The Relation between Mithraism and Magical Practices*

In Egypt, as is well known, one of Isis' most important areas of action is magic: she is deployed in a great many *historiolae*, one of the basic modes of Egyptian magic, and, like Osiris, was closely associated with the protective *ded* and *tit* amulets.[8] Yet it is almost impossible to find evidence for this aspect of her cult in the Roman West: like many other aspects of the Egyptian cult, it seems to have been simply bracketed in the quite different cultural milieu of the western Mediterranean. We need to bear this example in mind when we turn to the main

---

[6] See e.g. M. Beard, J. North and S.R.F. Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge 1998) 1: 91–6; 160f.; 180 etc.; R. Turcan, *Les cultes orientaux dans le monde romain*[2] (Paris 1992) 35–127; 298–305; F. Mora, *Prosopografia isiaca, 2: Prosopografia storica e statistica del culto isiaco*. EPROER 113 (Leyden 1990) 72–112; P. Borgeaud, *Mother of the Gods: From Cybele to the Virgin Mary*. Tr. L. Hochroth (Baltimore and London 2004) 57–89.

[7] See Alvar 2001, 287–313 = 2008, 383–421.

[8] See e.g. M. Münster, *Untersuchungen zur Göttin Isis vom alten Reich bis zum Ende des neuen Reiches*. Münchener ägyptologische Studien 11 (Berlin 1968); S. Sauneron 1966, 42f.; *historiolae*: J.F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*. Nisaba 9 (Leyden 1978) nos. 5, 7, 26, 34, 36, 44, 63 etc.; cf. Dieleman 2005, 141–3.

subject of my paper, the relation between the cult of Mithras and magic. This issue has recently become topical with the publication of Attilio Mastrocinque's book on Mithraic magical amulets, which runs a larger argument to the effect that the cult, which he sees as shot through with the *magika* of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha, may have been founded in western Asia Minor, or in the Aegean (say on Samothrace, where we know there was a mystery-tradition), in the first half of I[a], roughly contemporary with the ascendancy and fall of Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus.[9] This claim provides me with an opportunity to review the problem, in particular the long-standing controversy relating to the so-called Mithras Liturgy.

2.1. *The 'Mithras Liturgy'*[10]

In 1903, Albrecht Dieterich (1866–1908) re-published a remarkable text preserved in the IV[p] Great Paris magical Codex, which he claimed to have been an official liturgy of the cult of Mithras.[11] It was supposedly a description of the Mithraic ritual for the ascension and immortalisation of the soul (ἀπαθανατισμός).[12] This he claimed to have been the liturgy of the highest sacrament available to initiates in the Mithraic mysteries. The ritual fused the teachings of this cult with Stoic cosmology and Egyptian wisdom (1903, 82). Its author(s) were Mithras-worshippers who had assimilated Greek (especially Stoic) cosmological and other ideas. The actual compiler of the text we have

---

[9] Mastrocinque 1998, cf. the review by R.L. Gordon, *CR* 50 (2000) 321f.

[10] There is a persistant and troubling unclarity concerning the denotion of the term 'Liturgy' in this context. Sometimes the title is used to refer only to the supposedly Mithraic section, the ἀπαθανατισμός proper (i.e. *PGrMag* IV 485–732), sometimes to the entire text as presented by the Codex (*PGrMag* IV 475–820/829 or even 830). I distinguish between different workers on the text: (a) the *editor*/scribe of *PGrMag* IV (the Codex); (b) the *author* of the complete 'Liturgy' as it now stands in the Codex; (c) the *Urtext* underlying ll. 485–732; perhaps even (d) an *Ur-urtext*, the speculative Mithraic text hypothesised below, made use of in creating (c). That is, when discussing the nature of the ritual underlying ll. 485–732, we must distinguish between at least three, probably four, stages of redaction.

Note that in the remainder of the article, I use the abbreviation V. + numeral to represent the monument-numbers in Vermaseren 1956–60; *TM* + numeral to represent monument-numbers in Cumont 1896–99.

[11] Dieterich 1903 (1923). Dieterich used Wessely's edition of Bibl. Nat. suppl. gr. 574 (1888). In modern parlance, the Greek text is *PGrMag* IV 475–820/829/830, translated into English by M. Meyer in Betz 1986, 48–54; this is the same tr. as Meyer 1976, and also the one used in Betz 2003.

[12] Dieterich invented the title on the basis of the word ἀπαθανατισμός (747); the document in *PGrMag* has no title (Betz 2003, 1).

took a copy of this Mithraic liturgy and adapted it to create a ritual procedure aimed at obtaining oracles from a supreme heavenly deity. The original material however came from a genuine Mithraic liturgy for the ascension of the soul and its 'immortalisation' (1903, 85). The evidence for the identification of this text as Mithraic lay primarily of course in the explicit mention of the god Helios Mithras at the beginning (482), and the evidently 'Persian' dress (ἀναξυρίδες, l. 699) of the ultimate, highest deity who is supposed actually to provide the revelation. Dieterich also believed that he could discern a reflection of seven grades of Mithraic initiation in the seven spheres he thought the soul in the document passed through on its way to 'immortalisation'. His major aim however was to point up the limitations and distortions of the brave new type of positivist history of religion, based on archaeology and epigraphy, represented by the Belgian scholar Franz Cumont (1868–1947), whose great two-volume work *Textes et monuments figurés* had recently appeared to general acclaim.[13]

Almost as soon as they appeared, Dieterich's claims were rejected by Richard Reitzenstein (1861–1931) and by Cumont, the two experts who were to shape the orthodox view of the 'Graeco-oriental' mysteries.[14] Reitzenstein suggested that the most significant parallels were to be found in Hermetic writings as well as in private mysteries calqued on Graeco-Egyptian syncretism, magic and sun-worship, so that the Paris text could not be "the" Mithras liturgy. Cumont argued that the supposedly Mithraic ritual bore no relation to the eschatology of the mysteries, which involved (he believed, on the basis of Origen, *C. Celsum* 6.22) the ascent of the soul through the planets. He thus managed to ignore both the fact that the ritual does not claim to be eschatological and Dieterich's main point against his (Cumont's) reconstruction of Mithraism, that in an area as extensive as the Roman Empire the cult may well have developed variants.

---

[13] Cumont 1896–99. On Cumont see briefly R. Turcan, F. Cumont fondateur, *Hieros* 2 (1997) 11–20; C. Bonnet, Cumont, F. in *RGG*[4] 2 (1999) 504f.

[14] R. Reitzenstein, Hellenistische Theologie in Ägypten, *Neue Jahrb. für das classische Altertum* 7 (1904) 177–194, particularly 192–194; idem, Religiongeschichte und Eschatologie, *ZNTW* 13 (1912) 1–28, particularly 12–16. However, in *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen*[3] (Leipzig and Berlin 1927, 1st ed. 1910), he accepts the Mithraic nature of the Liturgy, viewing it as the result of syncretism with Hermetic thought; F. Cumont, Un livre nouveau sur la liturgie païenne, *Revue de l'Instruction Publique en Belgique* 47 (1904) 1–10 (see also Betz 2003, 1f.). Note the useful summary of the debate by Brashear 1995, 3423f.

Three of Dieterich's claims have since been generally accepted: first, the text of the 'Liturgy' is very different from the dozens of other recipes in the Great Paris codex; second, it is the product of a syncretistic process in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt that fused the mystery cults with strands of Hermetic and other esoteric thought; third, it contains a set of ritual prescriptions in which cult-images play a decisive role. In the 'thirties Theodor Hopfner even went so far as to claim that he was forced to consider the 'Liturgy' "trotz aller erhobenen Einwände doch als wichtigstes Dokument der Mithrasweihe", but his remained a lonely voice at a time of fairly general scepticism.[15]

In 1976 Marvin Meyer took up the discussion by publishing a commented English translation of the 'Liturgy' in which he essentially agreed with Dieterich, while introducing new arguments and modifying some previous ones. In his criticism of those who denied the Mithraic nature of the document, he noted some secondary issues which suggested that the text was indeed part of the marginal literature of Mithraism, albeit combined with other currents of religion and thought, whose influence on the document is palpable. Moreover, he urged that there is no solid reason to suggest that the underlying ritual is not Mithraic (Meyer 1976, vii). The features he adduced are: the explicit mention of the "great god Helios Mithra" (l. 482), the invocation of the elements (ll. 487–537), the descriptions of the fire-breathing god Aion (ll. 587–616), of Helios (ll. 635–637) and the supreme god (ll. 693–704). In addition to these internal considerations, the accounts of Mithraic belief by Celsus, ap. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.21f., and Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 5f. (etc.) tend to support the possibility that in some places at least a ritual specifically related to the ascension of souls may have been developed, which might well look rather like the 'Liturgy'.[16] It was considerations such as these that led Meyer to conclude that at any rate the *Urtext* might represent a variety of Mithraism, albeit not 'pure' Mithraism as commonly presented, but a variant concerned with individual 'psychic' experience, syncretism and magic. In short, a hypothetical variant of Mithraism specific to Egypt.

---

[15] Th. Hopfner, s.v. Mysterien (oriental-hellenistisch), *RE* 16 (1935) 1315–50 at 1346 ll. 59–61.

[16] Meyer ignores the flat denial of Dieterich's hypothesis by the greatest inter-war expert on the Chaldaean Oracles and theurgy, Hans Lewy (1901–45) (Lewy 1978, 209f. [first published 1956]).

Like his predecessors, Meyer distinguished two sections in the 'Liturgy'. The major section, ll. 475–750, was a mystery ritual for the ascent of souls. The briefer one, ll. 750–834, contained additional instructions (διδασκαλία τῆς πράξεως), including the preliminary rites and the optional ceremonies. After a brief introduction (ll. 475–485), the text evokes seven steps or moments during the soul's ascent, viz.:

1. The soul meets the four elements in their generative and regenerative guises (ll. 485–537)
2. The inferior powers of the air including the winds, thunder and lightning, and meteors (ll. 537–585)
3. Aion and the aionic powers, as planetary guardians of the gates of heaven (ll. 585–628)
4. Helios, youthful and fiery (ll. 628–657)
5. The seven Τύχαι (ll. 657–672)
6. The seven Pole-Lords (ll. 673–692). These two groups form the region of the fixed stars, both depicted in Egyptian fashion; and finally
7. The supreme God, portrayed as Mithras himself (ll. 692–724). This is the point at which divine revelation in verse (the oracular consultation) occurs; it ends with an experience of immortalisation.

There follow some instructions for the use of the mystery, including warning against misuse (ll. 724–834). First come two preparatory rituals, a sun-scarab ointment (ll. 751–78) and the use of the *kentritis* herb (ll. 778–92); then some supplementary information (ll. 792–813), instructions for protective phylacteries (ll. 813–19), and some further incantations (ll. 821–834).[17]

The magical elements of the text, all found elsewhere in Graeco-Egyptian magical practice, include breathing techniques, recipes for, and deployment of, eye-ointments and phylacteries, use of horoscopes for calculating propitious moments, and magic words (ὀνόματα βάρβαρα). The latter may be onomatopoeic, symbolic or glossolalic; some are derived from other languages, mainly Egyptian, occasionally Hebrew; and there are many examples of vowel-sequences, the variations serving to extract all their potential power.

[17] Meyer 1976, viiff.; idem 1987, 211ff. In including ll. 821–34, Meyer chose to follow Dieterich 1903, 44. But, as Wessely and Preisendanz had long since noted (see *PGrMag* ad loc.), there are paragraph marks after ll. 820/1, 824/5, 829/30, 834/5, which clearly suggests these lines are unrelated to the 'Liturgy' (they are mostly citations from Homer), and are misplaced from the θυμοκάτοχον in ll. 469–74. They are rightly so understood by Betz 2003, 26 and 87, who ends the 'Liturgy' at l. 820.

Hans-Dieter Betz' recent edition (Betz 2003), which offers an excellent linguistic and historico-religious commentary and must surely be the reference-point for all future study, distinguishes more carefully than his predecessors had tended to do between an *Urtext* underlying the central body of the ritual (the ἀπαθανατισμός) and the intention of the 'Liturgy' as a whole. His procedure is to track down the precise origin of each of the significant elements and thereby establish a sort of chromosome-chart for the text, thus revealing its true debts. The book also includes a full history of research, starting with Dieterich (2003, 1–26), and a useful, very detailed, analysis of the elements of the entire text (2003, 60–87). Here Betz identifies four main sections:

1. The *Exordium* (ll. 475–485), consisting of a brief prayer to Providence and the World-Soul, followed by the establishment of the author's (or copyist's) right to proceed in such a manner. According to Merkelbach (1992, 155f.), this brief exordium replaced a longer section describing the ritual preparatory to the ἀπαθανατισμός.
2. The *Central body of the ritual*, the ἀπαθανατισμός (ll. 485–732), with the opening prayers, the invocation of the four elements, the request for 'immortalisation' (i.e. becoming divine), the self-presentation of the initiate, the prescription for the breathing ritual, the introduction to the ascent ritual, and the account of the ascent in seven scenarios.
3. The *Supplemental rituals* (ll. 732–819): three optional rituals if one wishes to include an associate or assistant; additional instructions concerning the ingredients for the preparatory rituals (sun-scarab; *kentritis*); a variety of other details; finally the instructions for the protective phylacteries.
4. The text ends with a brief *Epilogue* (ll. 819–820).

In his discussion of the genre, composition and context of the text, Betz evinces some hesitation (2003, 26–38). Although the 'Liturgy' is now incorporated into the Great Paris Codex, it is generically different from the other recipes contained in that grimoire; as Dieterich recognised, it has clearly been adapted from another, different context. The author (who was, we may assume, not himself the editor, compiler or copyist of the Codex, which is a collection of recipes from many sources) based himself on earlier documents, essentially §2, the so-called ἀπαθανατισμός, and the source(s) of §3, which he modified in the light of his wider aim and to which he added the Exordium (§1) and the Epilogue (§4).[18]

[18] The supplementary ritual in §3 (ll. 732–820), which contains items whose names are Greek but denote Egyptian place-names, animals, plants and minerals, is perfectly in keeping with many other recipes in *PGrMag*.

The crucial question here however is: What was the nature of the *Urtext* that underlies §2? The sole deity mentioned, Helios Mithras, is never named there, only in the *Exordium* (l. 482). The implication, however, is that the author of the 'Liturgy' as a whole thought that the supreme god of §2 was indeed Mithras; which would be a strong hint at the nature of the *Urtext* of that section. However the content of §2 as a whole does not fit very well with what we know about the cult of Mithras from other sources. Against that, we know very little about the cult's actual practice; and there is a growing acceptance of the idea of regional variants in Mithraism, arising from local syncretistic processes.[19] The lack of fit between our circumstantial knowledge of Mithraism (hardly any of which comes from Egypt) and §2 may thus not be very telling. However that may be, the trousers worn by the supreme god, his close relation to light and brightness, and the detail of the golden calf's shoulder that he holds in his right hand, evidently to spin the world (l. 699f.), might legitimate acceptance of the *Urtext* as Mithraic in some non-trivial sense.[20] At the same time, since the 'Liturgy' makes clear that its users are already μύσται, initiates, it cannot be understood as the ritual of first initiation, by means of which the worshipper was admitted into the mystery-cult. It must represent some higher, more esoteric, ritual within Mithraism with which the author of the 'Liturgy' was familiar.

Betz also considers the wider aims of the author in editing §2 into a new ritual context (the 'Liturgy'). No traditional god, Greek or Egyptian, is referred to. There is no perceptible Platonic, Jewish or Christian influence. However the familiarity of §3 with Graeco-Egyptian magical practice implies that the author was attached to a temple, or at any rate had had experience as a temple-priest. Though he does not use theological material specifically attributable to Thebes in Upper Egypt, the provenance of the codex suggests that author may have been a (former) temple-priest from one of the temples there. But, as Dieterich first stressed, the appeal to Πρόνοια and Ψυχή in the exordium, and

[19] This is one of the main themes of Clauss 2000, though in practice he often disregards it.

[20] See esp. the commentary on ll. 628–61, 661–2, and 692–732 (2003, 166–75; 180–5). In an earlier publication, however, he seems much more convinced that Dieterich was right: "The long-standing debate principally between Albrecht Dieterich and Franz Cumont appears to have been finally decided in favor of the former": Betz 1991, 252, citing Meyer 1976; Klauck 1982, 156–8; and Vermaseren 1982, 25. In such matters, there is no "finally".

the cosmology, points to the influence of middle Stoicism. How are we to combine a markedly Egyptian context with such Greek influence? We must be reminded of the very type of ambitious syncretisers of Greek and Egyptian wisdom, the Hermetists.[21] Betz concludes that the 'Liturgy' belongs to a formative stage of Hermeticism based on a Greek cosmology, and was probably drawn up in the first or second centuries CE.[22]

Betz is thus more circumspect than Dieterich or Meyer in his view of the author's religious background or context. From the use of words such as μυστήριον/α to describe the ritual (ll. 476, 723, 746, 794), he concludes he must have been initiated into a mystery cult, possibly a variant of Mithraism adapted to Egyptian circumstances, but admits that it might have been any other mystery that had appropriated Mithraic elements, since the cosmology of the seven spheres or seven heavens was to be found in other systems in the Graeco-Roman world.[23]

Although it is offered with due caution, I believe this conclusion to be mistaken: in my view the references in §2 of the text to Mithras and his cult are superficial and purely circumstantial.[24] Before connecting §2 with a specific mystery-cult, we should note that the references to μυστήριον *vel sim*. occur not there but in the Exordium and in the section linking §§2 and 3. They are therefore additions by the author, part of his re-working of the *Urtext* to fit the new context. No safe conclusion about the status or the intention of the *Urtext* can be based on them. Besides, F. Graf has rightly argued that mystery-language in

---

[21] Cf. G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge 1986).

[22] Betz here seems to count the Exordium as part of §2, another example of the muddling indeterminacy of the title 'Liturgy'. As I have pointed out, Merkelbach attempted to reconcile the two quite differently, by supposing that the text represents Alexandrian syncretism within the cult of Agathos Daemon (1992).

[23] Betz 2003, 139f.; cf. idem, 1991, 252. W. Fauth, invoking a 'magisch-mystischer Adept', and citing Betz' earlier work (Betz 1991, 249), is confident that the ἀπαθανατισμός demonstrates a close connection between experience of (unspecified) mysteries ("steht außer Zweifel"); but he could cite no specific evidence, only very general features of the type that Reitzenstein used to invoke as 'mystic', such as silence, cosmokinetic phenomena, threatening gods and angels, the opening and closing of the initiate's eyes so as to behold marvels, as well as the idea of a mystic rebirth after death (1995, 8f.).

[24] Nor do I accept that the text is 'monotheistic'; as H. Versnel has amply shown (*Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion 1. Ter Unus. Isis, Dionysos, Hermes. Three Studies in Henotheism*. SGRR 6 (Leyden 1990) 35ff.), there is.nothing odd about a polytheist invoking a single deity deemed 'greatest', 'highest' or more powerful than all others. On the modern fashion for finding 'monotheists' everywhere in Late Antiquity, see Alvar 2001, 37f. = 2008, 31f.

the magical papyri has three functions: it emphasises the specialised knowledge required of the practitioner, expresses a shared interest in personal spirituality, and is a dignified way of talking about the secrecy of all such recipes for magical praxis.[25] Moreover, even if Betz were right about the Hermetic origin of §2, that would only indicate that behind the *Urtext* of §2 there might lie yet other texts, *Ur-urtexte*, one of which might have had some Mithraic colouring.

It is surely obvious that the Supplemental rituals belong to the second (or later) redaction.[26] Since we are discussing only the relevance to Mithraism of the *Urtext*, i.e. the one that at some level underlies the ἀπαθανατισμός, I confine my remarks to that section. Since the Exordium too surely belongs to the later redaction, I use no arguments, for example about the absence of women from the cult of Mithras, that depend upon it.[27] Finally something needs to be said about an issue that has haunted the discussion ever since Dieterich was forced to concede that his text could not be "the" Mithraic liturgy, namely the spectre of 'local variants' of the cult of Mithras, for which the chief evidence adduced is the existence of the 'Liturgy' itself. It certainly is the case that Cumont, and Mithraic scholarship since, has tended to reconstruct a monolithic cult on the tacit basis of an idealised, vaguely mediaeval, Christianity. Given the evidential problems inherent in our material for the cult, there are good heuristic reasons for such a procedure; every scholar however would agree that, given ancient communicative conditions, the small-group character of the cult, and wider ancient attitudes towards religious discourse, regional and local variation must have been a constant (cf. Clauss 2000). However there can be no general or theoretical answer to the real question, namely the

[25] F. Graf, Comment devenir magicien? Le rituel d'initation gréco-égyptien, in A. Morand (ed.), *L'initiation: Actes du Colloque international de Montpellier* (Montpellier 1992) 27–35; idem 1996, 197.

[26] None of these additional instructions (ll. 7320–819), such as the scarab ceremony of the sun, the preparation of the *kentritis* plant, and the phylacteries (see Betz 2003, 223f. with nn. 791f.), bears any resemblance to what we know about Mithraism or Hermeticism for that matter, but they are perfectly consistent with dozens of other recipes in the *PGrMag*.

[27] According to the exordium, the text as a whole is addressed to a θυγάτηρ (l. 479). On the ordinary understanding of the cult of Mithras, women were excluded, cf. Alvar 2000, 106 and 303 = 2008, 120 n. 290; A. Chalupa, Hyenas or Lionesses? Mithraism and Women in the Religious World of Late Antiquity, *Revue pro Religionistiku* 2 (2005) 199–230. If the exordium belongs to the second redaction, this objection has no force.

extent or range of such variation. On the other hand, one cannot help suspecting that appeal to local variation is all too convenient for those who want to argue in favour of at least §2 of the 'Liturgy' being significantly Mithraic: when the sceptic adduces counter-evidence taken from the 'normal' cult, the reply is simply 'oh, but we are dealing with a local variant, so your evidence does not count'. Quite apart from the obvious point that an untestable theory is doomed to remain mere speculation, a cumulative counter-argument based on many detailed disparities between the 'normal' cult and the 'Liturgy' surely has some force. At any rate, in what follows, I combine arguments against §2 having been either "the" general Mithraic liturgy or a ritual handbook of any related institutionalised cult.

My general complaint about Betz' procedure is that he appeals only to details and never considers the religious systems as a whole, whether that of the 'Liturgy' or of Mithraism. Faced with a particular image or idea in the 'Liturgy', he just looks for a plausible link to the Mithraic evidence. But even so the harvest is extremely meagre. His main argument is that the 'great god Helios Mithras', explicitly mentioned in the Exordium (l. 482) as having commanded his archangel to reveal the praxis to the redactor, is the unnamed supreme or ultimate god finally encountered at the climax of the ἀπαθανατισμός, the god who is to provide the oracle or response the practitioner desires (ll. 696–704).[28] This deity is certainly dressed in trousers (ἀναξυρίδες) just like Mithras of the mysteries, and we can also accept the details that he is young, vast in size and radiant with light, even perhaps that he has golden hair,[29] as being appropriate to an epiphany and to a θεὸς μέγιστος. But there are two details, the white χιτών and the golden crown (ll. 698), that simply contradict standard Mithraic iconography: except sometimes in phase III at Dura, Mithras wears a red, pink, gold, green or black tunic, but never white; and always wears a Phrygian cap to distinguish

[28] "This god is certainly Mithras, although it is peculiar that his name is not mentioned" (Betz 2003, 182).

[29] In the majority of surviving coloured images, for example at Capua, Marino, Barberini, and in almost all the many images at Dura, Mithras has brown or dark hair. But he has yellow or golden hair on the small relief from the *Castra peregrinorum*, Rome (Lissi Caronna 1986, 35f. with pl. XV), and on the relief of Atpeni at Dura (V. 37); on the second relief, that of Zenobios (V. 40), the first two coats are of yellow paint, the third, covering them, black. The entire face, hair, cap and hands of Mithras on the larger relief from the *Castra peregrinorum* and the entire stucco head belonging to the main cult-group, are gilded (Lissi Caronna 1986, 34 with pls. VIII–IX; 12 with pl. I).

him from Helios/Sol. Whatever the source of this imagery, then, it does not seem to be the mysteries as attested archaeologically.

The other major distinguishing feature of this final deity is that he holds in his right hand the μόσχου ὦμον χρύσεον, the golden shoulder of a bull-calf (l. 699f.), the significance of which is quickly explained: this is the (Egyptian) symbol of Arktos, the Great Bear, responsible for the turning of the fixed stars (but also, oddly enough, the seasons). This has been the subject of considerable debate, summarised by Betz (2003, 183–5). The matter is too complex to go into here.[30] I will only say that, although there is some evidence that Mithras was sometimes linked in the mysteries with cosmokinetic phenomena such as thunder and lightning (which feature in this passage of the 'Liturgy' too),[31] the likeliest explanation for the identity of this god is that offered by W. Fauth: he is a complex, deliberately-syncretistic fusion of Helios as fiery world-orderer, a pantheistic Phanes-Protogonos, and (Alexandrian) Aion-Agathos Daemon as kosmokrator and reconciler of cosmic antitheses (Fauth 1995, 31–33). There is a little evidence, especially in the title Zeus he sometimes bears, and the Porphyrian exegesis of him as demiurge, that Mithras of the mysteries came to be understood in analogous, though certainly simpler terms. As Fauth shows, however, the syncretism of the 'Liturgy' is wholly consistent with the general strategy of the more complex recipes of the *PGrMag*.

The other connections between the 'Liturgy' and Mithraic iconography adduced by Betz are unconvincing, either because of their ambiguity, their lack of specificity or simply because they are poor examples.[32] Moreover, several would-be examples, such as the seven virgins who emerge from the depths, as Τυχαί from Heaven, or the Lords of the

[30] The discovery of the ceiling decoration of the Ponza mithraeum, which shows the Great and Little Bear with Draco has proved that these constellations did attract some interest in the speculation of the mysteries, but that is not to say that this interest relates to the 'Liturgy', which clearly conceives the constellation in Egyptian terms; cf. esp. R.L. Beck, Interpreting the Ponza Zodiac 1 and II, *JMS* 1 (1976) 1–19 and 2 (1977–8) 87–147 = Beck 2004, 151–231 (rather over-elaborate). Secondly, whatever the object held by Mithras in the "obeisance of Sol" scene, Richard Gordon tells me (against his earlier view) that it is almost certainly not a calf's shoulder; at least sometimes there can be no doubt that it is the *hind-quarter* of the dead bull, and therefore part of the Mithraic sub-narrative connected with the First Sacrifice.

[31] See recently, R.L. Gordon, Mithras Helios astrobrontodaimôn? The re-discovery of *IG* XIV 998 = *IGVR* 125 in South Africa, *Epigraphica* 68 (2006) 155–94 at 180–9.

[32] For example, Betz claims that the rays of the sun that fall on the practitioner may be compared with the ray of light on Mithraic reliefs that sometimes connects Helios/Sol with tauroctonous Mithras (Betz 2003, 167 with n. 444).

Pole, the seven gods with bull-masks, as he himself finally admits, have nothing to do with (what we otherwise know about) Mithraism.[33] Finally, for a critical reader a convincing test of the hypothesis would have been the demonstration that some of the numerous enigmas of Mithraic iconography can be plausibly explained with reference to the 'Liturgy'. Yet Betz cannot point to a single such case. We can only conclude that our knowledge of Mithraism is not increased in the slightest by the 'Liturgy': it simply adds further, unnecessary, enigmas. The appeal to local variants of Mithraism thus turns out to be self-defeating.

We may also think it strange that the 'Liturgy' derives from an area, namely Egypt, which has produced hardly any archaeological evidence of regular Mithraism.[34] It is true that this circumstance might change if, say, a mithraeum were discovered in Alexandria; but on present evidence the regular cult of Mithras was hardly present in Egypt, so that there was no widespread basis of knowledge about the cult which might reasonably have produced a variant such as the 'Liturgy' whose Sitz im Leben seems so clearly to be different.

Another relevant consideration has hardly been raised in the entire discussion so far. Is there any evidence that regular Mithraism knew a ritual that might have inspired the *Urtext* underlying §2 (the ἀπαθανατισμός)? There can be no doubt that individual communities possessed texts of some kind: tantalising fragments among the graffiti of phases II and III at Dura-Europus, and the discrete verses on the walls of the mithraeum of Santa Prisca in Rome, make this certain.[35] But of what scope? And what status did they have? The key factor must have been the degree of literacy of the founder(s) of each community; the existence of written texts is after all well-documented in other telestic cults.[36] Evidence for the authority of the book in general—not necessarily, but plausibly, a Mithraic one—is provided by the frescoes of 'magi' at Dura, where both figures hold a papyrus roll or *codicillus*.

---

[33] Betz 2003, 174–80.

[34] Vermaseren's entry (V. 91–105) wrongly attributes the Hermopolis relief (V. 91) to the unpublished Memphis mithraeum (V. 92–101). None of the remaining 3 or 4 items are 'classic'. See J.R. Harris, Mithras at Hermopolis and Memphis, in D.M. Bailey (ed.), *Archaeological Research in Roman Egypt: Proceedings of the XVIIth Classical Colloquium of the Department of Classical Antiquities of the British Museum, 1–4 Dec. 1993* (London 1996) 169–76.

[35] V. 66, 68f.; Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965, 186–240.

[36] W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge MA 1987) 70f.

Such images served as emblems of membership in the cultivated class: they state a claim to rhetorical, legal or technical education. But in this narrower connection, they allude to arcane, esoteric wisdom. As for Santa Prisca, I see no difficulty in taking the *dipinti* as excerpts from a single *carmen sacrum* composed by one of the members of the community in the Severan period. The fragmentary line 21, *reddite cantu*, "rehearse in song", legitimates the inference that singing was envisaged, either on a particular occasion or regularly, at least in this mithraeum.[37] The ordering of the texts is compatible with the notion that the *carmen* consisted of an introduction in metrical iambic senarii, the metre, certainly or probably, of the first three preserved lines, followed by a main body in metrical hexameters. The formulation of the thoughts is personal to the composer; but the thoughts themselves draw upon the common body of Mithraic belief. This *carmen* would be a local attempt to fix the oral *hieros logos* in dignified form, that is, a narrative filled out with simple commentary or exegesis. But it bears no resemblance whatever to the ἀποθανατισμός.

Despite its general importance for our knowledge of the cult, then, the evidence from Sta Prisca does not support the idea that there existed rituals within Mithraism that might have inspired §2 of the 'Liturgy'. Furthermore, it seems on comparative grounds likely that many Mithraic communities possessed books of prayers (*precationes*) and instructions for sacrificial ritual, of the type that were current in many small religious groups.[38] Such books were not standardised: they were the individual creation and property of individual communities, characterised by the enthusiasms and exegeses of their several authors.[39] But there is no reason to think they were more elaborate than this—precisely pro formas of prayers and instructions for sacrifices. A

[37] Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965, 240 (right wall, lower layer). The words, recorded by Ferrua in 1939, had disappeared by the time of Vermaseren and Van Essen's re-excavation. They are separated from *]icit[ ]ucta* by a *hedera*.

[38] Cf. Mastrocinque 2003, 148f.). The best extant example is probably *PGurob* 1 = Kern *OF* 101–4 frag. vet. 31; also Livy, 25. 1, 12 with W. Speyer, Büchervernichtung, *JbAC* 13 (1970) 123–52 at 130f. As is well known, the Ptolemies attempted to control Dionysiac cults, and no doubt others, by requiring copies of their *hieroi logoi* to be vetted, apparently by the *archidikastes* in Alexandria: *SB* 7266 with P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford 1972) 1: 204 with nn. 214f. *PBerol* 21196, published with considerable fanfare some years ago (Brashear 1992), is most unlikely to be Mithraic.

[39] The gross uniformity of the iconography is however not an argument in favour of liturgical texts common to all mithraea.

text resembling the 'Liturgy' simply does not belong to this type of text-repertoire.

In my view, then, the 'moderate' modern approach to the 'Liturgy', which argues that "while ... it is impossible to prove that the entire piece was used in the cult of Mithras, it is just as impossible… to prove that portions were not used" (Brashear 1995, 3424), is both unsatisfactory and unsound.[40] The arguments in favour of the 'Liturgy' ever having been used in the context of regular Mithraic worship seem to me extremely flimsy, and the supposedly Mithraic elements of the text imaginary, or at any rate to amount to nothing more than general knowledge. As for the claim that it is "impossible ... to prove that portions were not used", it cuts both ways: apart from the mere desire to fill up a hole, why should anyone bother with a remote possibility? We may think that the procedures of the scholar F.M. Pratilli, who forged his own documents to glorify his native city of Capua, were not appreciably different.

2.2. *Mithraic Gems and Amulets*

I have mentioned that the third of the *Supplementary Rituals* contains a (defective) recipe for phylacteries, one for each arm.[41] The skin of a black sheep is to be used for the amulet for the right arm, and that of a white sheep for the left arm; both are to be inscribed in myrrh ink with the prophylactic text. This is clearly magical, not Mithraic. Some amuletic gems from various locations in the Roman Empire do however undeniably carry the iconography of the cult of Mithras.[42]

Some years ago, Attilio Mastrocinque drew attention to the amuletic gems and related objects with Mithraic motifs (Mastrocinque 1998). His study was based on the various collections of 'gnostic gems' from

---

[40] A common recent tendency is to claim that the 'Liturgy' contains elements that were to be found in the worship of Mithras, so that it might have been used one way or another in its rituals, e.g. Beck 1984, 2051; A.F. Segal, Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, early Christianity and their Environment, *ANRW* II, 23.2 (1984) 1382; Clauss 2000, 105–108, although he mistakenly believes that the rite of immortalisation was for initiands, not someone who had already been initiated. But none of these scholars offers any hard evidence for the conclusion.

[41] *PGM* IV 813–19 with Betz 2003, 223–5.

[42] The provenance of most amuletic gems is however unknown, since they have long been of interest to conoisseurs. The likeliest major provenance is graves, but it is rarely possible to demonstrate the fact.

Cesare Baronius (1538–1607) to modern times.[43] The great majority of clearly Mithraic gems had already been collected by Vermaseren (1956–60).[44] Mastrocinque tried to enlarge the group of relevant items, for example by including a magical axe-head from Mentana in the Zeri collection (1998, 59–62 with his figs. 15–16), and his is the most systematic attempt so far to analyse the relationship between Mithraism and magic. His general aim here was to argue that the 'Persian origin' of the mysteries must be taken to include the *magika* associated with Zoroaster in the so-called Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha: we should think of the cult as practising the whole gamut of the magian arts, magical divination, healing, astrological prediction.[45]

As regards the Mithraic gems and amulets, the major issue is whether they are to be understood as an expression of the private religious beliefs of those initiated into the mysteries of Mithras, or whether they represent a magical use of Mithraic themes by individuals outside this cult.[46] I would argue in favour of the latter conclusion. But it must be admitted that scholars in this field often tend to take refuge in vague, suggestive, or merely hopeful, references to Mithras and Mithraic imagery whenever they discuss solar motifs: for example, the index to Michel's British Museum catalogue lists 37 references to the cult of Mithras, yet the Museum possesses not a single Mithraic gem in the strict sense (2003, 2: 32).[47] In my view, we need to be far more critical about such language.

---

[43] C. Baronius, *Annales ecclesiastici* 2 (Venice and Lucca 1738–40) 92f. [orig. ed. Ingolstadt 1594]; the magical gems published before c. 1900 are reproduced in Mastrocinque 2004; of standard modern publications I may just cite Bonner 1950; Delatte & Derchain 1984; H. Philipp, *Mira et magica: Gemmen im Ägyptischen Museum der Staatlichen Museen—Preußischer Kulturbesitz—Berlin-Charlottenburg* (Mainz 1986); E. Zweierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen des Instituts für Altertumskunde der Universität Köln*. Papyrologia Coloniensia 20 (Opladen 1992); Michel 2003; 2004.

[44] See V. 1704; 2353; 2354–67 [2357–8; 2360 are irrelevant]; some of these are reproduced in Merkelbach 1984 figs. 165–69.

[45] See J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés: Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque*. 2 vols. (Paris 1938). R.L. Beck, Thus Spake not Zarathuštra: Zoroastrian Pseudepigrapha in the Greco-Roman World, in Boyce and Grenet 1991, 491–565, is rightly critical of the credulousness of Bidez and Cumont regarding the 'Persian' origin of the material in the pseudepigrapha (which in fact is virtually all Greek), and, in my opinion, showed, several years before Mastrocinque's book appeared, that any claim such as his rests on extremely shaky foundations.

[46] Mastrocinque 1998, vi.

[47] Michel 2004, 94 even invokes the Lion-headed god of Mithraism is as a source of the iconography of a Pantheus-gem in Vienna.

Mastrocinque begins his study with a very famous gem: the heliotrope formerly in the Medici collection and now in the Museo Archeologico in Florence (inv. no. 15110), first recorded by Agostini in 1694 (Plate 38a,b). The obverse represents tauroctonous Mithras accompanied by Cautes and Cautopates, surrounded by a selection of Mithraic symbols, which show detailed familiarity with the iconography of the regular cult. On the reverse is a lion standing on a ground-line with a bee entering its mouth; above it are depicted seven stars (i.e. the planets), each encircled by an ὄνομα βάρβαρον in Greek letters.[48] Mastrocinque does his best to find arguments in favour of the properly Mithraic nature of the piece, but his efforts are particularly forced in relation to these "secret names of the planetary gods".[49] No other evidence, whether textual or documentary, legitimates the belief that the planets had secret names in the cult; this in turn suggests to me that the specific iconography of the reverse derives from a quite different religious context from that which we normally designate 'Mithraism'. At any event, the presence of secret names is uncharacteristic of ordinary followers of Mithras, who would surely not have wanted thus to reveal or expose them to outsiders.

If Mastrocinque's identifications of these names are correct, we would have to suppose that such an amulet was commissioned by an individual outside the mainstream cult who was not subject to the rule of secrecy. In the case of the Florentine heliotrope, we can say that the authority of the tauroctony-scene, taken as a short-hand for the cult of Mithras as a whole, is invoked to reinforce the claim—whatever it is—being made by the reverse.[50] A similar explanation holds good for the five (or six) cases where a regular Mithraic iconography is associated with a clearly magical image or invocation.[51] One of these gems

---

[48] The older lit. in Mastrocinque 2004, 303–5 no. 256 = V. 2354 = Merkelbach 1984 fig. 165a, b; Mastrocinque 1998, 1–10. The names are (l. to r.): Σημεα, Καντευ, Κοντευ, Κορνευ, Κεριδευ, Δαρυγκω, Λυκυνξ. The very similar gem in the museum at Udine (V. 2355 = Merkelbach 1984 fig. 166) is a modern copy of the Florentine gem.

[49] Mastrocinque 1998, 2.

[50] It must be said that the distinction between obverse and reverse here is quite arbitrary.

[51] These are: 1) V. 2356 = Merkelbach 1984 fig. 167, with two different ὄνοματα βαρβαρικά (amatory; for some reason omitted by Mastrocinque 2004); 2) V. 2359 = Merkelbach 1984 fig. 167, with νεικαροπληξ, Ἰάω and Ἀσωνίηλ (Cairo); 3) V. 2361 = Merkelbach 1984 fig. 168, with αβλαναθαναλβα and τυξευι (Metropolitan, omitted by Michel 2004); 4) Bonner 1950 Cat no. 68 = V. 2364, with Iao on the reverse (formerly in the Marlborough Collection, now Walters, Baltimore); 5) Bonner 1950 Cat.

is clearly amatory, which we cannot believe to have been appropriate for the mysteries; another seems to identify Mithras as Φρ]ήν, that is, the late-Egyptian name of Ra.[52] *A fortiori*, we should be sceptical with regard to the evidence Mastrocinque adduces for his theory of a Mithraism heavily dependent on magical methods, insofar as it involves irregular, or non-standard, iconography, as in the case of the palaeolithic axes from the Argolid and Mentana.[53] The critical reader is offered no good reason for accepting a Mithraic context or inspiration for any of these items. What they do illustrate is the creative imagination of the designers of these amulets, which is what makes the interpretation of this iconography so troublesome, not to say frustrating; but of that we were already persuaded by the standard catalogues, of Bonner, Delatte & Derchain, Philipp and the others.

However, Mastrocinque must be right in claiming that some gems may have belonged to ordinary initiates into the cult, in other words, the faithful who followed the rules established for their entry into the brotherhood. Naturally, only items that conform to what we know about ordinary or 'standard' Mithraism should be ascribed to this type of owner. In fact eight intaglios are presently known that bear a plain representation of the bull-slaying without any magical additions.[54] The most interesting of these is a heliotrope recently found in a mediaeval grave on the Petersberg at Flintsbach, Lkr. Rosenheim, in Upper Bavaria (Plate 39), which the excavator ascribes to a workshop in SE Europe. Several of the other examples represent the cave, as this one

---

no. 69 = V. 2365, with αβλαναθ[αναλβα (formerly Coll. Seyrig, now Cabinet des Médailles); 6) Bonner 1950 no. 70 = V. 2366 (rev. bears a figure identified rather doubtfully as a Kabeiros; no ὀνόματα βαρβαρικά). Mastrocinque includes two items rejected by Vermaseren, but accepted by Cumont: *TM* p. 449, nº 7; pp. 452–3, nº 11, fig. 404.

[52] Resp. nos. 1 and 5 in the preceding list.

[53] Resp. V. 2353 and Mastrocinque 1998, 59–62 with figs. 15f.

[54] They are: 1) 'rock crystal', V. 2362 (Cabinet des Médailles, Paris); 2) chalcedony, 2363 (ibid.); 3) unknown stone, 2367 (Baltimore, supposedly from Nemea); 4) a cornelian at Carnuntum, possibly from Mithraeum IV, V. 1704 = Dembski 1969, 122 no. 233 = Schön 1988, 44 no. 35 = Jobst 1992, 69 no. 16 with fig. on p. 388; 4) a similar design on a cornelian, also from Carnuntum, without the torchbearers, and with seven stars and a crescent moon in the background, Dembski 1969, 121f. no. 232 = Schön 1988, 44 no. 36; 5) a similar design on a red jasper in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (inv.no. IX.2599) = E. Zweierlein-Diehl, *Die antiken Gemmen des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien* 2 (Vienna 1979) no. 1376, from Viminacium (Kostolac); 6) a similar gem in Munich, *AGDS* 1.3 no. 2654 pl. 247; 7) Petersberg heliotrope: Meier 2001 (with colour photo, fig. 154) = Gordon 2004, 276f. with fig. 19 (who lists most of these items).

does, but in concentrating on Mithras and the bull sacrifice other details usually found on Mithraic reliefs have been omitted. The Petersberg gem attempts to provide much more information, by including both the busts of Sol and Luna, and seven large 8-pointed stars divided into two groups, four above the cave and three below, which may well correspond to a division between three lower grades (Corax to Miles) and four senior ones (Leo to Pater). Such an allusion is unique among these intaglios. More important still, however, is the depiction of the krater at 7 o'clock, towards which the snake is slithering: this is a typical feature of reliefs from the Rheno-Danubian area, not found in the Italian iconography of the cult. This is a coded representation of the deeper significance of the bull's death, alluding to blood, wine, feasting and (evidently) salvation in the wide sense. I would argue that these gems, many of which have trivial but sometimes interesting deviations from the normative cult-icon (insofar as we can speak in such terms), are examples of personal or private images worn by individuals in commemoration of their initiation and faith.[55] The Petersberg example at least was clearly fitted into a ring. They belong with the great numbers of intaglios showing standard Olympians, such as Jupiter, Mercury, or Minerva but also, most obviously, the gods of the Isis-group.[56]

Quite apart from the suspect reasoning in relation to individual gems, Mastrocinque assumes, indeed more or less takes for granted, that current Mithraic research is fundamentally misguided. Since the nineteen-seventies, it has been generally agreed that there is little if any continuity between Iranian Miθra and Roman Mithraism, even if more learned Mithraists at least seem to have considered themselves to be the heirs of the Persian religious tradition.[57] Mastrocinque

[55] Cf. Gordon 2004, 274–8. The excavator of the Petersberg gem suggests rather contradictorily that Mithraists were, or might be, presented with a ring when they were initiated, but also that this example must have been "auch in der Antike eine qualitätvolle Rarität" (Meier 2002, 147). There are far too few such gems to admit the idea that such stones were a regular part of initiation: they must have been privately commissioned, and are thus evidence of the internal variation of individual wealth and status in such associations that I mention in §3 below.

[56] Like these other intaglios depicting regular divinities, the Mithraic gems are all cut with a reverse image, i.e. could be used as personal seals. It is typical of the magical amulets that they are cut 'straight', i.e. were not intended to be used for this purpose but kept hidden.

[57] See Beck 1984; idem, Mithraism after 'Mithraism since Franz Cumont', 1984–2003, in idem 2004, 3–23. The Iranist Gh. Gnoli claimed at the presentation of Bongard-Levine 2007 in Rome on 16 April 2008 that Cumont was right after all, though on the evidence of Gnoli 1979 he knows extremely little about the western cult. Some

seizes on this claim, and places great—we may think excessive—weight on the evidence, derived exclusively from Dura-Europus on the very easternmost marches of the Empire, that Mithraists might be called μάγοι, *magi*, which he interprets in the sense of 'magicians'.[58] We cannot say for certain what Mithras' relation to magic was, but, in the total absence of evidence for either divination or healing in the cult, it seems adventurous to use the term μάγοι, *magi* at Dura to legitimate the idea that it was constructed on the basis of the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha as collected by Bidez and Cumont.[59] If that had been the case, magical elements in Mithraism would surely be much more common.[60] It seems far more satisfactory to move the other way, and assume that, in the spirit of solar syncretism so well described in relation to the magical papyri by W. Fauth (1995, 34–120), the image of the tauroctony, associated as everyone knew with the unconquerable solar god Mithras, might be used to lend authority to protective (and other) amulets.

2.3. *Mithras in* PGrMag

This point can be confirmed indirectly by considering the references to Mithra(s) in the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri. The much-edited,

---

people cannot distinguish between hagiography and historiography. There is no epigraphic or (apart from Dura) iconographic evidence for Zoroaster in Roman Mithraism.

[58] He cites 1) the graffito *[N]ama Maximus magus* at Dura (V. 61) and 2) the graffito from the Via dei Cerchi mithraeum, Rome, which runs *magicas inbictas cede Degentio* […(*AE* 1980: 58), and therefore cannot be used as evidence that a role or rank of *magus* existed at Rome: Mastrocinque 2003, 158. This is frankly not much to go on (both had already been invoked by M. Guarducci, Ricordo della 'magia' in un graffito del mitreo dei Circo Massimo, in Bianchi 1979, 171–82, relying upon a quite imaginary reading). Perhaps rightly, Cumont interpreted one of the two seated figures on the faces of the piers of the cult niche of the Third Phase at Dura as Zoroaster (Cumont 1975, 186); and denied that the word μάγος/*magus* there had anything to do with the grade system, believing it rather to be a synonym of σοφιστής (p. 203) [see ibid. n. 293 for another example of the word in *IMDur* 17, as read by E.D. Francis, though its grammatical case is problematic as read]. For the semantic range of *magus*, see the paper by J.R. Rives earlier in this volume (p. 60f.). The word's apparent connotation of wisdom at Dura may conceivably help towards a better understanding of the name Mithras that Apuleius gives to the high priest of Isis who advises Lucius (Apuleius, *Met*. 11.22; 25).

[59] In addition to emphasising the Zoroastrian pseudepigraphy, Mastrocinque is also keen to emphasise the Egyptian influences on Mithraism (1998, 81–92). These again seem to me largely illusory, granted that the cult is rightly to be seen as a bricolage.

[60] He himself seems hardly to believe in his own attempt to show that individual Mithraic *patres* may have been interested in necromancy (1998, 96–8).

and therefore somewhat enigmatic, Cat-ritual in *P.Mimaut* (*PLouvre* 2391 = *PGrMag* III 1–164) invokes Mithra(s) twice (ll. 80f.; 100f.), each time in association with the ὄνοματα ναμαζαρ αναμαρια, a pair that clearly implies some acquaintance with the Mithraic acclamation νάμα, Hail! In the first passage (which assumes the second), he is identified with the Cat-daemon, who, as we have already learned, "has the form of Helios available to [it]" (l. 4f.), and who is both a ναυτικός, the steersman of the night-bark of Helios-Re, and associated with the mighty Seth-Typhon.[61] In the second passage, the ναυτικός is addressed as Meliouchos (here a hypostasis of Helios-Re, possibly the equivalent of Heka, magical binding force) and as Mithra, and is required to halt the bark's passage so that the practitioner may address Helios-Re directly. It is obvious that Mithra(s) is here understood, like Meliouchos, as a hypostasis of Helios-Re, i.e. exclusively in his capacity as a mighty solar deity (Harrauer 1987, 28). Furthermore, there is nothing in this ritual that is related to Mithraism as we understand it from the usual sources. Quite the contrary: he is invoked for the sake of completeness, within an Egyptian mythological context, as part of a strategy, fundamental to this magical style, designed to increase the practitioner's authority. Other invocations of Mithras in the magical *corpus* should be interpreted in the same way, as allusions to his power as a solar divinity, not as evidence for a connection between Mithraism and magical praxis.[62]

The association of Mithras with other divine names in texts of a different type, such as the therapeutic magic of Alexander of Tralles, in connection with gout, has nothing to do with Mithraism either, as Mastrocinque himself admits: "è certo che Mitra veniva invocato per la

[61] See Harrauer 1987, 19–21; she is however wrong to emphasis the antipathy between Helios-Re and Seth-Typhon. There is no mystery about why Seth-Typhon is invoked here: in the Pharaonic sun-theology (e.g. the *Amduat*) Seth serves as part of the crew of the Sun-bark and helps Re to destroy Apophis, the terrible snake-monster who threatens the bark on its nightly journey, cf. E. Hornung, *Die Nachtfahrt der Sonne. Eine altägyptische Beschreibung des Jenseits* (Düsseldorf and Zurich 1991) 111–33; Dieleman 2005, 134f. See also the criticism of Harrauer by Fauth 1995, 59f.

[62] This is perfectly clear e.g. in the 'Sarapis oracle' of *PGrMag* V 1–53, where the god is invoked: ἐπικαλοῦμαί σε, Ζεῦ, Ἥλιε, Μίθρα, Σάραπι ἀνίκητε, Μελιοῦχε, Μελικέρτα, Μελιγενέτωρ…(ll. 4–6), where the solar and chthonic aspects of Serapis are both in play, cf. Harrauer 1987, 78–81. In *PSI* I 28 = *SupplMag.* 42 l. 56, Mithra is invoked with Abrasax, Phre and Arsenophre as a solar deity, but almost as an ὄνομα βαρβαρικόν. Mastrocinque himself recognises this: "Il Mitra della magia è supratutto un dio greco ed egiziano" (1998, 157).

podagra al di fuori del Mitraismo", although he adds an unconfirmed and unconfirmable opinion with which he gives weight to his argument: "anche se è probabile che l'origine di questo genere de magia, come di altre in cui si ricorreva al dio, fosse legata alla sapienza dei Magi o dei Mitraisti".[63] The underlying problem, in fact, is determining whether the knowledge of the Persian *mobed*s (magi) somehow passed to the Mithraists, and from them to other magicians of the Roman period, or whether the magic that spread through the Empire took (very occasionally) the name of the god from the mystery cult for its own ends. The answer is surely plain enough.

3. *Taking the Easier Route*

Mastrocinque's interpretation is no doubt ingenious and scholarly. He has moreover performed a service in raising, or at any rate resurrecting, the problem of the existence of amuletic gems with an allegedly Mithraic theme. The whole construct however rests upon two extremely implausible assumptions. The first is that Graeco-Roman magic was indeed directly inspired by the Persian *mobed*s—as though we could take Pliny's history of magic in *HN* 30.3–11 as history indeed. The truth is of course far more complicated.[64] The second is that the cult of Mithras in the Roman Empire was likewise directly owed to the same religious experts—the Cumontian paradigm. As we have seen, virtually no one now believes this—and Cumont would have been astonished that his hypothesis about the origins of Mithraism could be instrumentalised in the way that Mastrocinque chooses. Furthermore, the evidence he adduces simply fails to support the main argument.

One of the central weaknesses, as we have seen, is the forced connection made between the world implied by the amuletic gems and the reality of Mithraism. Much the same can be said of his treatment of the 'Liturgy'. To prove its Mithraic character, he explains away everything that does not appear to be Mithraic, and bends over backwards to find links—be they real or imaginary—with the Mithraism of the

[63] Mastrocinque 1998, 126.

[64] See e.g. Carastro 2006; Graf 1996, 154–7; M.W. Dickie, The Learned Magician and the Collection and Transmission of Magical Lore, in *WAM* 163–93; E. Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia*. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 85.4 (Philadelphia 1995).

archaeological evidence. Yet if everything these 'secondary' documents have to offer was already present in mainstream Mithraism, what do they add to our knowledge of the cult? The situation is completely different in the case of material evidence such as the Mainz Schlangengefäß published a few years ago: the iconography is partly new, but it can be accommodated within the conventional interpretative framework; once the deeper significance is revealed, our understanding of Mithraism is enhanced.[65] This is not the case with Mastrocinque's magical evidence.

Furthermore, as Mastrocinque himself points out (1998, 119),

> la Mithrasliturgie non è…di molto aiuto per comprendere quali rapporti intercorressero fra Mitraismo e magia, anche perché non vi ricorrono le *voces magicae* tipiche degli intagli mitriaci; come pure non è d'aiuto per la comprensione del Mitraismo, visto che contiene non pochi elementi estranei o in contraddizione rispetto al culto persiano diffuso in Occidente.

What is claimed here with regard to the Liturgy applies equally to the amuletic gems. Sets of information require internal coherence. We can allow for a certain *décalage* between epigraphic and literary information, between iconography and texts, a degree of divergence between gems and other types of archaeological remains, lack of overlap between *dipinti* and philosophical speculations—each type of information has its own unique value. Mastrocinque's magical evidence lacks precisely this type of internal coherence. Using the same arguments, we could easily find other items, such as the Lion-Bull type in the ancient Near East, or the *Babyloniaka* of Iamblichus, and urge that they too are evidence for 'real' Mithraism.[66]

I have argued against two claims, the strong one that mithraea all over the Empire had copies of a text similar to the 'Liturgy', and the weaker one that the text may have been used in a local Egyptian variant of Mithraic praxis. To my mind, the real question that needs to be

---

[65] H.G. Horn, Das Mainzer Mithrasgefäß, *Mainzer Archäologische Zeitschrift* 1 (1994) 21–66; R. Merkelbach, Das Mainzer Mithrasgefäß, *ZPE* 108 (1995) 1–6; R.L. Beck, Ritual, Myth, Doctrine, and Initiation in the Mysteries of Mithras: New Evidence from a Cult Vessel, *JRS* 90 (2000) 145–180 = Beck 2004, 55–92.

[66] Lion-Bull: A. Bausani, Note sulla preistoria astronomica del mito di Mitra, in Bianchi 1979, 503–13; A.D.H. Bivar, *The Personalities of Mithra in Archaeology and Literature* (New York 1999) 31–44; Iamblichus: Merkelbach 1984, 253–58; J.R. Russell, On the Armeno-Iranian Roots of Mithraism, in J.R. Hinnells (ed.), *Studies in Mithraism* (Rome 1994) 183–93 at 188–90.

answered concerns the magical practitioners' aims in taking over or appropriating motifs from the mysteries, and specifically, in this case, Mithraism. The argument I wish to develop here is that they saw such motifs as a means of offering their clients the advantages of initiation, but at lower economic, social and psychological expense.

The mysteries in general offered the assurance that personal salvation is possible if the initiate succeeds in liberating himself from his earthly bonds. But there were two types of costs here, real and psychological. Initiation might sometimes, perhaps often, be very expensive. For example, before Osiris permits him to undertake his third initiation, Lucius was already buying what he needed, <*omnibus*> *ex studio pietatis magis quam mensura rerum mearum collatis* (Apuleius, *Met.* 11.30).[67] Indeed, such were the Isiac priests' demands that he even began to doubt their honesty (ibid. 29). We may allow that initiation was not necessarily expensive: evidence from various parts of the Empire indicates that even slaves might have access to it (though there can of course be no neat correlation between slavery and poverty: some slaves were relatively comfortably off). If we think of psychological costs, the individual's financial situation would naturally have a bearing on relationships within such religious associations. The internal role and status of someone who could afford to stage a *taurobolium* in the cult of the Mater Magna were inevitably different from those of one who could only afford a ram (the *criobolium*), or indeed no such animal. In other words, the social distribution of the mysteries meant that not all initiates were equally advantaged. As membership increased, so the social differences of the outside world were reproduced in the cult associations, and with them their tensions. We should also consider here the ethical demands arising from initiation.[68] Personal affiliation to a mystery cult would undoubtedly imply renunciations which not all inhabitants of the Empire were prepared to endure, even though they might have been delighted with the idea of personal salvation. I believe it was these problems that magical practitioners took advantage of.[69]

---

[67] "I procured the equipment for my initiation without stint, meeting the expenses more in accordance with religious zeal than with the measure of my assets" (tr. J.A. Hanson).

[68] This is not the place to get into a debate about the ethical rules and demands established by Mithraism for its initiates; see Alvar 2001, 154–62 = 2008, 192–203.

[69] Some analogous considerations in Bernand 1991, 394–97.

As is well known, we often find references to the mysteries in the magical papyri: a magical praxis might be called a μυστήριον, practitioners μύσται or μυσταγωγός.[70] Such language suggests how eager the authors of the *PGrMag* were to claim a parallel between their own specialised knowledge-practices and the restricted, salvific knowledge offered by the mysteries, on the one hand, and between their own spiritual quest and that of regular initiates, on the other. From the point of view of the mysteries, however, such language also implied a threat. Initiates into the regular mysteries would be confused by such claims on the part of magical practitioners. The offer by the competition of a more accessible route to the same destination would worry the priests. The mysteries were in fact surely to be found on the side of ideological repression, denouncing magical practices as superstitious and thus as activities contrary to the established order; in other words, the mystery-cults were happy to join in presenting magicians as enemies of the system.

Obviously we have no hard information about such conflicts, though I suspect they were fairly common in daily practice. But if it had been possible to construct a map of the provenances of all the ever-extant magico-Mithraic amuletic gems, we might have been able to chart something of the extent to which such a magical short-cut seemed attractive to individuals for whom genuine Mithraism might have been an option. In fact of course such a map is purely speculative: not only is the actual provenance of these items in almost every case unknown, but we have no means even of estimating the order of magnitude involved. Were there once a handful, dozens, hundreds, or thousands of such magico-Mithraic amulets? We have no idea. Nevertheless, the very existence of such items suggests that contact between the mysteries and magic may have been more extensive than ordinarily supposed.

In my view, this is where the true value of the 'Liturgy' is to be found.[71] It is a commonplace in the study of magic that one means by which practitioners seek to bolster their authority vis-à-vis the (implied

[70] Cf. Betz 1991; excluding the 'Liturgy', which I have already discussed in this context,we may cite *PGrMag* I 127; 131; IV 172; 2254; 2477; 2592; V 110; XII 94; 331; 322; 335; XIII 128; 685; XIXa 52; XX 8; etc.

[71] Mastrocinque does not accept that the 'Liturgy' helps us understand Mithraism's relationship with magic. The reason is that he wants regular Mithraism to be magical and therefore does not consider the possibility that it might be usurped by magic, which in my opinion is how we should understand the 'Liturgy'.

or explicit) addressee is to appropriate high-prestige materials from elsewhere and divert them to their own purposes.[72] The 'hymns' in the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri are a good example, as are the innumerable fragments or excerpts from the Bible, the Koran, the Vedas, the Pali Canon or the Tripiṭaka we encounter in the appropriate magical praxeis.[73] Since, as I have argued, we have no reason to suppose that ordinary Mithraic cult possessed either 'immortalising' or standard liturgies, we do not need to suppose the underlying *Urtext* derived from such a context. Hans Lewy long ago noted the similarities between details of the imagined psychic ascent in the 'Liturgy' and that of Chaldaean Oracles (taken as a cypher for early theurgy): the separation of the soul from the body and the inhalation of sunbeams; the final encounter with the supreme god, which produces 'immortalisation' (i.e. a change of spiritual state); the metonymic death and rebirth of the practitioner conceived as initiate.[74] Wanting to create an original and powerful *autoptos* (direct divinatory encounter with a god), the author of the 'Liturgy' based himself on a theurgic or Chaldaean *Urtext* that described the ascent of the soul in these terms.[75] It is not impossible that this *Urtext* itself drew upon a variety of sources, including the type of speculative Mithraic text that Celsus was acquainted with, which described a spiritual journey up to the fixed heaven (Turcan has suggested that Celsus here is relying on a neo-pythagorean interpretation of Mithraic ideas).[76] The ultimate aim was to provide clients not merely with what institutionalised initiation (not necessarily Mithraism) could offer, namely a vision of god, but with a means of interrogating him for divinatory purposes. The complex process of initiation was reduced to a magical ritual that was

[72] This habit is naturally most pronounced where the practitioners were themselves priests, most obviously, as I have pointed out earlier, in the Egyptian and Babylonian traditions.

[73] Mauss 1972, 55 (orig. ed. 1902/3). Mauss here actually cites Dieterich's 'Liturgy' as an example.

[74] Lewy 1978, 197 n. 85; 207f.; 415. This is the more significant in that Lewy himself was inclined to accept Celsus' account of the κλίμαξ ἑπτάπυλος at face-value.

[75] Cf. S. Iles Johnston, Rising to the Occasion: Theurgic Ascent in its Cultural Milieu, in *EM* 165–94; also her earlier discussion: Riders in the Sky: Cavalier Gods and Theurgic Salvation in the Second Century AD, *CPh* 87 (1992) 303–21. See also R. Edmonds, Did the Mithraists Inhale? A Technique for Theurgic Ascent in the Mithras Liturgy, the Chaldaean Oracles, and Some Mithraic Frescoes, *Ancient World* 32 (2000) 10–24.

[76] Turcan 1975, 58–61.

not only much cheaper from an economic point of view but also more convenient in terms of time and degree of personal commitment.[77]

Magic may nourish the soul just like philosophy, but it is also a practice through which benefits were obtained that could not be satisfied by means of other approaches to the supernatural.[78] The mysteries played an important role in this game of innovation, but the personal, economic and psychological implications of their offer were considerable. For those who were attracted by the mysteries, learning about man's position in the world called for preparation with a mentor, a process that gradually revealed part of the mystery. All this took time and money, which some did not have. Consequently, those in a hurry, those who could not or would not afford the costs of initiation, might be prompted to look for a solution to their concerns in other religious or philosophical modes. This is where the magicians came in. What they had to offer might be very close to other routes to power and knowledge, but made fewer personal demands. Magic thus became a powerful instrument of social control, operating outside official institutions.[79] Hence its subversive potential, and its rejection by the intellectual establishment. The magicians, I suggest, usurped the contents of the mysteries, offering formulae and amulets to answer the demands the mysteries met through complex ritual processes. The examples discussed here, the 'Liturgy' and the gems, imply an interpretation along these lines.

The number of known amuletic gems related to the cult of Mithras will no doubt continue to grow. We must however be careful to avoid mis-attributing them. Correct attribution is essential if we are to understand their significance, and the praxis of which they were part.

---

[77] So rightly Betz 1991.

[78] *Corp. Herm.* frg. 23 ap. Stob. *Ecl.* 1.49.44.68 = 4, p. 22 Nock-Festugière; cf. J. Alvar, Isis y Osiris *daímones* (Plut., *De Iside*, 360 D), in J. Alvar, C. Blánquez and C.G. Wagner (eds.), *I Encuentro-coloquio de ARYS: Héroes, semidioses y daimones. Jarandilla de la Vera 17–20 dic. 1989* (Madrid 1992) 245–263 at 259.

[79] Unfortunately, this perspective is not usually addressed in the literature, not even in the otherwise admirable Faraone and Obbink 1991 or in the articles so far published in the journal *MHNH* (1, 2001–). It is true that Mauss emphasised the extent to which magic is inserted into the social structure, viewing it as a form of private, secret and individualised spirituality independent of organised worship (Mauss 1972). Smith has emphasised the way magic comes to supplement the temple—the rise of the religious entrepreneur (J.Z. Smith, The Temple and the Magician, in idem, *Map is not Territory* [Leyden 1978] 172–89). However, I am not aware of any attempt to understand magic as a mechanism of social control in the manner that I claim here.

I believe the hypothesis presented here helps towards a better understanding of the links in the Roman Empire between different means of access to the supernatural. Once the various mystery-cults became Romanised and respectable, they joined civic religion in defending public order. Magic and 'superstition' however did not, could not, submit to the control of the authorities in the same way. Legitimate religious institutions condemned and persecuted such religious practices, fondly dreaming of a state in which all religious activity was institutionally regulated. But in truth 'superstitious' attitudes abounded even in institutionalised or legitimate religious praxis, without causing guilt or remorse among worshippers, who were completely oblivious to the subversive nature of their beliefs and practices.[80] Neither demonic powers nor magic tilted a religion centred upon justifying good fortune towards apocalypticism, but rather the contradictions inherent in the objective religious situation. Instead of hunting down the magician, the bewitcher of souls, the real or imaginary religious entrepreneur, it would have been better to find more effective means of accommodating the instrumentalism of popular religion to the dominant theodicy of good fortune—or vice versa.

The relation of the mysteries—and in particular, Mithraism—with magic may thus have been more complex than is generally allowed. Rather than transform Mithraism into magic, as Mastrocinque does, we should rather try to view both in the wider context of the religious changes of the Empire.

Bibliography

Alvar, J. 2001. *Los Misterios. Religiones "orientales" en el Imperio Romano* (Barcelona). Published in revised form as *Romanising Oriental Gods: Myth, Salvation and Ethics in the Cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras*. RGRW 165 (Leyden 2008).

Beck, R.L. 1984. Mithraism since Franz Cumont, *ANRW* II, 17.4, 2002–115.

——. 2004. *Beck on Mithraism: Collected Work with new Essays* (Aldershot and Burlington).

Bernand, A. 1991. *Sorciers grecs* (Paris).

Betz, H.-D. 1991. Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri, in Faraone and Obbink 1991, 244–59.

——. 1986. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago). Slight revisions in 1992[2].

[80] Hence the constant appearance in the Principate of alternative religious forms not subject to institutional regulation.

——. 2003. *The "Mithras Liturgy". Text, Translation and Commentary*. Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 18 (Tübingen).
Bianchi, U. (ed.) 1979. *Mysteria Mithrae: Atti del Seminario Internazionale su 'La specificità storico-religiosa dei Misteri di Mithra, con particolare riferimento alle fonti documentarie di Roma e Ostia', Roma e Ostia 28–31 Marzo 1978*. EPROER 80 (Leyden).
Bongard-Levine, G., Bonnet, C., Litvinenko, Y. and Marcone, A. (eds.) 2007. Mongolus Syrio salutem dat*: La correspondance entre Mikhail Rostovtzeff et Franz Cumont*. Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres 36 (Paris).
Bonner, C. 1950. *Studies in Magical Amulets, chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor).
Boyce, M. and Grenet, F. 1991. *A History of Zoroastrianism, 3: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule*. Handbuch der Orientalistik 8.1.2.2.3 (Leyden).
Brashear, W.M. 1992. *A Mithraic Catechism from Egypt*. Tyche Suppl. 1 (Vienna).
——. 1995. The Greek Magical Papyri, *ANRW* II, 18.5, 3380–684.
Carastro, M. 2006. *La cité des images: penser la magie en Grèce ancienne* (Grenoble).
Clauss, M. 2000. *The Roman Cult of Mithras: The God and his Mysteries* (tr. and ed. R.L. Gordon) (Edinburgh). First published as *Mithras: Kult und Mysterien* (Munich 1990).
Condominas, G. (ed.) 1966. *Le monde du sorcier*. Sources orientales 7 (Paris).
Cumont, F. 1896–99. *Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra*. 2 vols: 1: *Introduction*; 2: *Textes et monuments* (Brussels).
——. 1975. The Dura Mithraeum (tr. and ed. E.D. Francis), in J.R. Hinnells (ed.), *Mithraic Studies: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies*. 2 vols. (Manchester) 1: 151–214.
Delatte, A. and Derchain, P. 1984. *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris).
Dembski, G. 1969. *Römerzeitliche Gemmen und Kameen aus Karnuntum* (Diss. Vienna).
Dieleman, J. 2005. *Priests, Tongues and Rites. The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)*. RGRW 153 (Leyden).
Dieterich, A. 1903. *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (Leipzig). Re-ed. by R. Wünsch (1912) and O. Weinreich (1923). This latter is now the standard edition, repr. by the Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1966.
Étienne, M. 2000. *Heka: Magie et envoûtement dans l'Égypte ancienne* (Paris).
Faraone, C.A. and Obbink, D. (eds.) 1991. *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York and Oxford).
Fauth, W. 1995. *Helios Megistos: Zur synkretistischen Theologie der Spätantike*. RGRW 125 (Leyden).
Gnoli, Gh. 1979. Sol Persice Mithra, in Bianchi 1979, 725–40.
Gordon, R.L. 2004. Small and miniature reproductions of the Mithraic icon: reliefs, pottery, ornaments and gems, in M. Martens and G. de Boe (eds.) *Roman Mithraism: the evidence of the small finds* (Archeologie en Vlaanderen, Monogr. 4) (Brussels) 259–83.
Graf, F. 1996. *Gottesnähe und Schadenzauber: Die Magie in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Munich).
Harrauer, C. 1987. *Meliouchos: Studien zur Entwicklung religiöser Vorstellungen in griechischen synkretistischen Zaubertexten*. Wiener Studien Beiheft 11 (Vienna).
Jobst, W. (ed.) 1992. *Carnuntum: Das Erbe Roms an der Donau (Aussstellungskatalog, Museum Carnuntinum)* (Carnuntum/Bad Deutsch-Altenburg).
Kákosy, L. 1985. La magia nell' antico Egitto, in A. Roccati (ed.), *La magia in Egitto ai tempi dei faraoni: Mostra Milano 1985* (Modena) 7–101.
Klauck, H.-J. 1982. *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum ersten Korintherbrief* (Münster).
Koenig, Y. 1994. *Magie et magiciens dans l'Égypte ancienne* (Paris).
Lewy, H. 1978. *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*[2] (Paris).

E. Lissi Caronna. 1986. *Il mitreo dei Castra Peregrinorum*. EPROER 104 (Leyden).
Mastrocinque, A. 1998. *Studi sul Mitraismo. (Il mitraismo e la magia)* (Rome).
——. (ed.) 2004. *Sylloge gemmarum gnosticarum, 1*. Bolletino d'Arte, Monografia 8.2.1 (Rome).
Mauss, M. 1972. *A General Theory of Magic*. Tr. R. Brain (London). Orig. ed. 1902/3.
Meier, T. 2001. Mithras im Mittelalter? Ein außerordentlicher Fund des 2./3. und 13. Jahrhunderts vom Petersberg, in *Das archäologische Jahr in Bayern 2001* (Stuttgart 2002) 146–8.
Merkelbach, R. 1984. *Mithras* (Königstein/Ts.).
——. 1992. *Abrasax, 3: Zwei griechisch-ägyptische Weihezeremonien (Die Leidener Weltschöpfung; Die Pschai-Aion Liturgie)*. Papyrologica Coloniensia 17.3 (Opladen 1992).
Meyer, M. (tr., comm.) 1976. *The "Mithras Liturgy"* (Missoula).
——. (ed.) 1987. *The Ancient Mysteries. A Sourcebook* (New York).
Michel, S. 2003. *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*. 2 vols. (London).
——. 2004. *Die magischen Gemmen: Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln auf geschnittenen Steinen der Antike und Neuzeit*. Studien aus dem Warburg-Haus 7 (Berlin 2004).
Ritner, R.K. 1993. *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*. Studies in Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago).
Sauneron, S. 1966. Le monde du magicien égyptien, in Condominas 1966, 27–65.
Schön, D. 1988. *Orientalische Kulte im römischen Österreich* (Vienna).
Turcan, R. 1975. *Mithras Platonicus. Recherches sur l'hellénisation philosophique de Mithra*. EPROER 47 (Leyden).
Vermaseren, M.J. 1956–60. *Corpus inscriptionum et monumentorum religionis Mithriacae*. 2 vols. (The Hague).
——. 1982. La sotériologie dans les Papyri Graecae Magicae, in U. Bianchi and M.J. Vermaseren (eds.), *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell' impero romano*. EPROER 93 (Leyden) 17–30.
Vermaseren, M.J. and Van Essen, C.C. 1965. *The Excavations in the Church of Santa Prisca in Rome* (Leyden).

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A VISIGOTHIC CHARM FROM ASTURIAS AND THE CLASSICAL TRADITION OF PHYLACTERIES AGAINST HAIL

Francisco Javier Fernández Nieto

This article is an attempt to contextualise a charm from the western part of the Roman Empire (Hispania), written on slate in the early medieval period (VIII^{p}), but which clearly continues an older tradition of preventive magic.[1] Most known examples of the written tradition, even those found in Sicilia and Narbonensis, are in Greek; the sole close relatives in Latin come from Byzacena and Dalmatia.[2] The inscription was found near Carrio (Asturias), on the right bank of the River Navia. Gómez Moreno produced a first edition in 1954.[3] After a long interval, Canellas and Gil improved on some of his readings and interpretations;[4] in 1989 Isabel Velázquez included it in her corpus of the Visigothic slates.[5] A few years ago, Díaz y Díaz re-examined the inscription; the text presented here is based mainly on that of Velázquez, although I have included one or two of Díaz's suggestions.[6]

---

[1] This article is a revised and extended version of my earlier paper in Spanish, Fernández Nieto 1997. I welcome the opportunity provided by the publication of the Acta of the conference in Zaragoza, which I was unfortunately unable to attend in person, to make my work on these texts more widely known.

[2] Text 8 below, a related text against attack by locusts, from Rough Cilicia, is also in Latin.

[3] M. Gómez Moreno, Documentación goda en pizarra, *BRAE* 34 (1954) 48–54 = Gómez Moreno 1966, 95–101. He had called attention to the inscription some years earlier: Las lenguas hispánicas, *BSAA* 8 (1941/42) 28 = idem, *Misceláneas. Historia-Arte-Arqueología (dispersa, emendata, addita, inedita). Primera serie: La Antigüedad* (Madrid 1949) 213ff.

[4] A. Canellas López, *Diplomática hispano-visigoda* (Zaragoza 1979) 276 no. 231; Gil Fernández 1970; idem, 1981, 161–66, 176.

[5] Velázquez 1989, 312–14 no. 104; eadem, *Documentos de época visigoda escritos en pizarra (siglos VI–VIII), I. Presentación, edición de los textos*. Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi. Series Hispanica, I (Turnhout 2000) 113–15 no. 104; eadem 2004, 368–84 no. 104. I have adopted Velázquez' sigla '…' to denote letters added afterwards in the same hand.

[6] M.C. Díaz y Díaz, *Asturias en el siglo VIII. La cultura literaria* (Oviedo 2001) 142ff.

(*Signum*). *Pe'r' a a q(u)a die ri[---]o i s[..]m recepi nonia q(uae) necesaria sum sup[--] auitanciu et lauoranciu famulus D(e)i Ceci++[--], aguro uos o(m)nes patriarcas, Micael, Grabriel, Cecitiel, Oriel, Ra[fa]el, Ananiel, Marmoniel, qui illa[s] nubus conti{ti}netis in manu ues[t]ras, esto; liuera de uila nomine S[--] cau ubi auita famulus D(e)i Auriolus p[..]su cineterius cum fratribus uel vic[i-] nibus suis [et?] o(m)n(e)s posesiones eius; [e]diciantur de uila e de 'ilas' auitaciones p(er) montes uada et reuertam ubi neq(ue) galus canta neq(ue) galina cacena,ubi neq(ue) arator e(st) neque seminator semina, ub'i'ui neq(ue) nulla nomina reson'a'. Adiuro te Satas p(er) issu d(o)m(i)nu(m) n(ost)r(um) I(es)um Xr(ist)u(m) qui te licuit in Cirbes ciuitate, ubi non noceas neq(ue) arbori neq(ue) mensoribus neq(ue) u[i]{ne}neas neq(ue) frautiferis neq(ue) arboribus neq(ue) coliuem obeciari tiui, ibi est m(e)us d(omi)nissim(us) scetru ma[nu?] cum arte furinea eos + [..]++[--]c++ d(o)m(inu)s? + [...]sc? ad ora die p[rimo?] amic[--] cella p i n [..] a u [..] 'so' d(omi)ne [..]rus[--]ni bicini ++ auci+oracio s(an)c(t)i Critofori sic c[..] te [--] s(an)c(tu)[s Xrito]for(us) a gardinen ea ora [--] cum ad sui uicina, orabi s(an)c(tu)s X(rito)foru a D(omi)nu(m) dices: "D(omi)ne D(eu)s m(eu)s da mici fiducia loq(ue)di". D(ixit) D(omi)n(u)s: "[se]cundum co postulasti, ita [erit] et non te cotristabo". D(eu)s siue locus, siue regio, siue ciui[tas], uui de reliq(uie) [g]ratiam [--] u m [--] s a [--] n [--]tas D(omi)ne om(ne)s aui(tan)tes in regio lauore culture ad[f]luenter uenit ad locum ++ [--] [--] fixi genues amp{u}utatus est caputium s[uum?] et consuma<uit> martirium i(n) die d[o]mi(ni)co ora VII{I} et reue[sus]es(t) grando in pluuia in alia parte mon<te> cimeteri [--]as ista (u)sque in od{e}ierno die. i(n) nomine Patris [et] Fili et Sp(iritu)s, i(n) nomine Patris et Fili, Sp(iritu)s S(an)c(tu)s, amen,*

amen, p(er) semp(er) amen, al(le)l(ui)a (Duo signa)
(*Signum*)

Translation:

(pentagram). Therefore from the [--] day I received the requisite *nonias* of the inhabitants and labourers, I, the servant of God Cecit[--], entreat you, all the patriarchs, Michael, Gabriel, Cecitiel, Uriel, Raphael, Ananiel, Marmoniel, who hold the clouds in your hands; may the town named [--]cau be free, the dwelling place of the servant of God Auriolus, [and the?] cemetery, together with his brothers and neighbours, [--] and all his possessions; let it be driven out from the town and the houses; let it wander the mountains, where neither the cock crows nor the hen clucks, where neither the ploughman tarries nor the sower sows, where no name resounds. I beseech you Satan, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, who banished you to the city of Cirbes, that you harm neither the trees nor the reapers nor the vineyards nor the fruit trees nor the (other) trees, nor anything that comes in your way: [--] there is the Lord with his sceptre [in his hand] by its secret power (?) […] at the [--] hour of the day in the granary [--] of the neighbouring [--] Lord, [to say] the prayer of St Christopher, Saint Christopher [drive away] the hail from this very moment [--] his people. Saint Christopher prayed, saying: "O Lord, my God, give me confidence to speak". The Lord said: "As you have asked, so [shall it be], and I will not harm you". God, in whatever place, or region or city (that there be any) of my relics [give them] the grace [of salvation], Lord, for all the inhabitants of the region, for the abundance of their harvests. (Christopher) came to the place, bent his knees and his head was cut off and his martyrdom occurred on Sunday at the seventh hour. And the hail turned into rain on the other part of the cemetery mount [and so it has remained] until today. In the name of the Father and of the Son and the Spirit, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen, amen, for ever amen, alleluia. (Two pentagrams). (Pentagram).

This is clearly a charm devised to protect agricultural land against hail, one of the commonest severe weather phenomena in the Mediterranean area, and perhaps the one most dreaded by those dependent for their livelihoods on agrarian production. That it is directed against hail is clear from ll. 23f.: *reuersus est grando in pluuia in alia parte monte cimeteri*, "and the hail turned into rain on the other part of the cemetery mount", cf. l. 16, *a gardinen* = *a grandinem*. The text is thus an example of a genre of charms known as φυλακτήρια, κωλυτήρια or κωλύματα, designed to protect their owner from a potential threat.[7]

[7] It is of course quite wrong to call this slate a *defixio* or a *ueneficium*, as do some of the scholars mentioned previously.

There are a great many of this type of amulet, comprising anepigraphic talismans as well as written spells. These amulets were sometimes worn on the person; but they might also be deposited in some specific place. Their purpose was to counteract illnesses, spells, accidents and potential hazards (falls, robbery, poisons, shipwreck, fires, animal bites, and so on), as well as to ward off plagues and natural disasters.

Our piece is one of the latter type of phylacteries, designed to prevent damage caused to agricultural crops by what we would call natural forces. The text is of a typical all-purpose type covering various eventualities, so that the talisman could be used to ward off the greatest possible number of threats (storm-force winds, torrential rain, hail, snow, frost) as well as noxious pests (e.g. blight, ergot, locusts). Some of these phylacteries also include a catch-all phrase, καὶ ὅσα βλάπτει χωρίαν, "and whatever inflicts harm on the cropland";[8] others, like the Carrio slate, restrict their entreaties to hail. Starting from these texts, and information supplied by classical authors on rituals for warding off pests and weather threats, I want to show how magical resources against hail were believed to work; this in turn will enable us to set the Visigothic document in its appropriate mental and religious context. In doing so I shall try not to forget the words of Delehaye:

> C'est d'ailleurs une vérité élémentaire que le sens exact d'une parole, l'importance relative d'un détail, l'appréciation d'une série de faits peuvent nous échapper si nous faisons abstraction de l'ensemble et si, nous contentant de ce qu'on nous dit, nous négligeons de savoir ce qu'on a voulu dire. Une même phrase peut avoir plusieurs sens suivant l'intention de celui qui l'énonce.[9]

1. *Ritual Performance*

The oldest method of warding off hail storms consisted of actions: uttering a charm, performing a specific ritual, or both. The most interesting and informative literary text is Seneca, *Quaest. nat.* 4b.6.1–7.2 Gehrke, which I translate:

> It is said that there are men whose special skill is to watch the clouds and predict when it is going to hail. They managed to learn how to do this thanks to experience, by noting the colour that the clouds usually take

[8] E.g. *IG* XIV 2481, a text I examine in greater detail below.
[9] Delehaye 1921, 4f.

> on before a hailstorm. 2. It is hard to believe that in Cleonae (= Kleonai) there were some public servants, the *chalazophylacae*, whose duty was to calculate when it was going to hail. When they had given the sign that hail had arrived, do you think that the men ran out to get their woollen or leather capes? Not a bit of it. Everyone offered a sacrifice: some a lamb, others a chicken. Immediately the clouds would move somewhere else once they had tasted a little blood. 3. Did you think that was funny? This will make you laugh even more. Anybody who did not have a lamb or a chicken would wound himself slightly; and just so you don't think that the clouds were greedy, he would prick a finger with a sharp point and offer his blood: the hailstorm would move away from his land, the same as for those who had made more valuable sacrifices. 7.1. There are those who seek an explanation for this. Some, as you would expect from the wisest, say that it is impossible for anyone to negotiate with hail and ward off storms with gifts, even though the offerings may have influence, even on the gods. Others say that they suspect that the blood itself contains a certain energy that can divert and drive back a cloud. 2. But how can such a small quantity of blood contain energy enough to soar up and be noticed by the clouds? The easy answer would be to say that it is untrue and a legend. And yet the inhabitants of Kleonai would bring charges against those who had been given the task of predicting storms, in the belief that it was through their lack of engagement that vineyards were destroyed or cornfields ravaged.

Seneca's account is summarised with a slight twist by Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.31.1–3:

> Some say that pests, as well as hail, storms and similar phenomena, derive not only from the disorder of matter, but also from a certain restlessness among evil spirits and angels. 2. For example, they say that in Kleonai the magicians, watching the development of clouds that are about to unleash hail, divert the imminence of this rage through spells and sacrifices. 3. And it does not matter if they are caught with no animal at hand, as they can comply with the sacrifice by making their own fingers bleed.

Finally, Plutarch, *Quaest. conviv.* 7.2, 700ef, tells us that these χαλαζοφύλακες or 'hail-watchers' at Kleonai, which is in the Peloponnese, would seek to prevent hail destroying the crops by using the blood of a mole, or the blood from the sanitary towels used by the women of the city while they were menstruating. The magical power of menstrual blood to ward off bad weather and crop damage by pests is also noted in Roman sources. Pliny, *HN* 28.77 for example notes that hail and storms are driven away if a menstruating woman shows herself naked to the lightning, and that the same device will avert

storms at sea.[10] Palladius, *Op. agric.* 1.35.1, records that brandishing bloodstained, i.e. sacrificial, axes threateningly at the clouds will ward off hail.

In the territory of Argolis, which Kleonai belonged to, was also the city of Methana, on the peninsula of the same name. Here the inhabitants still held apotropaic ceremonies to protect them from the south-east wind[11]—which dried out the shoots on the vines—as well as from hail. These ceremonies are described by Pausanias:

> While the wind is still blowing, two people cleave a cock with spotless white wings into two; they run in opposite directions round the vines, each one carrying half the cock; when they return to the starting out point, they bury the cock there. This is the procedure that they have thought up to combat the wind…I have also just now seen some men warding off the hail using sacrifices and spells.
>
> 2.34.2f.

Presumably the victims here would have been ordinary farmyard cockerels, as at Kleonai. It is possible that other sources of blood might do as well, but, for now, let us just stick to the information regarding the spilling/presentation of blood, and the symbolic circuit made round the field, an old ritual to mark off the areas to be protected, of which we shall be looking at various examples.[12]

---

[10] In many peoples and cultures, menstruation was considered a remarkable mystery as well as a reliable magic resource. In certain societies, such blood was used for lustrations and was believed to possess healing and other magical powers. On menstrual blood in antiquity, see Solinus, *Mir.* 1.54–8 with my commentary: Solino. *Colección de hechos memorables o El erudito* (Madrid 2001) *ad loc.* It was also used against atmospheric phenomena at sea and, according to sailors, was a safeguard against St Elmo's fire. Little of value in this context can be gleaned from O. Weinreich, Zum Zauber des Menstrualblutes, *ARW* 26 (1928) 150f. = *Ausgewählte Schriften* (Amsterdam 1969–73) 2: 249f.; M.J. Schierling, Contaminant or Prophylactic? A Survey of Ancient Greek Opinion on Menstruation, *ClassBull* 57 (1981) 77–79; or L. Dean-Jones, Menstrual Bleeding according to the Hippocratics and Aristotle, *TAPhA* 119 (1989) 177–92. It was widely believed that if a woman, while menstruating, walked three times round a field (or a tree) barefoot and bareheaded, with her dress rolled up and loose, she would ward off plagues of caterpillars, worms and beetles; some sources specify that she had to walk round three times, and that the remedy was more effective if it was her first period: Pliny, *HN* 17.266; 28.78; Aelian, *NA* 6.36; Columella, *RR* 10.357–68; 11.3.64 (citing 'Democritus'); Palladius, *Op. agric.* 1.35.3; *Geoponica* 12.8.5f.

[11] In Greece there were spells specifically against winds, and families of practitioners who specialised in them; see n. 57 below.

[12] Making a circuit round the area to be protected marked out a barrier that was not to be crossed; cf. P.B. Fenton, Le symbolisme du rite de la circumambulation dans le judaïsme et dans l'Islam, in F. Baespflug and F. Dunand (eds.), *Le comparatisme en histoire des religions* (Paris 1997) 197–220; F.J. Fernández Nieto, Frontera como

A number of other beliefs about how to prevent storms are mentioned by Palladius and the Geoponica, and are confirmed, directly or indirectly, by other sources. There was a belief that hail could be prevented by dragging a crocodile-skin (or hyena-, or seal-skin) round the property and hanging it on the door of the house or the yard when the weather looked threatening. It was also believed that a sealskin thrown over a single vine in the middle of the vineyard would be effective in protecting the whole field.[13] A second method of warding off threatening clouds consisted of going through the vineyard carrying a live pond- or marsh-turtle belly-up in the right hand and, on returning to the point of departure, placing it on the ground in the same position, and surrounding it with a little earth embankment so that it could not roll over and would remain on its back (and so die).[14] Another recommendation was to present a mirror to the sky, which was supposed to throw back the image of the cloud.[15] The *Geoponica* also reports how,

---

barrera. El valor religioso y mágico del límite en la cultura griega, in P. López Barja and S. Reboreda Morillo (eds.), *Fronteras e identidad en el mundo griego antiguo* (Santiago de Compostela 2001) 227–40. The rite of making a circuit survived in some places: when a hailstorm was imminent, the Southern Slavs would take the dining table and the tripod outside (an allegory of the harvest and the hearth), walk round them and place on the table a spoon, bread and salt, while one of the women recited a spell; cf. S. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer* (Kristiania 1915) 322.

[13] Palladius, *Op. agric.* 1.34.14f.; *Geoponica* 1.14 (cf. E. Fehrle, *Studien zu den griechischen Geoponikern*. Stoicheia 3 [Leipzig and Berlin 1920] 7–26). On the use of sealskin in another type of anti-hail phylactery, as well as leather—almost certainly from a sacrificial animal—see Philostratus, *Heroicus* 21.8 de Lannoy = 2 p. 154 Kayser (cited p. 560 n. 22 below). Seal- and hyena-skins were also believed to keep lightning away from shipping, and sailors would place them on the mastheads (Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 4.2 [664cd]; 5.9 [684c]; cf. Pliny, *HN* 2.146). In the case of the seal, the ancients attributed this property not just to the idea of a hidden force, in other words, the inherent ability to reject or oppose (δύναμις ἀντιπαθής) that the skin possessed, but also to the belief that this animal was possessed in a high degree of the evil eye, cf. Detienne & Vernant 1974, 244–52. The concept of hidden force (which we might call internal energy) was one of the reasons advanced by Seneca, in the text already cited, to explain why blood might be able to ward off a cloud. On the ancient theory of sympathy and antipathy, see still T. Weidlich, *Die Sympathie in der antiken Literatur* (Stuttgart 1894); J. Röhr, Der okkulte Kraftbegriff im Altertum, *Philologus Supplementband* 17.1 (1923–24) 1–133.

[14] Palladius, *Op. agric.* 1.34.14; *Geoponica* 1.14.8.

[15] Palladius, *Op. agric.* 1.34.15; *Geoponica* 1.14.4. According to Palladius, the cloud would go away because it was annoyed at its reflection; or because it thought it was a double, and felt the field was being affected by the new image; the second explanation is nearer the mark, as mirrors worked in magic as fascinating objects that laid a trap for anyone who looked at it, because they would see what they desired in it: cf. M. Meslin, Significations rituelles et symboliques du miroir, in G. Piccaluga (ed.),

when such danger loomed, it could be diverted by placing keys from different houses in the field to be protected against hail.[16] We shall be coming back to these examples later when we examine the ritual of circumambulation, as practised at Methana.

2. *The Attractions of Permanence*

However, such ritual solutions had one big disadvantage, which was that the ceremony could not always be performed in the middle of the fields before the storm broke. For this reason, it was advisable to think up an alternative that could remain for long periods or permanently on the property itself. After being consecrated,[17] such an amulet would keep constant watch on the property and so its owner and his house-

---

Perennitas. Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich (Rome 1980) 332–38. Alternatively, this may be an example of the force attributed to metal objects (see following note). In *PGrMag* IV 2298, the moon is threatened with a mirror, leaving it astonished to find itself looking at itself, cf. Abt 1908, 99 [25]. However B. Kuster ap. *PGrMag app. crit.* ad loc. and M. Smith ap. *GMPT* p. 79 n. 288 each has a quite different interpretation.

[16] *Geoponica* 1.14.6. Anti-hail properties were not attributed to χαλαζία or χαλαζίτης ('hail stone'), which was so called because of its similarity to lumps of ice (*Orphic Lapidary* 758–61; *Kerygmata* 25; Pliny, *HN* 37.189; Solinus, *Mir.* 37.17; Isidore, *Orig.* 16.13.4). Use of a metallic object is different, as there is firm evidence that bronze and its sound were believed to have prophylactic virtues; this is why bronze bells were used in religious ceremonies not only as a means of purification but as amulets to protect people, flocks and harvests from the anger of the gods and their 'messengers', thought to be present in certain natural events, cf. I. Mundle, s.v. Erz, *RfAC* 6 (1966) 475–91. As everyone knows, during eclipses bells were rung, trumpets blown, and bronze cooking vessels beaten (e.g. Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.441–43; Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.28.2; Martial 12.57.16f.); bells placed on the hands of statues of Priapus were believed to protect orchards and gardens. Continuing with this practice, the Christian Church allowed bells to be blessed (baptised) and tolled to put demons to flight, calm storms and combat thunder, lightning and hail, but also to scare off witches and sorcerers. The idea of warding off storms by making a din with metal objects has survived into the modern period: J.G. Frazer collected relevant material from all periods and parts of the world, *Folklore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend and Law* (London 1918) 3: 446–80 (Part IV chap. 7). The rationale behind the deposition of keys is that of protecting property from intruders, cf. A. Delatte, Études sur la magie grecque 4: Amulettes inédites des Musées d'Athènes, *Le Musée Belge* 18 (1914) 21–96 at 83f. on the 'womb-key'.

[17] An item was said to be τελούμενος or *consecratus* when it had been invested with power. This was achieved either through the intervention of a deity or by ritual means: S. Eitrem, Die magischen Steine und ihre Weihe, *Symbolae Osloenses* 19 (1939) 56–87; H. Fugier, *Recherches sur l'expression du sacré dans la langue latine* (Paris 1963) 95–99. On the consecration of mirrors for magical ends, see A. Delatte, *La catoptromancie grecque et ses dérivés* (Liége 1932) 66f.

hold. This solution was no doubt hit upon when the various spells cast *in situ* during each alarm had 'worn off'.

Palladius, *Op. agric.* 1.35.1–2 describes a number of such phylacteries: covering a grindstone with a red cloth;[18] planting white bryony around the field;[19] crucifying an owl with its wings outspread;[20] greasing farm tools with bear-fat. On this last, he mentions that some people kept bear fat mixed with oil with which they would grease their pruning knives, in order to protect crops from the hazards of frost and fog, and the depredations of animals; but he emphasises that it must be done in secret, so that no other pruner would know; otherwise, it

[18] Metonymically the colour red evokes blood, and so can substitute for it: F. v. Duhn, Rot und Tot, *ARW* 9 (1906) 1–24; A. Sonny, Rotenfarbe im Totenkult, ibidem 525–529; E. Wunderlich, *Die Bedeutung der roten Farbe im Kultus der Griechen und Römern*. RGVV 20.1 (Gießen 1925). On the use of a grindstone as a setting for the spell, see the Sicilian phylacteries from Noto (no. **5**, p. 565f. below) and Palazzolo Acreide (no. **6**). On the magical use of grindstones against inclement weather: F.J. Fernández Nieto, Un *catillus* de Lugo y las virtudes mágicas de las soleras y volanderas in finibus, *MHNH* 5 (2005) 343–54.

[19] It is not easy to see the connection that might have been established between white bryony and hail, particularly in view of the fact that this remedy is also mentioned by Columella, *RR* 10.346f. as a discovery by the Etruscan, Tarcon, to ward off lightning. I feel that it might have to do with the fact that this plant was associated with snakes (one of its names was ὀφέως σταφυλή or ὀφιοστάφυλον, *Cyranides* 1 p. 27 l. 107 Kaimakis; Dioscorides, *Med.* 4.182; *ophiostaphyle*: Pliny, *HN* 13.127). Moreover, both snakes and bryony were associated with fertility, a quality of the earth that the charms aimed to safeguard. Isidore, *Orig.* 17.9. 90, for example, mentions that the juice of bryony berries was used to restore milk to dried up breasts. I discuss the relationship between snakes and hail later, in the section on the Aïn-Fourna text (no. 4 below), and again at the end of this article. At any event, the use of certain plants in spells against storms does have modern parallels: in Vogtland (i.e. Thüringerwald) it was believed that the well-known medicinal plant arnica (*Arnica montana*, one of its German names is Johannisblume), picked on St John's eve (i.e. the day before Midsummer) and laid under the roof, hung in the parlour or at the window, or placed in the corners of fields, protected the house and harvests from lightning and hail; see H. Marzell, s.v. Arnika, *HdA* 1 (1927) 597f. with refs. Superstitions regarding the picking of bryony (on Mondays, before sunrise, under the influence of Jupiter and Venus) and the magic properties ascribed to it (divine; queen of the gods; mother of plants; mistress of the earth, sky and water) are noted by A. Delatte, *Herbarius. Recherches sur le cérémonial usité chez les anciens pour la cueillite des simples et des plantes magiques*[2] (Liége 1938, repr. 1961) 33–35; 103.

[20] According to Columella, *RR* 10.348–50, who also mentions this custom, the practice of crucifying nocturnal birds to prevent the sinister calls of their fellows, and ward off pests, was due to the seer Melampus, the son of Amythaon. The owl was believed to be able to ward off ills because of its large eyes and penetrating gaze, the eye being a powerful apotropaic, cf. R. Laffineur, Le symbolisme funéraire de la chouette, *AntCl* 50 (1981) 432–44 at 437f.

was ineffective.[21] Another ploy, almost certainly of Greek origin, was to tie a strip of leather round one vine, which would then protect the others.[22] Here again we see the trust placed in the qualities of animal skins, which must originally have been those of sacrificial victims or of animals associated in myth with a god. The blood-stained hide of a sacrificial animal was charged with religious and magical power.[23]

These talismans against hail were all physically present at the place they were supposed to protect. Others however were itinerant, carried about on the person, in the belief that their power would prevent natural disaster from affecting the health or property of the owner. These were mainly stones: once duly consecrated, amethysts were believed to avert plagues of locusts, and hail (Pliny, *HN* 37.124); coral, wrapped in a piece of sealskin, was supposed to combat hail; likewise the stone that was known as *lychnis*, because it shone in the dark (*Orphic Lapidary* 271f.; *Kerygmata* 7).[24]

My real concern, however, is with the category of amulets or phylacteries that were both permanent and inscribed with a charm. We know from Pliny, *HN* 17.267; 28.29, that this was a fairly widespread custom in his day for attempting to ward off hail, and while it seems

---

[21] Fat from a bear, a beast that embodied the wild energy of the earth, continued to be used long after the end of Antiquity to repel hail, by being rubbed on objects or other animals (snakes); cf. J.G. Frazer, *Pausanias' Description of Greece* (London 1898) 3: 290. On the connection between snakes and hail, see Text 4 below (Aïn-Fourna) (p. 564).

[22] ἰμάντα.... περιάπτωμεν μιᾷ τῶν ἀμπέλων καὶ οὐκ βεβλήσονται αἱ λοιπαί: Philostratus, *Heroic.* 21.8 de Lannoy = 2 p. 154 Kayser (cited by *Geoponica* 1.14.3). P. Grosshardt, *Heroikos.* Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 33 (Basle 2006) 2: 458f. suggests that the part: whole relation here parallels Palamedes' own fate in being the only member of the army to be stoned (cf. 33.31).

[23] F. Rüsche, *Blut, Leben und Seele. Ihr Verhältnis nach Auffassung der griechischen und hellenistischen Antike, der Bibel und der alten Alexandrinischen Theologen. Eine Vorarbeit zur Religionsgeschichte des Opfers.* Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 5. Ergänzungsband (Paderborn 1930) 63–74; R. Vivoli, Il sangue e la magia, in Vattioni 1987, 71. Blood and hide rendered *daimones* harmless.

[24] Coral was said to be capable of protecting against winds, waves, rough seas, lightning, spells, violent whirlwinds, evil spirits, pirates and accidents at night: *Nautical Lapidary* 5; *Cyranides* 4.67.2–7 Kaimakis; cf. D. Wachsmuth, ΠΟΜΠΙΜΟΣ Ο ΔΑΙΜΩΝ. *Untersuchungen zu den antiken Sakralhandlungen bei Seereisen* (Berlin 1967) 442. Its efficacy was ascribed to its occult power of rejection or opposition, a property which earned one class of coral the name ἀντιπαθές. It was taken for granted that coral provided the same protection on land. Moreover, its colour is (blood-)red and its powers were reinforced by the sealskin (see n. 13 above). Red is also the colour of rubies and garnets, and the *lychnis* was probably a variety of one or the other.

he knew the words of some of the charms, he felt it advisable not to record them.[25] Luckily eight inscriptions of this type, and a close analogue, have survived from all round the ancient Mediterranean. Examination of these will help us to locate the Carrio slate in the context of the ritual and magic tradition built up over centuries by Greek and Roman rural populations.

3. *The Inscribed Charms against Hail*

I have arranged the texts roughly in chronological order, though it is difficult to be precise about the date in several cases. No less than seven are Christian.

Text 1

A Greek inscription on a limestone block found at Sidi Kaddou (Bou Arada, Tunisia; now in the museum there).[26] This charm aims to ward off not only hail, but also the effect of winds, blight and locusts.[27] Date: Second half II^{p} or III^{p}.

ΣΣΣΕΧΙ Ορεοβαζαγρα, Ορεοβ[αζαγρα],
Αβρασαχ, Μαχαρ, Σεμεσιλαμ, Στεναχτ[α],
Λορσαχθη, Κοριαυχη, Αδωναῖε, κύρ[ιοι]
θεοί, κωλύσατε, ἀποστρέψατε ἀπὸ τοῦ[δε]
χωρίου καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ γεννωμένω[ν]
ἐν ἀμπέλοις, ἐλαιῶσιν, σπορητοῖς τόπ[οις]-
καρπῶν χάλαζαν, ἐρυσείβην, ὀργὴ[ν]
τυφώνων ἀνέμων, κακοποιῶν

[25] Cf. Beckmann 1923, 15f. Such charms are of course not be confused with the *excantatio frugum*, that is, the removal of crops from one man's field to that of another by incantation, already forbidden in the XII Tables. The best-known case is the trial of C. Furius Cresimus (Calpurnius Piso ap. *FRH* frg.36 = Pliny, *HN* 18.41–43); Vergil alludes to the practice in *Ecl.* 8.99: *atque satas alio uidi traducere messis*; cf. Beckmann 1923, 5–16; A.-M. Tupet, Rites magiques dans l'Antiquité romaine, *ANRW* II.16.3 (1986) 2591–675 at 2615–17.

[26] *SEG* 44: 859 = Kotansky *GMA* 52f. Appendix to no. 11 = N. Ferchiou and A. Gabillon, Une inscription grecque magique de la région de Bou Arada (Tunisie), ou les quatre plaies de l'agriculture antique en Proconsulaire, in S. Lancel (ed.), *Actes du II^{e} Colloque International sur l'Histoire et l'Archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord, Grenoble 5–9 avril 1983*. Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, N.S., fasc. 19 [1983] B (Paris 1985) 109–125. Except for the reading at the end of l. 8, I follow the text of Ferchiou and Gabillon.

[27] On mastering the winds, see n. 57 below.

ἀκρῖδων ἐσμόν, ἵνα μηδὲν τῶν λ[υ-]
μαιωτικῶν τῶνδε ἅψηται τοῦ-
δε τοῦ χωρίου καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ [κ]α[ρ-]
πῶν πάντων: ἀσινεῖς δὲ αὐτοὺ[ς] καὶ α-
φθόρους πάντοτε συντηρήσατε,
ἕως ἄν οἵδε λίθοι γεγραμ-
μένοι τοῖς ἱροῖς ὑμῶν ὀνόμα-
σιν ὑπὸ γῆ πέριξ κείμενοι
ὦσιν.

Translation:

> (*charakteres*) Oreobazagra, Oreobazagra, Abrasax, Machar, Semesilam, Stenachta, Lorsachthe, Coriauche, Adonai, sovereign gods, drive away, ward off from this land and the fruits produced therein—on the vines, olive trees and the sown fields—hail, blight, raging hurricanes, swarm of harmful locusts, so that none of these harmful things affect this land nor the fruits growing thereon. Rather preserve them unharmed and safe at all times, as long as these stones, engraved with your sacred names, lie beneath the earth all around.

We shall revert several times to this text, but meanwhile it is worth highlighting a few major features: the list of names of powers, which as well as denoting divine beings are magic words (Machar, Stenachta), whose mere utterance was supposed to activate the spell; the fact that there are nine names; and the possible existence of further copies of the stone, distributed around various points of the property to mark the boundaries of the protected area.

Text 2

Two almost identical bronze tablets (*tabulae ansatae*), inscribed in Greek, found in the south of France, one at Bouchet (Drôme),[28] the other at Mondragon (Vaucluse).[29] Dated by Kotansky to II^{p}. The first has a hole near the centre, probably for hanging it up. Both seem to contain the same exorcism to prevent hail, snowstorms and all manner of pests. The power invoked is the otherwise unknown Oamutha,

[28] *IG* XIV 2481 = Grégoire 1922 124f. no. 341 *ter* = Kotansky *GMA* 47 no. 11a (with bibliography). The first two and a half lines combine *charakteres* and a nomen; there are six further *charakteres* on the surviving *ansa*. The tablet is now in the museum at Avignon.

[29] *IG* XIV 2494 = Kotansky no. 11b (fragmentary, but what survives matches the Bouchet inscription). The main difference lies in the addition of a name, I]ulius Peroin[---, no doubt the owner of the land.

or Oamouoa, whom Abrasax is required to aid and assist: ἀποστρέψον ἐκ τούτου τοῦ χωρίου πᾶσαν χάλαζαν καὶ πᾶσαν νιφάδα{ν} καὶ ὅσα βλάπτει χώρα<ν>. κελεύει θεὸς Ὡαμουθα, καὶ σὺ συνέργει, Ἀβρασάξ, Ἰαη, Ἰάω (ll. 3–10).[30]

Text 3

A damaged marble slab from Philadelphia, Lydia, with the Greek text of a spell to ward off hail.[31] Despite the numerous gaps, restored by Cumont, it is clear that this Christian talisman is directed against an anonymous δαίμων in charge of unsettled, turbulent skies, who rules the heavens when there is thunder, lightning and hail; this spirit is presumed to possess a "mouth of fire" (καμινόστομος). The unnamed demon is warded off by the powers of Sabaoth, the throne of the Lord and Ufridiel, but also by the force of the "name of the cock's egg" and by the series of the seven planets represented by the seven vowels of the alphabet. One final detail is that the phylactery carefully notes the boundaries of the area that is to be protected from the fury of this *daimon*, beginning in the Ninth Village (the ninth mile around Philadelphia?), and this request is complemented by a new plea, this time to the archangels Raphael, Raguel, Istrael and Agatoel, for them to "put their seal all around (περισφραγίζειν)", so as to protect Philadelphia and its land up to the designated boundary.[32]

---

[30] The assocation between νιφαί and χάλαζα has Homeric overtones (*Iliad* 15.170); on Oamutha, see Preisendanz 1935, 156f.; Kotansky *GMA* comm. on l. 8–9 (p. 51).

[31] Grégoire 1922, 124ff. no. 341 *ter*.

[32] The daemones (or, by now, demons) must obey the divine seal. This theme is developed in the so-called *Testament of Solomon* (Migne *PG* 122, 1315–58). Solomon's seal (σφραγὶς Σολομῶνος), which had been presented to the king by the archangel Michael, was made of electrum. It was inscribed with a pentagram; by virtue of its power, Solomon was able to subdue the devils and force them to build the temple. Between IV^{p} and VI^{p}, pilgrims to the Church at Golgotha were still shown what was supposedly Solomon's seal (*anulus, unde Salomo sigillavit demones*, "by which he had enslaved the devils"). The *Testament of Solomon* is of Jewish origin, although it was rewritten by Christians; see esp. Delatte 1927, 117 l. 27; P. Perdrizet, Σφραγὶς Σολόμωνος, *REG* 16 (1903) 42–61; Preisendanz 1956, 670–76 and 685; Kotansky *GMA* 174–80; also *IGLS* IV no. 1289 (a stone with the name of Solomon). Gómez Moreno (1966, 101) published another previously unknown talisman of XII^{p} now in the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, with a spell against hail, fog and ice, demonstrating that trust in the power of Solomon long survived: *In isto circulo coligantur opere diabolico nubes cum grandine et nebula mala atque gelata cum ligacione diabolica cum qua religavit illo Salomon, alligo uos diabolos cum exercitu ligo uos Satan Lucifer Belial… alligo uos per Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum alligo*. Finally, the concept of the seal made a smooth transition to mediaeval magic, as may be seen in

Text 4

Another Christian document of African origin is the lead cross of Aïn-Fourna, the ancient *Furnos Maius*, in Tunisia.[33] Its vertical arm measures 34 cm, the horizontal arm, 35 cm; it was found in a ditch near the city's Roman aqueduct. The cross has two very similar Latin inscriptions, one on each side, with only slight variations between them. Date: V^{p}–VII^{p}. A comparison of the two texts reveals that this was a genuinely original spell against hail (*scriptura ad grandinem*). Among many strange features, the cross reproduces a sort of dialogue between a snake, *bipera* (= *uipera*) *serpis*, emerging from a spring or the earth itself, representing the guardian of the soil, and a diminutive man (*omunculo*) who can protect it from excessive rains and harmful hail. The spell confirms its coherence from the moment that the strange being replies to the snake: *ego te libero de aquas malas et de grandine mala*. The phylactery later expressly asks for the hail to avoid the harvests, vines, orchards, crops, oak trees and olive treees, in other words the agricultural property of the owner.[34]

The Aïn-Fourna text has much more of interest to offer. The cross has three holes that were made after the text was engraved, which means that it was attached to some sort of frame. Among its formulae is: *ibi nata es bitis* (= *uitis*) *cum senquine* (= *sanguine*) *Christi*, bringing up the theme of blood once again; elsewhere the owner is to stand on a spot, make a 360º turn, and repeat the exorcisms three times: *ibi ista* (= *sta*) *et ingira modo ter memora.*[35] Almost at the end of Part I

---

a passage from the *Jardín de flores curiosas* (Trat. 3), by Antonio de Torquemada: "It is well known that necromancers and sorcerers control devils and force them to do and carry out their will; and many of them have them tied and bound in *rings* and in phials and other objects, using them at will, and these demons are commonly known as familiars" (transl. from the ed. by G. Allegra [Madrid 1982] 286).

[33] *AE* 1939: 136 = A. Audollent, Double inscription prophylactique contre la grêle, sur une croix de plomb trouvée en Tunisie, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 43. 2 (1939) 45–75.

[34] An analysis of this charm in Alfaro Giner & Fernández Nieto 2000.

[35] On the value of the number three in magic ceremonies, see e.g. O. Weinreich, *Triskaidekadische Studien*. RGVV 16.1 (Gießen 1916) 121–23; E. Tavenner, Three as a Magic Number in Latin Literature, *TAPhA* 47 (1916) 117–43; F.J. Dölger, *Sol Salutis. Gebet und Gesang im christlichen Altertum*. Liturgiegeschichtliche Forschungen 4–5 (Münster in Westf. 1920) 75–77; J. Cazeneuve, Le principe de répétition dans le rite, *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 23 (1957) 42–62; R. Mehrlein, s.v. Drei, *RfAC* 4 (1959) 269–310 at 291–94. Triplication is a form of primitive thought: repeating a symbol or word three times does not indicate three examples of the object of representation but merely serves to denote the plural; the number three is used to denote

in Audollent's text, we find an invocation: *in nomine Domini Patris et Filio et Ispirito Dei sento* (= *sancto*) *Chisto tuo*—a reference to the Trinity just as in our Visigothic text—the mere recital of which is enough to empower the charm: *nomen sentu* (= *sanctum*) *quia* (= *ut*) *baleat* (= *ualeat*) *quod ego incento* (= *incanto*). This section ends with the utterance *agios, agios, agios, emen, emen, alleluia, alleluia* (3 + 2 + 2 = 7). The formula occurs at the end of part II in modified form but retaining the overall number (3 *agios* + 3 *emen* + 1 *alleluia* = 7). In part I the pentagram at the start and end of the text, occurs ten times, while in part II there are only five, although once again there is one at the beginning and one at the end.

Text 5

Greek text from Noto (Sicily), engraved on a slab of limestone (Manganaro 1963). The charm is written out twice, with some variations, once on each side (A and B). Date: late IV^{p}—late VI^{p}. It is a Christian phylactery for protecting a vineyard. Although its aim is not explicitly stated, the reference in side A to an aggressive spirit referred to as θεὸς Μιχαλάζοκος (a sycopation of Μιχαήλ and χάλαζα, i.e. 'the demon Michailer') makes clear that it is against hail.[36] There are three points of interest in this text. Firstly, the invocation of Jesus Christ, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael, Iao, Atas, Krephiel, Amega, Neph[.]el, Phato, Edanemuel and Ameseël. Christ and a series of Christian angels are supported by pagan entities and mysterious names (such as Μαμιλαφιναελ, Μυκταιλουεαμδαειε), thus clearly illustrating the agglutination of powerful names which is so evident a good in these types of charm. The stone was placed (probably buried) somewhere out in the vineyard. The phrase ὅπου κεῖται τὸ φυλακτήριον τοῦτο makes clear that its effect was supposed to radiate out over the entire property. Finally, the demon 'Michailer' is imagined as occupying or being attracted εἰς

'more than two', which has been called the 'non-dual, non-singular plural'. Some random examples: Vergil, Ecl. 8.73–77 (75: *numero deus impare gaudet*); Petronius, *Sat*. 131.5 (spitting three times; putting pebbles three times into the bosom); Pliny, *HN* 28.21 (repeating a formula three times); 33 (a stone or projectile that has killed three animals in three blows); 36 (cursing three times, touching three times); 44 (washing the eyes three times). The number nine is closely linked to three: three blows to three animals; nine knots in a thread (Pliny, *HN* 28.33; 48).

[36] On side B it is a series of obscure demonic names (Μισουτον, Λινατον, Λοσοιο) that threaten the vineyard; and the charm aims to get them to be "expelled inside the body of the pig".

τρεῖς ὄνους, three millstones that must have been visible in the vineyard and which perhaps marked a protective boundary that prevented the spirit from entering the plantation area.[37]

Text 6

Opisthographic clay tablet (0.31 x 0.22m) from Palazzolo Acreide (the ancient Akras), in Sicily.[38] The text occupies all of side A and part of side B. Date: late IV^{p}—early VI^{p}. This is another Christian vineyard-charm. Although the charm does not mention the ills it is supposed to combat, it may reasonably be included here. In fact, in these parts hail was the main scourge of vines, so that it could be taken as read that hail was the main target,[39] but on this tablet, the term ὑλίστριον (= ὑλιστήριον, a strainer, colander) also happens to appear, which might conceivably be understood in the sense of a millstone,[40] and we have already seen that large stones seem to play a special role in averting hail. The charm opens with the name of Jesus Christ and closes by invoking the archangels Gabriel and Michael, who enjoy pre-eminence in this context; among the *charakteres* are the chi-rho symbol and the pentagram (beginning of side B).

Text 7

An opisthographic lead tablet in Latin found on a hill near Trogir (ancient Tragurium, in Dalmatia), 0.125 × 0.095m. 16 lines on the front, 9 on the back. Christian exorcism against hail (l. 13: *grandene nuoceres*).[41] Date: VI^{p} (de Rossi, Zangemeister, Wünsch); VI–VIII^{p} (Barada). The

---

[37] I have already alluded to the power of grindstones to prevent hail (n. 18 above).

[38] Pugliese Carratelli 1953; Burzachechi 1959.

[39] A contemporary Christian amulet found at Comiso, prov. Catania, and inscribed on a large limestone slab was intended to protect a vineyard against absolutely everything, including hail. Its main interest lies in the effective powers invoked: Jesus Christ, a series of angels (Abim[el, Lasphen, Amiel…], Krephiel…Erael x2), Jewish and magical divine beings, some of whom may be conceived of as angels (Adonael, [E]aol, Phachthobar, Abra(sa)x), and even Azaer, the planet Jupiter: see Pugliese Carratelli 1953, 181f.; Burzachechi 1959, 405–07 (the text used here); Manganaro 1963, 60; 63f.; D.R. Jordan, Two Christian Prayers from Southeastern Sicily, *GRBS* 25 (1984) 297–302.

[40] Cf. Manganaro 1963, 64 with n. 38.

[41] *CIL* III p. 961 no. XXVI + p. 2181; cf. R. Wünsch, *Antike Fluchtafeln*. Kleine Texte 20 (Bonn 1912) 27–30 no. 7; S. Eitrem and A. Fridrichsen, *Ein christliches Amulett auf Papyrus*. Videnskapsselskapets Forhandlinger for 1921, no. 1 (Kristiania 1921) 5–7. The most important contribution to establishing the text is M. Barada, Tabella

charm is directed against a demon named Tartarucus (Ταρταροῦχος), who was bound with chains by the archangel Gabriel. His escapades and failures are briefly related, and he is warned, in the name of the Lord, not to repeat them.[42] The tablet has two holes on one of the edges, probably to attach it to a base.

Text 8

The next document is a compound amulet (inscription + statue of a god) aimed at averting not hail but plagues of locusts. It nevertheless has value as comparison. It is a dirty white marble base for a statue of Mercury (now lost), with a poorly-visible Latin inscription on one of its four sides. Found 25m from the bottom of the narrow pass known as the Cilician Gates (Gülek Boğazı), but originally erected on the summit of the hill above, named Kale (the Fort); now in the Museum of Tarsus.[43] H.: 1.00m; L. 0–655m; D. 0.375m. Letter heights: 25mm.

Text:

Mercuri sceptripotens, Argifonta, deorum angele,
abige lucustarum nubis de his locis sacrosancta
virga tua, tuum enim simulacrum hoc in loco stat
ponendum ad proventum frugum et ad salutaṛ[e]
remedium locorum et nationum harum;
sis propitius et placatus hominibus cunctis et des proventus frugum omnium rerum.

Translation:

Mercury, whose power resides in your sceptre, slayer of Argos, messenger of the gods, avert from these lands the clouds of locusts with your sacred wand, since your statue stands at this point to provide abundant harvests and as a beneficial remedy for these places and peoples; look favourably and kindly on all men and grant them large numbers of fruits of all kinds.

---

plumbea traguriensis, *Vjesnik Hrvatskoga Arheoloskoya Drustva* 16 (1935) 11–18. The current edition, by A. and J. Šašel, is *ILJug* 2792 (with the older bibliography).

[42] Tartaruchus is one of the fallen angels, subdued by Gabriel. His name is also used as a synonym of Satan, cf. Michl 1962, 236, J.M. Rosenstiehl, Tartarouchos-Temelouchos. Contribution à l'étude de l'Apocalypse apocryphe de Paul, in *Deuxième Journée d'études coptes, Strasbourg 25 mai 1984*. Cahiers de la Bibliothèque Copte 3 (Louvain 1986) 29–56.

[43] *AE* 1988: 1048 = G. Varinlioğlu, Une inscription de Mercure aux Portes de Cilicie, *EpigrAnat* 11 (1988) 59–64.

The editor offers no date, although it is likely to be later than II^{p}. The most important point is the emergence in the Greek tradition of a specific nomenclature for Hermes, reflected here in the epithet *sceptripotens* and in the attributes *angelus* and *Argifontes*. The first two terms offered a bridge to Christian syncretistic ambitions, and re-emerge in later phylacteries, for example in the Carrio text.

Text 9

We may add to this series the text of a Byzantine Christian spell originally published by A. Almazov,[44] which contains some interesting features related to our group.

Text:

> Ἐξορκισμός τοῦ χαλαζίου· μάβρον νέφος ἐσηκώθη ἐκ Βηθλεέμ ἀστραπόβροντον χάλαζαν γέμον καὶ ὑπήντησεν αὐτῷ ἀρχάγγελος δυνάμεως κυρίου λέγων· ποῦ ὑπάγεις, μάβρον νέφος ἀστραπόβροντον χάλαζαν γέμον; λέγει αὐτῷ· ἐγώ ὑπάγω εἰς τὰ μέρη τοῦ δεῖνου τόπου ἀμπελῶνος ξηράναι κήπον, φθεῖραι δένδρα καὶ γεννήματα, καὶ ὀπωρόφυτα καταλῦσαι, καὶ πὰν κακὸν ποιῆσαι. λέγει αὐτῷ ἀρχάγγελος δυνάμεως κυρίου· ὁρκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ ἀοράτου θεοῦ, τοῦ ποιήσαντος τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γὴν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς. ὁρκίζω σε εἰς τὰ τέσσαρα κιόνια τὰ βαστάζοντα τὸν ἀσάλευτον θρόνον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ εἰς τὸν πύρινον ποταμόν, μὴ ἀπέλθῃ εἰς τὰ μέρη τοῦ τόπου τοῦ δεῖνου ἀλλὰ ἄπελθε εἰς τὰ ἄγρια ὄρη ἔνθα ἀλέκτωρ οὐ κράζει, σημάντηρι οὐ φωνεῖ, οὐκ ἀκούεται, εἰς δόξαν τοῦ ἐπουρανίου καὶ μεγάλου θεοῦ. ἀμήν.

Translation:

> Exorcism of hail: a black cloud rose up from Bethlehem full of hail with thunder and lightning, and it was met by an archangel of the host of God, who said: where are you going, black cloud full of hail with thunder and lightning? It answered: I am going to the fields in (such-and-such a place) which are planted with vines to dry up the orchards, ruin the trees and their buds, and spoil the fruits and cause all types of damage. The archangel of the host of God said: I entreat you through God invisible, the creator of the heaven, earth and sea and everything that therein is. I entreat you before the four pillars that hold the unmovable throne of God and before the river of fire, do not try to go to the pieces of land in (such-and-such a place), and instead go to the wild mountains

[44] In *Lietopis istorikophilologetscheskago Obtchestva* (1898) 334 (*non vidi*); my text is reproduced from Grégoire 1922, 124f.

where no cock crows, no semantron[45] sounds or is heard for the glory of the great God in heaven. Amen.

The blanks in this charm indicate that it comes from a formulary collection; it belongs to the type known as Begegnungssegen ('encounter exorcisms').[46]

4. *The Development of a Tradition*

The amulets against hail, with all their idiosyncrasies, dovetail perfectly with the mechanisms and techniques of magical practice as known from papyri, epigraphy and amuletic stones. Magic differs from religion not so much in its procedures or in the miraculous nature of its effects but in its incompatibility with the inherited system of religious ideas, because it tries to compel supernatural powers instead of offering them adoration and reverence, in an attempt to achieve what the individual desires and avoid what he or she fears.[47] However, magic can also resemble science more than religion, because magical thought is based on an almost instinctive empiricism and tries to impose order on the world. The more primitive and older the elements of spells or charms were, the more powerful they were deemed to be. With regard specifically to the charms against hail, ancient formulas and invocations may be expanded or curtailed at will, even combined with others originating from similar sources (different types of exorcism, incantations, charms, curses etc.). Perhaps there was once a custom

[45] In Byzantine texts, the term σημαντήριον (σήμαντρον) denotes the *semantron*, the bar-gong used in Orthodox churches, cf. Longo 1989, 69.

[46] Cf. the anti-migraine spell published by A. A. Barb, Griechische Zaubertexte vom Gräberfelde westlich des Lagers, in *Römische Limes in Österreich* 16 (1926) 52–67 no. 48 (expanded version in English: Antaura. The Mermaid and the Devil's Grandmother, *JWI* 29 [1966] 1–23) = Kotansky *GMA* 58–71 no. 13 with later bibliography and parallel texts; written in Greek on a silver *lamella*, it was found in a sarcophagus in one of the necropoleis at Carnuntum (perhaps II–III^{p}, Kotansky suggests I–II^{p}): Antaura, a female demon, emerges from the sea weeping and wailing. Artemis of Ephesus—the goddess of magic—encounters her, asks her where she is going, and exorcises her. The Christian versions of the amulet against the migraine demon replace Artemis with Jesus Christ or the archangel Gabriel. Christian encounter-exorcisms were circulated in all the languages and countries of Europe and Asia Minor, always following the basic structure: Christ, the Virgin or some angel or saint encounters the demon of a particular ailment wandering around, and orders him to stop causing harm.

[47] With regard to the distinction between religion and magic, of particular interest are the observations of Barb 1963, 17–19; Phillips 1986, 2723ff.; H.S. Versnel, Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion, *Numen* 38 (1991) 177–97.

of remaining faithful to a set pattern, but in the period of which we have knowledge, they are living texts. It is thus very difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct the originals of each type of charm or spell, because they were altered over time by improvisation. As a result, a more or less intelligible nucleus of themes was interwoven with mere allusions to familiar formulae, while others might be expanded in an impromptu fashion.

The drafting of the formulaic elements of an exorcism was governed by certain criteria. One might deploy secular references as well as sacred phrases or passages. Only one of the terms here needed to have anything to do with the overt aim; the text could be further enhanced by the inclusion of psalms, short phrases or indeed any fragment of a religious nature. This freedom led to a personal emotional conditioning, such that attention came to be focused rather on the figurative motifs and on simple visual symbols, to the extent that the words gradually lost their meaning.[48] The original coherence was thus lost, and power shifted from literal meaning to the symbols or the mere sounds. In short, oral and written spells went from the intelligible to the unintelligible. In the end the virtue of such documents came to lie in the mere recital or in their materiality, not in substantive utterance.[49] All this should help us to understand the Carrio slate, which is the fullest of all surviving documents of its type, not only for the number of formulae but also for the manner in which they are distributed (with the "articulate/intelligible" interspersed with the "magic/nonsense" formulae, although they can in fact be translated).

[48] I cannot resist here citing a thought by Miguel de Unamuno: "Those mysterious words had for us all the charm that simple, virgin, holy words have for children—that is to say, words which have no meaning" (*Recuerdos de niñez y de mocedad* [Madrid 1942] 46).

[49] This process was furthered by the popularity of gemstones and other objects believed to possess apotropaic powers, which were transferred to what was engraved on them; examples of gemstones with unintelligible 'prophylactic' inscriptions in *SMA* and A. Delatte and P. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris 1964) *passim*. Generally on the value of the word in magical recitation, see A. Bäumer, Die Macht des Wortes in Religion und Magie (Plinius, *Naturalis historia* 28, 4–29), *Hermes* 112 (1984) 84–99; A.A. Addabbo, Carmen magico e carmen religioso, *CCC* 12 (1991) 11–27.

4.1. *Naming Names*

4.1.1. *Naming Malign Powers*

In l. 10 of the Carrio slate, Satan is identified (*adiuro te Satan*) as in control of the hail, and able to redirect it to a neighbouring settlement. Specifying the source of the trouble is common in phylacteries: it was an anonymous fire-breathing δαίμων at Philadelphia (Text **3**, l. 2; 5f.); the spirit known as Μιχαλάζοκος in the Noto inscription (**5**A), or the mysterious Μισουτον, Λινατον, Λοσοιο (**5**B); the devil Tartarucus in the lead tablet from Trogir (**7**); the Black Cloud ascribed human attributes in the Byzantine Christian exorcism (**9**). This is an example of the common claim that knowledge of a (divine) name bestows power.[50] A magician or exorcist could dominate the will of a *daemon* by virtue of knowing his name. Moreover, images were analogous to names; considered as an image, the written form of the name acquired its own authority.[51] In the Jewish tradition, the names of demons were inscribed on amulets so as to target them, since the angels were considered to require no external authorisation to destroy them.[52]

However, I believe that there was a deeper reason for the identification of the *daemon* (or demon) in writing. In primitive belief, storms were caused by sky-gods who controlled the weather. Zeus, Jupiter and Yahweh each had features typical of the weather gods of the ancient cultures of the Middle East and Asia Minor; they were gods who bestowed adversity as well as blessings on humans. Storms, rain, wind and hail (as well as other disasters) were taken as signs of divine anger, intended to punish man's arrogance and offences.[53] Such gods

---

[50] Cf. W. Kroll, Namenaberglauben bei Griechen und Römern, *Mitteilungen der Schlesischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* 16 (1914) 179–96.

[51] J.-H. Abry, Les tablettes de Grand: mode d'emploi à travers les écrits des astrologues, in J.-H. Abry (ed.), *Les tablettes astrologiques de Grand (Vosges) et l'astrologie en Gaule romaine* (Lyon 1993) 141–60 at 155.

[52] Cf. F. Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen* (Budapest 1898) 92.

[53] This is why Zeus was invoked as Ζεὺς Χαλάζιος Σώζων in an inscription erected by the farmers of a village on the Cyzicus plain, to defend them against hail and ensure that they had trouble-free harvests (ὑπὲρ εὐκαρπίας καὶ ἀβλαβίας τῶν καρπῶν): F.W. Hasluck, Unpublished Inscriptions from the Cyzicus Neighbourhood, *JHS* 24 (1904) 21–40 at 21f. no. 4; L. Robert, *Hellenica* 9 (1950) 63. In the *Daphnephoria* at Thebes, Apollo Ismenius was worshipped as Χαλάζιος, i.e. he who provides protection against hail: Proclus ap Phot. *Bibl.* cod.239 p. 321b, with M.P. Nilsson, Symbolisme astronomique et mystique dans certains cultes publics grecs, in *Hommages à Joseph Bidez et Franz Cumont*. Coll. Latomus 2 (Brussels 1950) 221. Three inscriptions from Amaseia in Pontus invoke Αἰθὴρ Ἀλεξιχάλαζος, i.e. the personification of the upper

were also responsible for frost, ice, hurricanes and floods. Insofar as it recycled the Pentateuch, Christianity confirmed such beliefs. However, from the Hellenistic period, and especially among Christians, natural catastrophes came increasingly to be attributed to the anger of *daemones*.[54]

At the same time, all these cultures created images of wonder-workers (individuals or groups) capable of influencing the divine forces that generated such phenomena. These figures, who at first were supposed to possess the ability to ward off storms (including wind and hail), were gradually considered to have the power to unleash them as well.[55] In this group were Zoroaster and certain other Persian magi, Moses and Abraham, the *Telchines* (who had the power to sterilise animals, wither plants and ruin harvests),[56] Medea, Orpheus, and certain philosophers (e.g. Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus).[57] The Jewish

---

air, in its role as protector: see French 1996, 88f. nos. 5–7; in view of the similarity of the stones and their texts, French suggests that all three may have been temenos-markers at the same sanctuary.

[54] See esp. Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.3.31; Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 2.14–17 describes how angels became *daemones*. There is a good example in the apocryphal (and very late) *Mors Pilati*: after his body had been thrown into the depths of the Tiber, "malignant and filthy spirits in his malignant and filthy body, all rejoicing together, kept moving themselves in the waters, and in a terrible manner brought lightnings and tempests, thunders and hail-storms, in the air, so that men were kept in horrible fear" (tr. Cox). I return immediately below to this theme.

[55] The same process occurred with regard to Christian saints; see n. 79 below. See in general, W. Fiedler, *Antiker Wetterzauber*. Würzburger Studien zur Altertumswissenschaft 1 (Stuttgart 1931); W. Speyer, s. v. Hagel, *RfAC* 13 (1986) cols. 314–28.

[56] P. Realacci, I Telchines, «maghi» nel segno della trasformazione, in P. Xella (ed.), *Magia. Studi di storia delle religioni in memoria di Raffaela Garosi* (Rome 1976) 197–206.

[57] On the similarities between the Telchines and seals, see Detienne and Vernant 1974, 242–44. With regard to Medea, Pausanias 2.12.1 claims that one night a year the priest sacrificed to the winds at the Altar of the Winds in Titane, and performed other secret rites in four pits to tame the savagery of the winds while singing the 'incantations of Medea'. On the spirits of the winds, cf. F. Cumont, Les Vents et les Anges psychopompes, in *Pisciculi. Studien zur Religion und Kultur des Altertums Franz Joseph Dölger zum sechzigsten Geburtstage dargeboten von Freunden, Verehrern und Schülern* (Münster/Westf. 1939) 70–75. Empedocles was reputed to have managed to calm the winds that brought sickness to Agrigentum, for which he was given the name of κωλυσανέμας (Wind-stopper): Timaeus *FGrH* 566 F30; in Corinth there was a fraternity (γένος) responsible for calming winds, whose members were known as the Ἀνεμοκοῖται. On these last, cf. G. Panesse, *Fonti greche e latine per la storia dell'ambiente e del clima nel mondo greco* (Pisa 1991) 524–27; 534–40; G. Nenci, Il sacrificio tarentino dell'asino ai venti (Hesych., *s.v.* ἀνεμώτας), *ASNP* 25 (1995) 1345–58. On Democritus as a philosopher-magus see M. Wellmann, Die *Georgika* des Demokritos, *Abh. Preuß. Akad. Wiss.* Jrg. 1921, Phil.-hist. Kl., no. 4 (Berlin 1921); A.J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, 1: L'astrologie et les sciences occultes*[2]

'historian' Artapanus, a contemporary of Ptolemy IV Philopator and reteller of *OT* stories, describes the miracles of this type performed by Moses when he was trying to persuade Pharaoh to allow his people to leave Egypt:

> Striking the ground with his rod, he caused frogs as well as locusts and mosquitoes to appear… As the king remained unperturbed, Moses produced hail and earth tremors at night, so that those fleeing from the earthquake perished because of the hail, and those who escaped from the hail perished as a result of the earthquake. Thus the houses and most of the temples collapsed.[58]

More humdrum figures of this type are the 'magi' and 'charlatans' attacked by *De morb. sacr.* 1, 29 Grensemann, who claimed to be able to cause storms and bad weather, rain and drought. This dualism at the level of practitioners, mythic and actual, was partly reproduced at the divine level: angels and archangels invoked as protectors against storms are sometimes named as their cause. Thus Pharmakael is ὁ ἄγγελος τῆς βροντῆς καὶ χαλάζης, the angel of thunder and hail, and the archangel Michael is said to carry hailstones with him (ὁ Μιχαὴλ ἀρχιστράτηγος ὁ τὸ χάλαζιν βαστάζων).[59]

At the popular level, adverse *daemones* responsible for illness had always been numerous, even if their names were unknown. Specialists knew more: the practitioners attacked by the author of *De morb. sacr.* could identify the various *daemones* responsible for different types of 'epilepsy' by taking note of the precise manner of screaming or bawling, the type of stool passed, whether the patient foamed at the mouth or drummed with his heels etc.[60] The well-known lead-tablet from Phalasarna in Crete (IV[a]) with ἐπῳδαί lists a number of *daemones*

(Paris 1950) 194ff.; J.H. Waszink, s.v. Bolos, *RfAC* 2 (1954) 502–08; R.L. Beck, Thus Spake not Zarathuštra, in M. Boyce and F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism 3: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leyden 1991) 491–565 at 554f., 560–63; J. Salem, *Démocrite* (Paris 1996) 366–70.

[58] *FGrH* 726 F3 = Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 9.27. 32f. On Artapanus' methods, see briefly E.S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1998) 87–89; idem, *Diaspora* (Cambridge MA 2002) 201–11.

[59] Delatte 1927, 1: 112, l. 21; 286, l. 10. Βαστάζειν might however mean 'carry away' here rather than 'hold'. I should just say that these are Greek magical texts included in mediaeval or modern codices, although the formulae undeniably date from (late) Antiquity.

[60] *De morbo sacro* 1.33–40 Grensemann.

responsible for village and agrarian ills who are to be exorcised.[61] In the same way, female sieve-diviners could determine the (daemonic) causes, and so the treatment, of specific illnesses of stock-animals.[62] Literacy made it possible to collect and systematise such dispersed, essentially local, knowledge; the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri and the Sethian Gnostic tradition are two quite different examples of such relatively learned interests, wholly dependent on literacy. Specifically with regard to weather *daemones*, we may cite Riopha and Bonchar/Zonchar who controlled lightning and thunder respectively in the region of Berytus.[63]

As I have already intimated, the idea became rooted among Christians that neither God nor His host could be held responsible for all the misfortunes in the world, but that it was other powers—the devil and his henchmen, the evil spirits—that caused disasters such as storms. Such reasoning was reaffirmed in Judaeo-Christian legend, with parallels in Greek mythology, which claimed that the effects produced by magic, alchemy and all occult sciences were due to daemonic beings.[64] These intermediaries had originally been divine, but now they were undisciplined and cursed, and their damnation influenced the arts that they taught. The role ascribed to Satan in the Carrio slate is simple orthodoxy: as the head of the infernal legions, he was the spirit with the greatest power and authority among the *inmissores tempestatum*; the key target to be neutralised, because without him the other demons were rendered impotent.

---

[61] The old text of *InscrCret* II xix.7 has been tentatively overhauled in recent years: cf. D.R. Jordan, *ZPE* 94 (1992) 191–94; J. d'Alessio, *ZPE* 97 (1993) 290 = *SEG* 42 (1992) 818; Cl. Brixhe & A. Panayotou, Le plombe magique de Phalasarna, *IC* II.xix.7, in *Hellenika symmikta. Histoire, linguistique, épigraphie 2.* Études d'archéologie classique 8 (Nancy and Paris 1993) 23–38 = *SEG* 43 (1993) 615; D.R. Jordan, *ZPE* 130 (2000) 95–107 at 96–101.

[62] On κοσκινομάντεις see Philostratus, *Vit Apoll. Tyan.* 6.11, p. 222.28–30 Kayser; Lucian, *Alex.* 9; cf. F. Boehm, s.v. Koskinomantie, *HdA* 5 (1932–33) 323–8.

[63] *SEG* 41: 1530 ll. 34–37 = D.R. Jordan, A New Reading of a Phylactery from Beirut, *ZPE* 88 (1991) 61–69 = Kotansky *GMA* no. 52 with n. ad loc. on p. 286.

[64] Official and unofficial Christian views of magic: N. Brox, Magie und Aberglaube in den Anfängen des Christentums, *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 83 (1974) 157–80; D.E. Aune, Magic in Early Christianity, *ANRW* II. 23. 2 (1980) 1507–57; F.C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen 1984); J.-B. Clerc, *Homines magici: Études sur la sorcellerie et la magie dans la société romaine impériale* (Berne 1995) 239–321; V. Flint, The Demonisation of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions, in Ankarloo/Clark 1999, 277–348; M.W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York 2001) 251–321.

4.1.2. *Naming Protective Powers*

The second basic element in these spells was the invocation of the divinity responsible for preventing the disaster. Since the cause of such events was identified as the will of a conscious spirit, a δαίμων, a claim that had its roots in Platonist demonology,[65] the authors of the spells appropriately sought to counteract this spirit by invoking a superior being. This belief in turn explains why defensive or protective spirits are a constant feature of magic texts, so that Graeco-Latin amulets made use of demigods (of the sky, earth, the underworld) as well as of established *daemones* (Aeons, Gnostic Archons, demon-angels, stars and planets, etc.) or those who were known locally, and even sacred objects that had some magic property. In my series of anti-hail amulets, we can find several such named powers: Oamuza, as a superior demon, and Abrasax as an assistant (Bouchet/Mondragon) (**2**); an anonymous and mysterious diminutive man (*omunculo*), a local spirit (Aïn-Fourna) (**4**); Oreobazagra, Abrasax, Semesilam, Lorsachthê, Koriauchê and Adonai (Sidi Kaddou) (**1**). These protective *daemones*, sometimes called angels, were never real gods but were 'half-way' between men and gods. In the final instance, their efficacy was merely borrowed from the gods, whose delegates or servants, *paredroi* or intermediaries they were, taking on the role of messengers or enforcers of their will.[66] Over time there was also a parallel tendency to turn messenger- and oracular gods into benevolent spirits. On the other hand, the inscription from the Cilician Gates (**8**) invokes Hermes/Mercury not only as a divinity able to counteract evil but also apparently as mediator (*deorum angelus*) between devout men and the gods.

In Christian spells, the function of intermediary was undertaken by the patriarchs: the names of Moses, Abraham, Jacob and Solomon were endlessly invoked on the grounds that, through their intercession, and with the powers they received from God, they could work miracles. At the same time, pagan demons were very quickly assimilated to angels, who were considered to be the ministers of God as well as a special type of supernatural being.[67] Gabriel, Michael, Raphael

[65] Cf. F.E. Brenk, In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the early Imperial Period, *ANRW* II.17.3 (1986) 2068–145.

[66] Herrmann 1962, 31f.; Ricl 1992, 99–102.

[67] F. Cumont, Les anges du paganisme, *RHR* 72 (1915) 159–82; M. Guarducci, Angelos, *SMSR* 15 (1939) 85–93; J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos. Die Anschauung von Christus als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstümlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Ursprungs und der Fortdauer*

and Uriel predominate in such lists, not only because of their archangelic status but also because their deployment in pagan magic and Gnostic speculation reinforced their role as protective powers in the eyes of Christians.[68] Michael, whose name tends to head the lists of angels invoked, exerted a fascination deriving from the fact that he was the commander-in-chief of the hosts of God (ὁ μέγας ταχιάρξης καὶ ἀρχιστράτηγος τῆς δυνάμεως Κυρίου) and the guardian of the seal with which Solomon had overcome the devils.[69] The frequency of Uriel in these lists may have to do with the role ascribed to him by certain Christian churches as distributor of Christ's blood on earth (cf. n. 108 below). At any rate, archangels and angels abound in Christian anti-hail phylacteries: Raphael, Ragüel, Istrael, Agatoel and Ufridiel in the text from Philadelphia (**3**); Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael, Krephiel, Neph[.]el, Edanemuel and Ameseël in the Noto exorcism (**5**); Gabriel and Michael at Palazzolo Acreide (**6**); and Abimel, Lasphen, Amiel, Eloel?, Krephiel and Erael in the text from Comiso.[70]

The trust placed in the angels did not however inhibit Christian amulets from invoking other powers in order to extend the scope of the exorcism. It was not unusual for God himself to be invoked under the Jewish names Sabaoth, Yahweh (= Iao or Eao), Eloi(m), as in the texts from Philadelphia (**3**), Noto (**5**) and Comiso, or through references to "God invisible, creator of the heaven and earth and sea and all that therein is" (Byzantine exorcism, **9**); nor are versicles exalt-

---

des Arianismus. Theophaneia. Beiträge zur Religions- und Kirchengeschichte des Altertums 8 (Bonn 1941) 7–33; 262–69; A.R.R. Sheppard, Pagan Cults of Angels in Roman Asia Minor, *Talanta* 12–13 (1980/81) 77–101. G. Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium.* Transformation of the Classical Heritage 32 (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2001) 35, describes their status as "a kind of third body—in nature somewhere between God and humanity, but with a nature not fully determinable".

[68] Cf. Michl 1962, 239–58 [*s.v.* Engel VI (Gabriel), VII (Michael), Engel VII (Raphael), Engel IX (Uriel)]; G. Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels. Including the Fallen Angels* (New York and London 1967); also the bibliography cited by W.M. Brashear, New Greek Magical and Divinatory Texts in Berlin, in *AMRP* 209–42 at 220f. (nn. on *PBerol.* 21337, ll. 3f.). In Byzantine amulets: T. Matantseva, Les amulettes byzantines contre le mauvais oeil du Cabinet des Médailles, *JbAC* 37 (1994) 110–21 at 119; also A. Sorlin Dorigny, Phylactère alexandrin contre les épistaxis, *REG* 4 (1891) 287–92.

[69] Cf. G. Peers, Hagiographic Models of Worship of Images and Angels, *Byzantion* 67 (1997) 407–20 at 410–12; on the seal of Solomon, see n. 32 above.

[70] For the Comiso text, see n. 39 above. Many of these angelic names are omitted both by H. Leclercq, s.v. Anges, *DACL* 1.2 (1924) 2150–59 and by Michl 1962, 200–39.

ing Christ, God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit unusual.[71] Perhaps more surprising is the inclusion of pagan *daemones* or magic words, clear evidence of how superstition was rooted among all layers of the population and of the objective difficulties in eliminating it, given the tendency of magical practice to absorb elements of diverse origin so long as they were considered powerful. The hail-texts include several examples: Atas, Amega and Fato (= Fatum ?) (Noto, **5**); Azaer (= the planet Jupiter), Adonael, Phachthobar, Abra(sa)x) (Comiso); we may add here appeals to the "name of the cock's egg" and the series of the seven planets (in the form of the seven vowels) in the sequence of Sabaoth and the angels (Philadelphia, **3**).[72]

Such practices undoubtedly worried the church authorities. Already in the second century Irenaeus vigorously denounces angelic invocations and incantations: the Church

> *nec inuocationibus angelicis facit aliquid, nec incantationibus, nec reliqua praua curiositate, sed munde et pure et manifeste orationes dirigens ad Dominum qui omnia fecit et nomen Domini nostri Jesu Christi inuocans, uirtutes ad utilitatem hominum sed non ad seductionem perficit.*[73]
>
> *Adv. haer.* 2.32.5

The first explicit action was taken at the council of Serdica in 343 CE.[74] The council of Phrygian Laodicea (mid-late IV^{p}) anathematised excessive angel-worship, as implying idolatry, and forbade anyone in holy orders to act as a magician or enchanter, to practice astrology and to

---

[71] On the invocation of Yahweh/Iao together with the archangels in magic see W. Fauth, Arbath Jao. Zur mystischen Vierheit in griechischen und koptischen Zaubertexten und in gnostischen oder apokryphen Schriften des christlichen Orients, *OrChr* 67 (1983) 65–103 at 75ff.

[72] The seven vowels are repeatedly invoked in *PGrMag* and the amuletic gems; they even appear in combination with the names of the seven archangels. The seven Aeons are mentioned in the apocryphal *History of Joseph the Carpenter* (see n. 87 below). The association occurs in the *NT*: an unclean spirit is always accompanied by seven spirits more wicked than itself (Luke 11.24–26).

[73] "performs nothing by means of angelic invocations, or by incantations, or by any other wicked curious art; but directing her prayers to the Lord, who made all things, in a pure, sincere, and straightforward spirit, and calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, she has been accustomed to work miracles for the advantage of mankind, and not to lead them into error" (tr. Roberts & Rambaud).

[74] Cf. E. Peterson, Die geheimen Praktiken eines syrischen Bischofs, in A. Sasamassa et al. (eds.), *Miscellanea Pio Paschini: Studi di storia ecclesiastica.* Lateranum n.s. 14–15 (Rome 1948–49) 2: 49–62 = idem, *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis. Studien und Untersuchungen* (Freiburg 1959) 333–45; H. Hess, *The Early Development of Canon Law and the Council of Serdica* (Oxford 2002) 95–114.

make amulets, under pain of excommunication.[75] John Chrysostom (349–407), deploring the use of amulets (περίαπτα) to cure the sick, asseverates that there is only one effective ritual in this connection, making the sign of the cross.[76] About the same time, the so-called Decree of Gelasius *de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis*, banned all phylacteries *quae non angelorum, ut illi configunt, sed daemonum magis nominibus conscripta sunt.*[77] In the late sixth century, Theodore of Sykeon in Galatia scrupulously followed such precepts in aiding a village, Apoukoumis, whose vintage had been ruined by hail: he said a prayer and erected a cross, and in after years, though storm-clouds gathered, they did no damage.[78] In other cases, however, more might need to be done. For example, at the village of Reake in the same area, where a threatening cloud would periodically appear suddenly over the countryside and pour down hailstones upon the vineyards when the grapes were ripe, the villagers called upon Theodore to intervene. He formed a procession of supplication, circumambulated the vineyard and the fields, and, after offering prayer, placed a wooden cross at the four angles of the boundary line (*Vit. Theod.* 52).[79]

Judging by the persistence of hail-texts, however, these pious recommendations seem to have had a merely relative effect—the invocation of angels in fact never disappeared from exorcisms.[80] Recourse

---

[75] *Syn. Laod. cc.* 35 and 36; cf. M. Smith, How Magic was Changed by the Triumph of Christianity, *Graeco-Arabica* 2 (1983) 51–58.

[76] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 8. in Coloss.* 3.15, pp. 294–99 ed. Piazzino. The trope of the drunken old woman and 'old wives' tales' recurs here.

[77] Migne, *PL* 59, 179f.; cf. E. von Dobschütz, *Das Decretum Gelasianum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis.* Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 38.4 (Leipzig 1912) 319ff.; E. Schwarz, Zum Decretum Gelasianum, *ZNTW* 29 (1930) 161–68.

[78] Eleusius, *Vit. Theod.* 144; cf. the floods at Skoudris after a hail-storm (§141). I have used the edition by A.-J Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*. 2 vols. Subsidia hagiographica 48 (Brussels 1970). See also the tr. by E. Dawes & N. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (Oxford 1948) 127.

[79] Dawes & Baynes p. 126. Theodore was also capable of causing 'righteous' damage: in order to punish the inhabitants of Halios, who had failed to carry out his orders, he caused hail to fall on their crops (*Vit. Theod.* 150, omitted by Dawes & Baynes).

[80] One of the reasons for this is that highly influential thinkers such as St Augustine defended the value of rituals invoking angelic powers to fight demons. Such scenes, based on the New Testament, tended to be described with such emphasis that the people ended up believing in the actual existence of the two opposing forces as they were also depicted in magic. On the doctrinal attitude of the Church with regard to the influence of pagan mythology and superstitions, see A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig 1924) 328ff.

to simple, devout prayers, improvised for each circumstance, as Irenaeus instructed, or to praise combined with the sign of the cross, as urged by John Chrysostom, might be proof of one's orthodoxy but was condemned to be sidelined by the weight of tradition in matters of magic/superstition that most of the faithful had yet to abandon.[81] The Church's official criticism of paganism was full of contradictions; for example, by endorsing the reality of the demonic world, Christians gave it a quasi-historical existence: theologically, demons were a class of rebellious fallen angels who, as Satan's cohorts, assumed all the attributes of paganism that Christianity aimed to eradicate. And by declaring certain practices demonic, the Church underwrote popular ideas of witchcraft right up until the modern age.[82] For the Christians, the pagan gods were not a fantasy of the heathen but evil demons (Abt 1908, 253). But the Church's most consistent position is well expressed by Marcel Simon:

> Dans son appréciation des actes magiques, l'Église tient compte, non seulement de leur objet, mais aussi de leurs méthodes: sont condamnables ceux qui servent à une fin mauvaise, sans doute, mais aussi ceux qui, même dans un bout en soi louable, ou indifférent, comme la fertilité des champs ou la santé des hommes, recourent à des procédés et à des formules que réprouve l'orthodoxie. Tout usage magique est haïssable, dans la mesure où il fait appel aux puissances mauvaises, aux démons. C'est le cas de la magie païenne ou paganisante, c'est celui également de la magie juive, ou judaïsante, sous toutes ses formes.[83]

The stress in the Carrio text on the power of angels, headed by Michael, followed by Gabriel, Cecitiel, Uriel, Rafael, Ananiel and Marmoniel, and the occlusion of *daemonum nomina* thus reflects a desire to keep

---

[81] A.-J. Festugière, Lieux communs littéraires et thèmes de folk-lore dans l'hagiographie primitive, in *Festschrift Johannes Mewaldt* = *WS* 73 (1960) 145–152 = idem, *Études de religion grecque et hellénistique* (Paris 1972) 271–301, showed how popular fantasy transferred many of the ideas about the powers of magicians to monks (e.g. flying, rooting people in one spot, forcing the obedience of hippopotami and dragons, restoring a young girl who had been turned into a donkey to human shape, breaking down the doors of prisons and bursting the chains of prisoners, scattering an enemy by means of bad weather, crossing the Nile on foot or on a crocodile…).

[82] M. Merlin, *La fête des kalendes de janvier dans l'empire romain. Étude d'un rituel de Nouvel An*. Coll. Latomus 115 (Brussels 1970) 99ff.

[83] M. Simon, *Verus Israel, Études sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'Empire romain* (135–425). BEFAR 166 (Paris 1948) 424. On the Church's ambivalent position, see further Brashear 1992, 156 n. 22.

within the bounds of orthodoxy.[84] It is however unusual that they are termed *patriarchs*, a title that seems to be charged with respect and veneration and which raises them to the highest position in ecclesiastical tradition.[85] Such usage may reflect heterodox practice. For the Encratites, as well as the Marcionites, and particularly the Montanists, borrowed the Jewish term 'patriarch' for their hierarchy of powers.[86] Later it acquired a formal ceremonial value in the Church and was applied to the heads of various sees (Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem). It may therefore have been introduced into magical texts as a special invocation linking the prestige attached to the names of angels and *daemones* with the allure of condemned sects.

4.2. *Powerful Instruments*

Closely connected with the theme of protective spirits is the question of formulae to ward off ills by appealing to ("in the name of") a material element, whether moveable or immoveable. The principle of correspondence operates here: if gods, wonder-workers and sorcerers used instruments to stimulate a storm and create hail and pests, then it was permissible to invoke the power of the objects which, being in contact with the guardian demons and angels, held sway over the origin of the harm. In our texts, particular emphasis is placed on God's throne: the anonymous demon in the Philadelphia amulet (**3**) is exorcised in its name, and in the Byzantine formulary (**9**) the Black Cloud is ordered to withdraw before the "four columns that support the immovable throne of God". The "river of fire" mentioned in the same text is reminiscent of eschatological descriptions of Hell.[87]

In a similar vein, the Carrio text refers to God's sceptre, *ibi est meus dominissimus scetru manu*, "there is the Lord (with his) sceptre (in his)

---

[84] Cf. n. 68 above. Velázquez 1989, 507; 615 and 2004, 376f. thinks Marmoniel may be an invented name, while inclining to my suggestion (1997, 279) that Cecetiel/Cecitiel is a corruption of Sedekiel → Setekiel → Secetiel (through metathesis).

[85] Many characters from the Old and New Testaments were incorporated into the ecclesiastical annals, eventually requiring the formation of a hierarchy, known to us from Hilarius and Cyril of Jerusalem: first patriarchs, then prophets and apostles, finally martyrs: Delehaye 1933, 95ff.

[86] H. Grégoire, Notes épigraphiques, *Byzantion* 8 (1933) 69–76.

[87] The idea of this river, conceived as composed of molten metals, comes ultimately from the Avesta and is an element of Mazdeism (cf. F. Cumont, *Lux perpetua* [Paris 1949] 209; 225 and 452) which spread later to Christianity.

hand" [--] (.13). The motif of the magic wand or enchanted sceptre is of course very old.[88] As we have seen, Moses used a staff to create the plagues of Egypt (n. 58 above). My Cilician text (**8**), which invokes Mercury to destroy locusts with his holy staff (*sacrosancta uirga tua*), was inscribed on the base of a statue showing the god holding it. Solomon too is said to have a sceptre, which he received from God. I suspect that behind the phrase *meus dominissimus scetru manu* in the Carrio text is a reference to the sceptre of God or the King of Israel and son of David, in the belief that it could produce miraculous effects thanks to its hidden, secret power (*cum arte furinea*).[89]

Moreover, the sceptre is often found as an attribute of deities and superior beings (angels) in pagan religions.[90] It is, for example, one of the usual attributes of Men and Zeus in western Asia Minor. In this area, individual sceptres, as well as the Twelve Sceptres (οἱ δώδεκα σκῆπτρα), are regularly invoked in funerary inscriptions to protect the tomb against desecrators, the sceptre being not only a divine symbol but also, as the personification of the deity, a token with magical powers.[91] Oaths and public curses were sworn before one; sinners acknowledged their faults before a god by holding one against their left side;

---

[88] De Waele 1929, 1905–23. Homer, *Od.* 24.1–4 mentions the traditional view that Hermes sealed the eyes of mortals or roused them from their sleep with his staff; Lucian, *Dial. deor.* 7.4 points out that Hephaestus had given the staff miraculous powers (ῥάβδον τινὰ πεποίηται θαυμασίαν τὴν δύναμιν).

[89] In my opinion, this section of the text goes with *scetru*. García Ruiz 1967, 231, followed by Velázquez 1989, 562f., suggested an adjective *furineus* derived from *fur* (in 2004, 381 she describes the passage as a *locus desperatus*, on the grounds that neither reading nor sense are established).

I think the intended meaning is that the sceptre's magic power was due to the fact that it had been taken (snatched) from God. In fact, underlying this is a functioning element of the old tradition of the thief god, wittily explained by Lucian, *Dial. deor.* 7. 3, according to whom Hermes had stolen Zeus' sceptre when he was not looking, cf. N.O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief. The Evolution of a Myth* (Madison 1947). This idea of theft would have been transferred to God's or Solomon's sceptre, which is why I hold that the power was "hidden and secret". This would be supported by the verb *furor*, meaning that it originally belonged to someone else. It was this mechanism, widespread in folklore all over the world, whereby an instrument of divine origin could fall into the hands of an inferior or evil being and be manipulated, misused or defiled, which must have led to the inclusion among demonic figures of certain representations of the devil with a lance, standard and sceptre: cf. J. Collin de Plancy, *Dictionnaire infernal* (Paris 1863) s.v. Abigor.

[90] On the magical staff/sceptre, see esp. F.J.M. de Waele, *The Magic Staff or Rod in Graeco-Italian Antiquity* (Ghent 1927); idem 1929; idem, s.v. Zauberstab, Roscher 6 (1937) 542–59.

[91] L. Robert, Documents d'Asie Mineure, *BCH* 107 (1983) 518–20; J. Strubbe, ARAI EPITUMBIOI. *Imprecations against Desecrators of the Grave in the Greek Epitaphs*

one was set up in a local temple in an attempt to stop a series of bath-house thefts.[92] In Christian contexts, sceptres or rods are traditionally one of the attributes of the archangels, saints and martyrs. Examples abound. An archangel with a sceptre appears on a jasper formerly in the Le Clerc collection together with the names of Gabriel, Michael, Ouriel and Souriel.[93] Simeon Stylites cured a leper by touching him with his staff, and lent others to his disciples for them to perform miracles in his name.[94] The martyr Mamas of Caesarea received a staff directly from heaven and heard a voice saying, *excipe virgam hanc et semper tuis manibus porta. Quicquid autem a me postulaveris, dum compleveris orationem tuam, percuties virga terram et dabit tibi lapidem et parebit desideriis tuis*, "receive this staff and carry it with you at all times. Whatever you will have me do, after completing your request, strike the ground with the staff, and it will produce a stone and obey your desires".[95] With the aid of his staff, Heraclides of Cyprus divided the waters of a torrent in spate.[96] In such texts, the staff has become a magical wand.

4.3. *The Power of Blood*

A third feature of the Carrio text, the allusion to the martyrdom of St. Christopher, warrants some discussion. As J. Gil first pointed out (1970, 46; 1981, 162f.), ll. 17–23 (*ora VII*) contain a series of phrases alluding to, or citing from, the saint's Passion:

> *Sanctus Christoforus dixit: "Si inueni gratiam in conspectu tuo, Domine Deus meus, da mici fiduciam loquendi ad te". Et dixit Dominus: "Loquere quod uolueris". Respondit sanctus dicens: "Da iterum gratiam corpori meo*

---

of Asia Minor. A Catalogue. IK 52 (Bonn 1977) nos. 53, 54, 61f., 64f., 67f.; Petzold *BIWK* 4 and 89f.

[92] Oaths/curse: *TAM* 5.1 no. 318 = Petzold *BIWK* no. 69; consequently 'a sceptre' might mean 'an oath', SEG 37: 1000 = Petzold *BIWK* no. 58 cf. Chaniotis 2004, 11–15, 34f.; sinners: several stelai show the principal holding a sceptre vertical in their left hand, e.g. Petzold *BIWK* nos. 6, 10, 11; bath-house theft: *TAM* 5.1 no. 159 = Petzold *BIWK* no. 3, cf. Herrmann 1962, 30–34; Ricl 1992, 96f.

[93] Peterson 1926, 84 no. 5.

[94] H. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites*. Subsidia hagiographica 14 (Brussels and Paris 1923) lxvi.

[95] *Pass. Mam.*, *Enc. Vit*. 6 ap. Berger 2002, 246. In the Greek version (§12), the staff also has the power to tame wild animals (Berger 2002, 292f.).

[96] *Acta Heracl*. 14 ap. F. Halkin, Les Actes apocryphes de saint Héraclide de Chypre, disciple de l'apôtre Barnabé, *Anal. Boll.* 82 (1964) 156f.

in omnes qui habuerint parum reliquiarum mearum tantum mereantur ut spiritus malignus non eos perterreat neque passio infirmitatis, locus ubi fuerint de reliquiis meis non superueniat ibi indignatio grandinis neque lesio frugum aut terribilitas uinearum, sed etsi aliquando lese fuerint sicut mei presentia ubicumque deuenerint reliquie mee, dona gratiam, Domine Deus meus, omnes habitantes in regiones illas labores culture sue affluenter excipientes, repleti tua gratia, glorificent sanctum nomen tuum ex toto corde suo. Ita fac, Domine Deus meus". Et dixit Dominus: "Secundum quod postulasti ita erit et non te contristabo. Tu itaque ueni, ascende ad fratres tuos. Omnes enim iusti mirantur in te et militia angelorum meorum cupiunt uidere te". Et hec quum audisset, discessit et uenit ad locum preparatum et dixit ad spiculatorem: "Veni, fili, fac quod tibi iussum est. Sed adiuro te per Deum qui intendit super orbem terre, ne me iudices". Et hec dicens, consignauit se et fixis genibus extendit ceruicem et sic amputatum est caput eius. Consumauit autem martyrium suum die dominica hora septima.

Pass. Christophori 33

According to Gil, the allusions to the saint in the Carrio text are directly related to its purpose, as the faithful believed that anybody who possessed a relic of St Christopher would be protected from all harm, particularly hail and agricultural pests. This is reasonable enough. However, I believe the true explanation lies closer to magical procedures, and provides the true justification for the trust placed in the saint's relics.

In my view, the Passion of St. Christopher is evoked in the Carrio text because of the nature of the saint's death. The key lies in Carrio l. 22: *amputatus est caput*, "his head was cut off"—i.e. his blood flowed to the ground. It should be remembered that formulae and superstitious customs had been deeply rooted in the collective consciousness for centuries. They might appear to have been abandoned when in fact they had only been dormant. I would therefore suggest the following reconstruction: the ritual spilling of blood to ward off hail is attested in the earliest Greek exorcisms practised in the Peloponnese, at Kleonai, as we have already seen; it was probably practised in other parts of Greece, since the custom of protecting vines with a strip of leather, attested to by the *Geoponica*, was basically just another way of evoking the power of blood (in the form of the bloody hide of a sacrificial animal). Such traditions undeniably continued to exist in Hellenistic and Roman times, since Palladius alludes to the practice of warding off hail by brandishing bloodstained axes at the sky. The motif of blood could also be distorted into unrecognisability by popular superstition,

for example in the red cloth covering the millstone, or ability of red coral to ward off storms and hail.[97]

Christian phylacteries could not employ such rites; orthodoxy required formulae that respected the dichotomy between demons who are permitted by God to put the believer to the test, and the power of God, as delegated to His angels and saints, to ward off disasters. However, it would be naïve to think that there was no resistance to giving up practices resorted to by so many people who coexisted with Christians—and by Christians themselves before they adopted the new faith; sprinkling blood on the ground had always been believed to stimulate fertility in the land.[98] It was a simple matter to replace magical protective blood with the invocation of the blood that Christ and numerous martyrs had shed for man. This step was taken at latest by V^{P}–VII^{P}, since the lead cross from Aïn-Fourna (**4**) includes the sequence *ibi nata est bitis* (= *uitis*) *cum senquine* (= *sanguine*) *Christi* immediately before the recommendation to turn round and repeat the formula of the exorcism three times. What we have here is the surreptitious perpetuation of traditional ceremonies involving blood, circumambulation and triplication, to protect the countryside against hail.

It is highly likely that the ecclesiastical authorities were aware of this subterfuge, since they would hardly have condoned invocations to pagan demons which had been condemned by the Decretum Gelasianum, and moved against it. The response was to introduce a pious passage into such exorcisms invoking the passion of the saints, with brief references to their form of martyrdom, so as to introduce the idea of blood without raising suspicion (since the word 'blood' does not appear as such).[99] For example, before his martyrdom St Cyriacus prayed, without making any mention of blood, that hail and other ills

---

[97] See pp. 566, 560 above.

[98] P. Pachis, Il significato e il ruolo del sangue nei rituali del culto greco-romano, in Vattioni 1989, 261–71 at 261.

[99] The power of St Christopher's blood is thematised in the version of his death in the *Legenda Aurea*: "One of the arrows returned suddenly from the air and smote him (the King) in the eye, and blinded him. To whom Christopher said: 'Tyrant, I shall die to-morn, […] make a little clay, with my blood tempered, and anoint therewith thine eye, and thou shalt receive health.' Then by the commandment of the King he was led for to be beheaded, and then, there made he his orison, and his head was smitten off […]. And the king then took a little of his blood and laid it on his eye, and said: 'In the name of God and of St Christopher!' and was anon healed. […] The blood of the holy martyr re-established his sight, and enlumined him in taking away the blindness of his body" (§100, trans. William Caxton).

should never occur in the area of his death: *in locum autem ubi fuerit tabernaculum martyrii, non veniat grando neque mortalitas hominum nec fames nec sterilitas et daemonum incursus*.[100] The power of martyrs' blood to defeat demons was early acknowledged, for example by Origen: "Blessed be the soul of the martyr, who defeats the airborne host of demons blocking his path (to the heavenly altar) with the sight of his blood spilt in martyrdom"; and John Chrysostom: "At the sight of the blood of the martyrs, while the angels expressed great joy, demons were awestruck and the devil trembled. What was flowing was not common blood, but the blood of salvation, holy blood, blood worthy of the heavens".[101] The purity, virtue and strength of the martyr was believed to give his blood matchless power, analogous, I would say, to the belief that the blood of pure undefiled creatures, such as foetuses or the new-born, possessed a special power.[102] The blood of the martyrs thus replaced the older pagan forms. I believe that it is no coincidence that what are in some parts of Europe called "stone saints" (Cosmas and Damian, for example), because they have served as protection against hail right up to modern times, were always martyrs who had been subjected to violent torture.

Christians in fact often appealed to the blood of martyrs. In some cases the success of the cult was directly linked to blood: the relics of Gervasius and Protasius, for example, were well known in the western Roman world partly thanks to Ambrose of Milan, but also because of an unusual circumstance, the presence of bloodstains on their bodies.[103] The blood of the martyr Euphemia, collected in her sepulchre in Constantinople with a sponge, was distributed among the people, and was also sent "over the entire earth" to any of the faithful who wanted some (Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.3). The Christian *imaginaire* of the circus encouraged the belief that fruit-trees were fertilised by the blood of martyrs, and that martyrdom turned shed blood into the

---

[100] *Pass. SS. Ciryci et Iulittae, BHL* 1802, *Acta SS., Iun.* 3 p. 33, n. 22.

[101] Origen, *Hom. Jud.* 7.2 = *GCS* 7, 507f.; Chrysostom, *De martyr.* 2 = Migne, *PG* 50, 709. On the power of martyrs' blood, see P. Rukamba, Il sangue del martiri in Cipriano di Cartagine, in Vattioni 1983, 1083–89; U.M. Fasola, Il culto del sangue dei martiri nella chiesa primitiva e deviazioni devozionistiche nell'epoca della riscoperta delle catacombe, in Vattioni 1983, 1473–89; M. Forlin Patrucco, Sangue e martirio nella letteratura del primo monachesimo orientale, in Vattioni 1983, 1541–60; A. Quacquarelli, Il battesimo di sangue, in Vattioni 1989, 1263–75.

[102] Cf. M.G. Varvounis, Une pratique de magie byzantine et la prise de Pergame par les arabes, *Byzantion* 68 (1998), 148–56 at 152.

[103] P. Courcelle, *Histoire littéraire des grandes invasions* 3 (Paris 1964) 287–91.

flour required to make the bread of Christ (e.g. Ignatius: "I am the wheat of the Lord, which must be ground by the teeth of beasts").[104] All blood spilt in violent circumstances, such as that of βιοθάνατοι, was of course useful for magical purposes, but the blood of a martyr was even more valuable because Christians considered it holy and almost divine, similar to the blood of Christ. So it should come as no surprise that both pagans and Christians vied with one another, at the moment of martyrdom, to fill sponges and cloths with the blood shed by the victims. It is highly probable that the sponges used by the novice gladiators (who were responsible for cutting the martyrs' throats) to clean off the blood spattered on their bodies later became prized items for magic ceremonies and spells.[105] The attendants of the martyr Cyprian wanted to keep his clothes, which were saturated with his sweat and blood, almost certainly in order to make use of them or sell them. Likewise the faithful strewed linen cloths (*linteamina et manualia*) at the spot where he was martyred.[106]

In Christian tradition, blood was valued even when it was not that of martyrs or saints but of exemplary individuals. In the biography of Dioscorus, the patriarch of Alexandria, famous for the role he played at the Council of Ephesus in 449 CE, the following miracle was attributed to him:

> Pendant que les serviteurs traînaient notre père, l'ongle de l'un d'eux l'égratigna à la main, et il en sortit du sang que j'essuyai avec mes mains. En sortant de chez ce misérable, je vis assis sur sa porte un homme qui avait la main desséchée. Je résolus d'essayer si notre père était arrivé à la hauteur des premiers pères qui souffrirent pour la foi orthodoxe, comme Alexandre, Athanase et les autres. J'allai près de cet homme qui avait la main desséchée et je lui dis: 'Montre-moi ta main, tu es donc né ainsi?'. Ô grandeur des miséricordes de Dieu!, pendant que je lui disais cela comme pour l'interroger, je fis sur la main un signe de croix avec la sang de notre saint père et cet homme cria et dit: 'Que fais-tu en me couvrant la main de sang?' Et aussitôt elle fut étendue aussi bien que l'autre main par la vertu de Dieu qui réside dans ses saints.
>
> Theopistos, *Histoire de Dioscore* 16 in Nau 1903, 295

---

[104] R. Triomphe, *Le lion, la vierge, et le miel* (Paris 1989) 352 n. 14.

[105] L. Robert, Une vision de Perpétue martyre à Carthage en 203, *CRAI* 1982, 229–276 (= *OMS* 5, 791–839) provides a thorough examination of the realities of martyrs' executions and the role of gladiators at them.

[106] *Vita Cypr*. 16, ed. Hartel p. 108; *Acta procons*. 5, ed. Hartel p. 113; cf. Delehaye 1933, 60.

The efficacy of other types of blood was also officially acknowledged by some Christians. For example, a Christian prayer from the Church of Ethiopia links hail and blood (here, in fact, menstrual blood): "A prayer for blood and pregnancy: You who came to Damascus, Jesus Christ, who caused the power of the hail to condense, condense and stem the blood of her menstruation and open the womb of thy servant *NN*".[107]

4.4. *Disposing of Ills*

The remaining elements of the Carrio text pose no major problems. The formula in ll. 8–10: *per montes uada et reuertam, ibi neque galus canta neque galina cacena, ubi neque arator est neque seminator semina, ub'i'ui neq(ue) nulla nomina reson'a'*, was a well known magical injunction, appearing with variations in spells aimed at banning evils to the ἐσχάτια or boundaries of human habitation, to wild and uncultivated regions. J. Gil found a Latin parallel from the Passion of St Bartholomew: *uade in deserta ubi nec auis uolat nec arator arat nec umquam vox hominis resonat*, which in all likelihood served as one model for the Carrio text.[108] There must be more to it than this, however: the Byzantine Christian exorcism (**9**) contains a similar phrase to the Carrio text, which like it mentions the rooster (though not the hen), but its conception of silence (the absence of the semantron, i.e. the sound of the church bell) is religiously inflected and is not a merely social one. Sequences of this kind occur in all types of apotropaic texts; indeed they seem to go back to the Indo-European horizon, as well being found in the cultural contexts of the Middle East. As Weinreich showed, it was fairly common from the Classical period to use a prayer-formula (*apopompê* or *apagogê*) to ward off imminent evils or harmful influences—sometimes personified as an evil spirit—that might befall the individual himself, his family, his dwelling, his property or his land. He suggested a twofold classification: the simple *apopompê*,

[107] O. Raineri, Dan (sangue) in alcuni testi etiopici di lingue semitiche, in Vattioni 1989, 207–306 at 278. Another even more surreptitious way of associating blood with phylacteries against hail may have been to includes the archangel Uriel in the (optional) list of protectors. Examples are to be found both in the Noto text (**5**) and the Carrio slate (l. 4).

[108] *Passio Bartholomaei* 17; see Gil Fernández 1981, 176; also Velázquez 2004, 371 on ll. 8–10.

which merely sought to get rid of the problem, regardless of what happened to it (as long as it disappeared); and the *apopompê* that was linked to an *epipompê*, i.e. a directive to a specific location.[109]

The second form, which is what concerns us here, was the surest and the one most likely to succeed; practitioners considered it to have the power to banish any problem that needed to be exorcised by ordering it to go to a specific place. Once the spirit had departed to where it had been sent, it was given free rein to do its worst, particularly if it was to its own detriment. The *epipompê* could be directed towards the body of animals or humans, but its most widespread (and considerate) form banished the malignant powers to a destination where they could not harm any living being; hence we constantly find them being sent to deserts, uninhabited mountains, the sea or the ends of the earth.[110] In the Greek and Latin formulae, this locus has one of two identities, non-civilisation (ocean depths, deserted landscapes, wildernesses, where the worker neither ploughs nor sows, where there are no shepherds, no fruits or fish), and absolute silence (no human voice is heard, no child cries, the cock does not crow, the dog does not bark, the bronze [simandra] does not resound).[111] The boundary crossed by the banished spirit thus separates our world from those places where everything is desolate, silent and dark, a frontier which is also a symbol of the separation between the living and the dead.[112] There is no

---

[109] Weinreich 1929, 9–28 [175–94].

[110] Telling the threat to go ἄχρις Ὑπερβορέων, "to the land of the Hyperboreans" was merely a variant on τέρματα γαῖας: Weinreich 1929, 20 [186].

[111] On the workings of the *apopompê* and its expressions in the East, Greece and Rome, as well as its manifestations in the mediaeval and modern era, see O. Weinreich, Religiös-ethische Formen der Epipompe", in Th. Klauser and A. Rücker (eds.), *Pisciculi. Studien zur Religion und Kultur des Altertums. Franz Joseph Dölger zum 60. Geburtstage dargeboten von Freunden, Verehrern und Schülern* (Münster 1939) 291–308 (= Weinreich 1979, 61–77); idem, Unheilbannung im volkstümlichen Gebet, Segen und Zauberspruch, *Universitas* 1 (1946) 275–99 (= Weinreich 1979, 199–223); A.D. Nock, Deities and Rites of Aversion, Appdx to The Cult of Heroes, *HThR* 37 (1944) 171–74 (= *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*,[2] Z. Stewart (ed.) [Oxford 1986] 2: 599–601); H. S. Versnel, Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer, in idem (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship*. Studies in Greek and Roman Religion 2 (Leyden 1981) 1–64 at 18f.; idem,, 'May he not be able to sacrifice…' Concerning a curious Formula in Greek and Latin Curses, *ZPE* 58 (1985) 247–69 at 254; R. Schlesier, s.v. Apopompe, in *HrwG* 2 (1990) 38–41.

[112] Silence is here the most telling index, cf. W. Deonna, *De Télesphore au "moine bourru". Dieux, génies et démons encapuchonnés*. Coll. Latomus 21 (Brussels 1955) 90f. I am currently preparing a more extensive paper on this subject, with the title "*Saeculum redactum in antiquuum silentium*", to appear in *MHNH*.

doubt that the banishment-prayer or exorcism actively benefitted from the idea of a powerful barrier surrounding the desolate areas of the earth—or materialising on the sea shore—which could be manipulated to allow the entry of calamities, and then closed so tightly as to keep the dangerous spirits enclosed there for ever.[113]

The *apopompê* formula would have almost certainly been rooted in Visigothic Hispanic amulets against harmful weather phenomena. This view is reinforced by a recently-published text found in Fuente Encalada (Zamora), also written on slate and of roughly the same date as the Carrio text.[114] This is the transcription suggested by the editors:

[--]incib[--]
[--vir]gine mi[--]
[--]nolis ra[--]
[--]sunt supe[r--]
[--]m≥i≥na≥[.]d≥ul[.]ro[--]
[--]s cuis matris fue≥[.]o[--]
[--]eleison transeat[..]per tra[nsea--]
[--]triades uadas et ibi uadas ubi nec ais [uolat nec arator arat nec unquam]
[--n]u≥la uox ominum resonantur[--]
[--Pat]er et Filiu[s] et S(piritus) S(an)c(tu)s ab fe[--]
[--]milia numerum uakarum[--]
[--]d≥o≥tare uolunt ut[--]
[--]equineisne (quingenta) [--]
[--]amen[--]
[--](signum)[--]

Granted that the (abbreviated) *apopompê* formula in ll. 8f. indicates that this is a spell against unfavourable weather,[115] I incline to think that it is aimed at storms in general, not specifically against hail. If instead of *vir*]*gine* in l. 2 we read *uor*]*agine*, as the objective, which is palaeographically possible, the term is broad and expressive enough (storms similar to whirlwinds) to cover all adverse weather contingencies. In view of the variability of these texts, it is inadvisable to try and

[113] As may be inferred from some of the expulsion commands in *apopompê* formulae, such as ἔξηλθε, *exite* (go away!) or ἐκτός, ἐκτός (out! out!).

[114] A. Esparza Arroyo and R. Martín Valls, La pizarra altomedieval de Fuente Encalada (Zamora): contribución al estudio de las inscripciones profilácticas, *Zephyrus* 51 (1998) 237–62. The editors considered it to be a spell against hail, cf. the paper by I. Velázquez elsewhere in this volume, p. 625 nn. 80 and 83.

[115] Depending on the extent of loss at the right margin, the formula may be reduced to *nec auis uolat, nec nulla uox hominum resonantur*.

reconstruct further elements. The main value of the Fuente Encalada text in the present context is after all simply to reinforce the claim that the *apopompê* formula was still current in Visigothic Hispania in VIII^{p}.

4.5. *Closure*

The repetition of the sacred invocations featured in the final part of the Carrio amulet (ll. 26f.) is a common device. The exorcistic value of the Hebrew words *amen* and *alleluia* was highly prized in the late-Roman period.[116] *Amen* also acquired an aura of prestige as a magic figure, as the isopsephic equivalents of its Greek letters (α+μ+η+ν) add up to 99 (1+40+8+50). In fact, the pagans adopted the expression too.[117] I have already referred to triple repetition of a word or an action in spells (n. 35 above). The Aïn-Fourna phylactery (**4**) has two combinations (see p. 565 above): on side I it links *agios* (three times), *emen* (twice) and *alleluia* (twice), adding up to the magic number seven; on side II, *agios* (three times), *emen* (three) and *alleluia*. The sequence we find in the Carrio text (*amen, amen, per semper amen* + *alleluia*) is probably a shortened form or the final part of a longer sequence. The invocation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit also features on the Aïn-Fourna cross and comes, in both cases, just before the series of Hebrew words.

4.6. *Symbols*

Pentagrams feature in the exorcism, but need no detailed discussion. In magic texts, star signs or the invocation of cosmogonic and planetary spirits were aimed at evoking the omnipresent forces of the universe in the spell. In material form, through either a drawing or written reference, they served to attract natural powers to the drawn symbols and were supposed to bring planetary influences to bear on the ceremony. The five-pointed star, known as the pentagram, was one of the astral symbols originating from the east that were highly appreciated in religion and magic; the partiality for it felt by Christian talismans, shared only by the chi-rho symbol, is due to the previously-mentioned fact that the pentagram enjoyed enormous prestige as protection because it

[116] H. Engberding, s.v. Alleluja, *RfAC* 1 (1950) 293–98 at 298; A. Stuiber, Nachträge zum Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum: Amen, *JbAC* 1 (1958) 153–59.
[117] F. Cabrol, s.v. Amen, *DACL* 1 (1924) 1554–73 at 1571–73.

was the pattern on Solomon's seal, the scourge of demons.[118] For this reason, the star usually opens and closes the exorcism, rendering it protected and sealed from beginning to end, as in our case.[119] Particularly instructive, I feel, is the Aïn-Fourna cross (**4**): on side I, the first line is framed by pentagrams and the last line is composed of another five; side II, however, begins and ends with a single pentagram, as is the case with the Carrio text.

5. *Maintaining Effectivity*

Before I conclude, I just should note one further feature that the Carrio slate shares with other analogous spells, namely the manner in which the item is displayed or mounted. We have already seen that, by contrast with improvised rituals performed when storms were imminent, 'prophylactic' inscriptions against harm were designed to be located where they could constantly take effect. It is clear that some of these talismans were nailed to a support that was visible within the property; these include the phylacteries on metal that still have the corresponding perforations: the bronze tablet from Bouchet (**2**), the lead cross from Aïn-Fourna (**4**) and the lead tablet from Trogir (**7**). A second group is made up of the inscriptions on stone, also left out in all weathers, which were presumably placed on elevations overlooking the land: this was the case with the exorcism from Philadelphia, Lydia (**3**) and the statue-base dedicated to Mercury from the Cilician Gates (**8**). But it is the third group that mainly concerns me here: the spells designed to remain hidden. The most noteworthy example is the Sidi Kaddou text (**1**), which ends by asking the gods to protect the estate's produce for as long as the stones bearing their sacred names are buried around it. The writers of the exorcism evidently buried several such stones—a minimum of three, in order to mark an area—on the boundaries of the property.[120] The Sicilian phylacteries found at Noto (**5**) and Palazzolo

[118] P. Perdrizet, *Negotium perambulans in tenebris. Études de démonologie gréco-orientale* (Strasbourg 1922) 35–38; Peterson 1926, 93 and 101; E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 7: *Pagan Symbols in Judaism* (New York 1958) 198f.

[119] Recall the term περισφραγίζειν in the Philadelphia talisman (**3**) (p. 563 above).

[120] Thus the three stones from Amaseia in Pontus with an invocation to Αἰθὴρ Ἀλεξιχάλαζος might not have been temenos-markers, as French 1996, 88 suggested (see n. 53 above), but three phylacteries buried to mark out an area to be protected from hail.

Acreide (**6**) might also have been directly buried, judging from the phrase phrase ὅπου κεῖται τὸ φυλακτήριον τοῦτο in (**5**), expressing the idea that the amulet is reclining, sleeping or buried.

Although it might be thought that such interment might have been due to the persecution that magic and witchcraft were subjected to from time to time, sometimes including even the most innocent signs of superstition,[121] the fact is that magical measures designed to protect crops were never shrouded in mystery or secrecy, as they were considered acceptable and tolerable, because of their inoffensive nature. From very early times, the Church, following the hints in the Gospels (Jesus calming the elements), had tolerated ceremonies to ward off hail and other agrarian disasters by sanctioning the use of prayers, phylacteries, sacred symbols such as the cross, and saints' relics. The Christian emperors declared that the quest for remedies against rain and hail was not a crime, as they were designed not to harm people but to safeguard the work of farmers.[122] A similar measure was decreed by Chindasuinth (642–53) (*Lex Visigoth.* [*Chind.*] 6.2.4).

There were, I think, several reasons for burying such texts. It is perfectly natural that a phylactery to safeguard crops should be entrusted to the land itself. Interment also served to transmit the intrinsic force of the spell directly to the property indicated. Moreover, it seems that burial was not random: the phylactery acted as a barrier against the scourge and protected all the crops growing inside a notional area. I have already remarked on the importance of ritual circumambulation with an apotropaic object; in the case of the turtle, it was then fixed (half-buried) at the starting out point; when an animal skin was used, it was hung up. I take it that texts such as the clay tablets from

---

[121] Caracalla went so far as to condemn to death anyone who used magic talismans to protect themselves against malaria (HA, *Vit. Carac.* 5.7). Constantius II came down harshly on all types of magical practices, including inoffensive ones, and under Valentinian I and Valens show trials were held for alleged black magic practices and all acts of witchcraft were remorselessly prosecuted, as were the owners of books of devil-worship: J. Maurice, La terreur de la magie au IV^{e} siècle, *RHD* 6 (1927) 108–120; Barb 1963, 126–38; Phillips 1986, 2718–20; Brashear 1992, 155 n. 21.

[122] E.g. the ruling of Constantine I in 321/4 [317–19 Seeck]:…*nulli uero criminationibus inplicanda sunt remedia humanis quaesita corporibus aut in agrestibus locis, ne maturis uindemiis metuerentur imbres aut ruentis grandinis lapidatione quaterentur, innocenter adhibita suffragia, quibus non cuiusque salus aut existimatio laederetur, sed quorum proficerent actus, ne diuina munera et labores hominum sternerentur* (*CTh.* 9.16.3). This law was reiterated by Theodosius II in 438 and then again by Justinian in 529 (*CJ.* 9.18.4).

Noto (**5**) and Palazzolo Acreide (**6**), as well as, no doubt, the Carrio slate, which were one-off talismans with no copies made, would first have been taken in procession around the area to be protected, before being covered by a layer of earth.

The Carrio phylactery in fact shows every sign of having been deliberately buried. As Gómez Moreno noted, the slate comprises two unequal parts that need to be joined together to be read; it was split from top to bottom by a single blow; and both parts were drilled through in their upper sections

> before they were written on. The text completely fills up one of the sides, which is fairly flat, but rough-surfaced, with hardly any space between the lines. In the hole there is still a piece of iron nail that kept the two surfaces together, so that it could not be read until it was removed. This was how it was discovered by chance below the ground, no one knows how, in 1926 by some farm labourers in Carrio, a small locality near Villayón, on the western edge of Asturias.[123]

The custom of dividing a text into two and placing the two inscribed areas face to face is very occasionally found with *defixiones*.[124] The ritual of placing the two inscribed faces together is thus common to both types of document, just like that of piercing the text with a nail, but the value of the procedure is different in each case: the *defixio* is intended to attract spirits from the netherworld, the phylacteries to drive them away.

In fact, several types of nail have survived, some of them decorated, strangely enough, with images of snakes.[125] I am tempted to link these items with the burial of phylacteries, since that might help to explain the mysterious interlude in the cross from Aïn-Fourna (**4**), which features a sort of dialogue between a snake (*vipera serpis*), which many people considered as embodying the fertility of the land, and a diminutive man (*omunculo*) who can protect it from excessive rains

---

[123] Gómez Moreno 1966, 95. See also the drawing in Velázquez 2004, 370.

[124] The only Latin example is in fact the II^{a} lead diptych from near the Porta Stabiana at Pompeii, one of the earliest known *defixiones* in Latin, found bound together by means of a leaden band: *CIL* I^{2} 2541 + p. 844 = IV 9251 = *ILLRP* 1147 = Solin, *Ostia* no. 39. In other cases, such as the Emporion curses discussed by Marco Simón elsewhere in this volume (p. 399), the Praunheim/Frankfurt *defixiones* against the adversaries of Sextus (*AE* 1978: 545–46), and the four late-Roman texts from Bologna against the doctor Porcellus (García Ruiz 1957 nos. 5–8), similar texts were for some reason written out at least twice on different sheets of lead, but not split and not closed together as in a diptych/writing tablet.

[125] Cf. H. Leclercq, s.v. Amulettes, *DACL* 1 (1924) 1784–1860 at 1791–93, figs. 477f.

and harmful hail.[126] Passing a nail through the phylactery and burying it meant entrusting it to the care of a symbolic reptile, protected by Mother Earth, who would take charge of it and would constantly ensure that it was effective—something very different from the symbolism of the dragon/serpent in curses.[127] However, although the practice might have survived, it is almost certain that its true sense was unknown to its practitioners.

6. *Miscellaneous Considerations*

There are still a few odd points to clear up. There is, for example, the term *nonia* in l. 1. Gómez Moreno suggested that the word might refer to some form of levy or tax, and in the absence of any other theory, this suggestion has been repeated by others.[128] But what is a levy doing in the spell, and why should it be something the author of the text has received? I suspect rather that *nonia*, which must be connected with the idea of 'nine-fold', denotes some element in the exorcism that was deemed necessary to make it effective. As Sauvaget puts it: "There are texts that were written in such a way as to express themselves in the name of the very object in which they were read; they were always in the first person singular, as is logical, and the inscribed medium was considered to speak exclusively in its own name, not in the name of all its counterparts".[129] If that applies here and the subject of *recepi* is the phylactery itself, the text could be indicating one of four possibilities: a) that before it was buried, a ritual had been held to take the spell to the ninth circuit, that is the farthest boundary of the area to be protected; b) a ritual involving nine circuits of the area; c) the rite of reciting the spell nine times (in other words, three times three)—recall the *ingira modo ter memora* of the Aïn-Fourna spell (**4**); or d) the ritual of

---

[126] There are other links between snakes and anti-hail spells, see n. 21 above.

[127] In fact, these nails might also have been used in *defixionum tabellae*. Indeed, since very early times, serpents were considered domestic, oracular and apotropaic animals, as were evil demons, cf. Preisendanz 1935, 162f.; F. Heichelheim, s.v. Tierdämonen, *RE* 6A (1936) 862–931 at 873, 900, 913.

[128] Gómez Moreno 1966, 97; also García Ruiz 1967, 232; Velázquez 1989, 563 and 615. In Velázquez 2004, 375 she accepts the interpretation in Fernández Nieto 1997, 286 n. 84, partly repeated here, though I now incline to the view that *nonia* = *nenia*.

[129] J. Sauvaget, Flocons à vin ou grenades à "feu grégeois", in J. Moreau (ed.), ΠΑΓΚΑΡΠΕΙΑ. *Mélanges Henri Grégoire*. AIPH 9 and 12 (Brussels 1949–53) 1: 522–31 at 527.

invoking nine gods or nine powers, as in the Sidi Kaddou inscription (**1**). However, a much simpler solution is also possible, namely that the form *nonia* is a badly-written or phonetic variant of *nenias*. It is fairly common knowledge that *nenia* denotes not only a funeral chant delivered at burials but also magic recitation and chanting (Horace, *Epod*. 17.29; Ovid, *Ars* 2.102; Fasti 6.142, all using the stock phrase *nenia Marsa*). If this were the case, the Carrio text would merely be certifying that all the stages of the text had been solemnly recited, in the manner of a funeral chant, and that therefore its power had been activated (*consecrata*).

I also suspect that the mention of a cemetery in ll. 6 and 24 is not a coincidence and may be due to the irrepressible desire to associate the invocation with such a place, the *coemeterium* being commonly held to be the appropriate place for magical practices (Longo 1989, 20f.). G. Charrière cites a procession in rural France organised on the feast of St John in which the participants, bearing lighted torches, visited the cemetery attached to the chapel (the ceremony having replaced the cult of *Mars Sutugius*); there they would each lay their flaming brands on the family tomb, but some would take them home, in the belief that this would ward off evil. However, from my point of view, the most remarkable aspect of this ceremony is that the embers of the pyres burnt that day were thought to act as protection against lightning and hail and to serve to purify the fields, expel evil spirits, fertilise the soil and keep the crops from disaster.[130] The ancient connection between anti-hail amulet (i.e. the embers) and cemetery is here plain.

I should like to offer one final observation with regard to ll. 10–12, where Satan is rejected in the name of Jesus Christ, *qui te licuit in Cirbes ciuitate*. Both Velázquez and Díaz translate this as "who banished (or confined) you to the city of Cirbes", taking *licuit* = *liquit* (*reliquit*).[131] An alternative would be to take *licuit* as a transitive form of *liquesco* (fuse, melt), with the support a passage of the Aïn-Fourna text (**4**) that I have already twice mentioned, namely the 'dialogue' between the

[130] G. Charrière, Feux, bûchers et autodafés bien de chez nous, *RHR* 194 (1978) 23–64 at 24. In certain parts of Europe processions with lighted torches were conducted through the fields to protect them from lightning and hail: S. Seligmann, *Die magischen Heil- und Schutzmittel aus der unbelebten Natur, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Mittel gegen den bösen Blick. Eine Geschichte des Amulettwesens* (Stuttgart 1927) 129.

[131] Velázquez 2004, 369, 372 and 379, reading *plicuit*, translates "because he shut you up in the city of Cirbes" and offers no comment on the passage.

snake and the *omuncio*. Here it seems that the function of the snake is to "fuse" or "dissolve" the visitor (*ut solberet te* = *ut solueret te*). I have argued elsewhere that this implies the gnostic and alchemical notion of an *homunculus* or ἀνθρωπάκιον, notably in the work of Zosimus of Panopolis.[132] I would argue that there was a tradition in the Mediterranean area that phylacteries against hail might contain an *historiola* involving the dissolution of an evil being. The development reflected in the Carrio slate would have involved giving Satan the leading role in the episode, following a Christian pattern developed much earlier for other types of spells. The apocryphal gospels suggest the reason. The early medieval *Acts of Pilate* tells the famous story of Christ's descent to the underworld and the condemnation of Satan:

> *Et ecce Dominus Iesus Christus ueniens in claritate excelsi luminis mansuetus, magnus et humilis, catenam suis deportans manibus Satan cum collo ligauit, et iterum a tergo ei religans manus resupinum eum elisit in tartarum, pedemque suum sanctum ei posuit in gutture, dicens: Per omnia saecula multa mala fecisti, ullo modo non quieuisti; hodie te trado igni perpetuo…Et demersus est in profundum abyssi.*[133]
>
> *Acta Pilati*, Latin B version, VIII [XXIV]

However that may be, whichever meaning we accept for *licuit* in the Carrio text, "banish, leave, confine" or "fuse, dissolve", I believe that the setting for Christ's action there is hell, and that the expression *in Cirbes ciuitate* denotes "the city of Cerberus" as a metonym for Hades, where Christ banished Satan for all eternity.[134] The name given to Hell in the Greek version of the Acts of Pilate is indeed Hades (ὁ ῞Αδης).

---

[132] Alfaro Giner & Fernández Nieto 2000, 1585–1587. The *omuncio* would end up being thrown into the fire and devoured by it, which was reminiscent of the copper sheet which would have been turned into gold if it was suitably treated in the fire in which it was melted.

[133] "And behold Lord Jesus Christ coming in the glory of heavenly light, kindly, great and humble, bearing in his hands a chain. He bound Satan by the neck, and his hands behind his back, and pushed him in the direction of Tartarus; he set his holy foot on his head saying: 'You have done great wrong for all the ages, and have never ceased from it; today I hand you over to the eternal fire…and plunged him into the depths of the Abyss." For *guttur* = head rather than mouth, see Souter, *Glossary* s.v.

[134] From an abbreviated form of the Latin *Cerberos*/*Cerberus* (Κέρβερος) it is a short step to Cerbes/Cirbes (with perhaps iotacism coming into play?).

7. *Conclusion*

The Carrio text thus constitutes the final link in the long line of ancient Christian phylacteries against hail, confirming the idea that magic is one of the areas in which a discontinuous tradition can most clearly be traced.[135] Like all the other surviving texts, it employs mechanisms and formulae drawn from various strands of the religious syncretism of the ancient Mediterranean. It preserves pagan beliefs and themes beneath the appearance of Christian piety, combining them haphazardly with invocations permitted and recommended by the Church. Nevertheless, with regard to the length and density of the formulae, and the restrained use of *signa*, it has a claim to be the most typical and complete of all surviving *ad grandinem* texts. One might find fault with its carelessness and obscurity, but, as I have stressed, logical order and meaning are secondary to sonority and magical resonance. We can surely detect here the hand of a well-to-do, far from unsophisticated Christian landowner, perhaps a priest, fully cognisant of the models inherited from the Late Empire, the phylacteries still in use in every province. It is, in short, an excellent example of the classical heritage in Visigothic culture, which extended to the farthest reaches of the Iberian Peninsula. My aim in producing this commentary has however been to explore the entire tradition of phylacteries against hail, and the mentality that made their production a meaningful enterprise. It was Angelo Brelich, one of the great practitioners of the history of religions, who urged us to investigate not only *what* a magical/religious element means, but also, and above all, *why* the people who created and preserved it said the things they did.[136]

---

[135] Barb 1963, 143. It should be remembered that the figure of *malefici* or *inmissores tempestatum*, which we have briefly touched on in this article, was perpetuated in Galician culture, giving rise to *nubeiros*, *tronadores*, *tronantes*, *escoleres* and *legrumantes* (*negrumantes*); I recently devoted an article to this topic: F.J. Fernández Nieto, El maravilloso guía de Borrow en el viaje al Finisterre, in A. Rodríquez Casal (coord.), *Humanitas. Estudios en Homenaxe ó Prof. Dr. Carlos Alonso del Real* (Santiago de Compostela 1996) 285–96. In late-antique Gaul it was widely believed that there were people able to cause hail and thunder at will, and that other sorcerers could prevent these disasters through counter-spells. Agobard of Lyon wrote a treatise claiming to refute such beliefs, cf. F. Bonnhölzl, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 1. *Von Cassiodor bis zum Ausklang der karolingischen Erneuerung* (Munich 1975) 423f.; H. Platelle, Agobard, évêque de Lyon († 840). Les soucoupes volantes, les convulsionnaires, in A. Dierkens (ed.), *Apparitions et miracles*, 2 (Brussels 1991) 85–93.

[136] A. Brelich, Note e discussioni, *SMSR* 28 (1957) 138–40.

Bibliography

Abt, A. 1908. *Die Apologie des Apuleius von Madaura und die antike Zauberei. Beiträge zur Erläuterung der Schrift* de magia. RGVV 4.2 (Giessen).
Alfaro Giner, C. and Fernández Nieto, F.J. 2000. L'empreinte du gnosticisme sur l'inscription chrétienne prophylactique d'Aïn-Fourna (Tunisie), in *L'Africa romana. Atti del XIII convegno di studio. Djerba, 10–13 dicembre 1998* (Rome) 2: 1577–87.
Barb, A.A. 1963. The Survival of Magic Arts, in A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford) 100-25.
Beckmann, F. 1923. *Zauberei und Recht in Roms Frühzeit. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Interpretation des Zwölftafelrechtes*. Diss. Münster (Osnabrück).
Berger, A. 2002. Die alten Viten des heiligen Mamas von Kaisareia. Mit einer Edition der Vita *BHG* 1019, *Anal. Boll.* 120, 241–310.
Brashear, W.M. 1992. À propos des tablettes magiques, in É. Lalou (ed.), *Les tablettes à écrire de l'Antiquité à l'Époque Moderne*. Bibliologia 12 (Turnhout) 149–58.
Burzachechi, M. 1959. Nuove iscrizioni greche cristiane di Comiso, *RAL* 14, 403–10.
Chaniotis, A. 2004. Under the Watchful Eyes of the Gods: Divine Justice in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor, in S. Colvin (ed.), *The Greco-Roman East = Yale Classical Studies* 31 (Cambridge) 1–43.
Delatte, A. 1927. *Anecdota Atheniensia. Textes grecs relatifs à l'histoire des religions*, 1 (Liège and Paris).
Delehaye, H. 1921. *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Brussels).
——. 1933. *Les origines du culte des martyrs*. Subsidia hagiographica 20 (Brussels).
Detienne, M. and Vernant, J.-P. 1974. *Les ruses de l'intelligence: La mètis des Grecs* (Paris).
Fernández Nieto, F.J. 1997. La pizarra visigoda de Carrio y el horizonte clásico de los χαλαζοφύλακες, in J.M Blázquez, A. González Blanco and R. González Fernández (eds.), *La tradición en la Antigüedad Tardía = Antigüedad y Cristianismo* 14 (Murcia) 259–86.
French, D.H. 1996. Amasian Notes 4. Cults and Divinities: The Epigraphic Evidence, *EpigrAnat* 26, 87–98.
García Ruiz, E. 1967. Estudio lingüístico de las *defixiones* latinas no incluidas en el corpus de Audollent, *Emerita* 35, 55–89 and 219–48.
Gil Fernández, J. 1970. Notas sobre fonética del latín visigodo, *Habis* 1, 45–86.
——. 1981. Epigrafía antigua y moderna, *Habis* 12, 153–76.
Gómez Moreno, M. 1966. *Documentación goda en pizarra* (Madrid).
Grégoire, H. 1922. *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure*, 1 (Paris; repr. Amsterdam 1968).
Herrmann, P. 1962. *Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordostlydien*, Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.- hist. Kl. 80 (Vienna).
Longo, A.A. 1989. La vita di S. Leone vescovo di Catania e gli incantesimi del mago Eliodoro, *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e neoellenici* 26, 3–98.
Manganaro, G. 1963. Nuovi documenti magici della Sicilia orientale, *RAL* 18, 57–74.
Michl, J. 1962. s.v. Engel I–IX, *RfAC* 5, 54–258.
Nau, F.N. 1903. L'histoire de Dioscore d'Alexandrie par son disciple Theopiste, *JAsiat* (ser.10) 1, 5–108 and 241–310.
Peterson, E. 1926. Εἷς Θεός. *Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Göttingen).
Phillips, C.R. 1986. The Sociology of Religious Knowledge in the Roman Empire to A.D. 284, *ANRW* II.16. 3, 2677–773.
Preisendanz, K. 1935. Die griechischen und lateinischen Zaubertafeln, 2, *APF* 11, 153–64.
Preisendanz, K. 1956. s.v. Salomo 4, *RE Suppl.* 8, 660–704.

Pugliese Carratelli, G. 1953. Epigrafi magiche cristiane della Sicilia orientale, *RAL* 8, 184–89.
Ricl, M. 1992. *Hosios kai Dikaios*. Seconde partie: Analyse, *EpigrAnat* 19, 71–103.
Vattioni, F. (ed.) 1983. *Sangue e antropologia nella letteratura cristiana. Atti della III Settimana, Roma 29 nov.-4 dic. 1982*. Collana "Sangue e antropologia" 3. Centro Studi Sanguis Christi (Rome).
——. (ed.) 1987. *Sangue e antropologia, riti e culto. Atti della V settimana, Roma 26 nov.–1 dic. 1984*. Collana "Sangue e antropologia" 5. Centro Studi Sanguis Christi (Rome).
——. (ed.) 1989. *Sangue e antropologia nella teologia. Atti della VI Settimana, Roma 23–28 nov. 1987*. Collana "Sangue e antropologia" 6. Centro Studi Sanguis Christi (Rome).
Velázquez Soriano, I. 1989. *Las pizarras visigodas: edición crítica y estudio*. Antigüedad y Cristianismo. Monografías, 6 (Murcia).
——. 2004. *Las pizarras visigodas. Entre el Latín y su disgregación. La lengua hablada en Hispania, siglos VI–VIII*. Colección Beltenebros 8 (Burgos).
Waele, F.J.M. de. 1929. s.v. Stab, *RE* 3A, 1894–923.
Weinreich, O. 1929. *Gebet und Wunder. Zwei Abhandlungen zur Religions- und Literaturgeschichte* (Stuttgart).
Weinreich, O. 1979. *Ausgewählte Schriften III. 1937–1970*. G. Wille (ed.) (Amsterdam).

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

BETWEEN ORTHODOX BELIEF AND 'SUPERSTITION' IN VISIGOTHIC HISPANIA[1]

Isabel Velázquez Soriano

1. *Introduction*

It is commonplace nowadays to observe that the dividing line between religious belief or public and private displays of faith on the one hand and 'superstition' or magical praxis on the other is often subjectively indistinct and in daily life easily crossed. In practice there is a continuum between understanding the theoretical side of a religion and conforming to its regular or established forms of worship, and all the many ways in which people, either individually or as groups, believe that they can approach a deity to ask for particular favours they require. The difference between praying to ask for a favour and believing that prayers can be used to put pressure on a divinity (be it a god, an angel, a denizen of the Underworld, or any other type of being believed to be superior to humans) is sometimes hard to make out; hence the fact that some, both in the past and now, have been convinced that they could call up spirits and obtain what they wanted either through their intervention, or—indirectly, through intermediaries—that of God. My intention in this paper is to offer some brief reflections, within such a

[1] This paper forms part of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science Research Project HUM 2005/00268/HIST, under the direction of Dr Gisela Ripoll. It is based on two previous articles in Spanish: I. Velázquez, Intersección de realidades culturales en la antigüedad tardía: el ejemplo de defixiones y filacterias como instrumento de la cultura popular, *Antiquité Tardive* 9 (2001) 149–162, and eadem, Magia y Conjuros en el mundo romano: Las defixiones, *Codex Aquilarensis* 17 (2001) 143–161. Some passages in the present paper are taken directly from the first of these. My reflections here form part of a broader study which, under the rubric of the mode of dissemination of religious beliefs, attempts to link a number of Visigothic inscriptions with a variety of contemporary literary (religious) texts. I used the Spanish translation by J.L. Calvo Martínez and M.D. Sánchez Romero, *Textos de magia en papiros griegos* (Madrid 1987), but all the translations in this version of my text have been revised from those of Preisendanz and Daniel & Maltomini. All translations from the Visigothic texts are my own, turned into English by Martin Dough.

framework, on the creation of 'Christian magic' in the particular case of Hispania in the Visigothic era.[2]

As is well known, north-western Hispania, controlled by the Arian Sueves, and the Arian Visigothic kingdom in the centre of Spain, were only thinly Christianised in the sixth century.[3] The religious practice of the great mass of the population,[4] including no doubt much of the local clergy (as opposed to the higher clergy and the religious), consisted of a mixture of pagan tradition and Christian forms. This amounted to a syncretism of the kind prevalent in Europe in the mediaeval period (indeed up to the Counter-Reformation) and which can be found in all periods of Christian contact with exotic peoples.[5] Such practices were often frowned on by bishops, who prescribed measures to try and correct what they felt were deviations from the faith, without taking them seriously enough to claim them as genuine heresies or deviant worship. They amounted in practice to the simplification and vulgarisation of Christian beliefs, and the transformation of certain public or private religious practices into instrumental rites. Liturgical formulae served as models for prayers used outside the sphere of the church, being converted into words of power and standard invocations for a variety of private ends.[6]

I see two main processes at work here. One is the effort made to communicate complicated orthodox concepts and theological issues to the laity, in Spain notably the work of Martin of Braga, which had the

---

[2] I do not intend to address the theoretical issue of the possible differences between magic and religion in the ancient world, or any other wider issue regarding the term magic. I use the term simply for convenience, equivalent to 'instrumental religion'.

[3] The Sueves were converted to Catholicism from c. 560 through the efforts of Martin of Braga (Bracara Augusta in Galicia), a Greek-speaking Pachomian monk: E.A. Thompson, The Conversion of the Spanish Suevi to Catholicism, in James 1980, 77–92; some correctives to his excessive scepticism e.g. over Chararic, in A. Ferrero, Braga and Tours: Some Observations on Gregory's *De virtutibus sancti Martini (1.11)*, *JECS* 3.2 (1995) 195–210.

[4] The towns were mainly inhabited by Goths, together with Hispano-Roman officials and the still extremely wealthy aristocrats, cf. P. Heather, *The Goths* (Malden and Oxford 1996) 276–98. Quite apart from the spread of a tied peasantry (the colonate), the decline of towns in the fourth century and after, to the benefit of the major villa production-centres, naturally encouraged the persistence of rural syncretism.

[5] For the pre-modern period in Europe, see Wilson 2000; exotic peoples, e.g. the case of the Jesuit mission to China: L.M. Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge MA 2008).

[6] For this phenomenon in Late-Roman Hispania, see Sanz Serrano 2003. As Engemann pointed out many years ago, "Auch alle christlichen Theologen glaubten an die Wirksamkeit der magischen Künste" (Engemann 1975, 23).

unintended consequence of legitimating aspects of traditional pagan practice. The second is the role of parochial schools and church readers (*lectores*), and more broadly the catechumenate, in communicating both a certain familiarity with liturgical and Biblical texts, mainly through rote learning, together with a degree of literacy.[7] Phrases derived from official practice, or prayers learnt by heart, provided a stock of material charged with the authority of the Church, which could be used instrumentally to re-empower the age-old services of protection and revenge traditionally offered by magical practice. The dividing line between belief and 'superstition' could easily be crossed, and amount to deviation from orthodox practice, or what at any rate might be found deviant by the religious or civil authorities responsible for controlling and directing religious practice.[8]

In some, perhaps even many, areas of the Late-Roman world, the authors of Christian magical texts, notably those in Coptic, frequently included literati, among them no doubt priests, deacons and monks. "The often sophisticated adaptations of [Judeao-Christian] myth [in Coptic magical texts] show that so-called magical texts had firm roots in literary culture".[9] In Visigothic Spain, I would argue, it was the

[7] On literary culture and literacy in Visigothic Spain, which boasted an extraordinary efflorescence in VI^{p}, after the death of Martin, see the recent synthetic accounts by Collins 1990 and 2004, 147–73; on the education available to the different ranks of clergy, Martín Hernandez 1988, 196–99. One of the canons of the first council of Braga in 563 specifically declares that *nihil poetice compositum in ecclesia psallatur* apart from the Psalms and selected passages of the *OT* and *NT* (§12, *de canonicis scripturis*). On the other hand, the main canon of the second Council in 572 (§1) suggests that many priests and catechumens were more or less ignorant of Catholic doctrine; on the latter, it declares: *ante dies viginti baptismi ad purgationem exorcismi catechumeni currant, in quibus viginti diebus omnino catechumeni symbolum, quod est Credo in Deum Patrem Omnipotentem, specialiter doceantur*, "the catechumens are to go to be purified by adjuration three weeks before baptism; during this period they are specifically to be taught the Creed".

[8] Obviously, within any given society, individual practices might be considered by one group as manifestations of faith, but by another as magic, superstition or vain falsehoods; on the use of these terms as boundary markers in antiquity, note A.F. Segal, Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition, in R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions [for] G. Quispel.*... EPROER 91 (Leyden 1981) 348–75, and the contribution to this volume by J.R. Rives (p. 65f.). On the historical use of the category superstition, see now Smith and Knight 2008.

[9] J. van der Vliet, Satan's Fall in Coptic Magic, *AMRC* 401–18 at 417; cf. Frankfurter 1998, 214–17; 257–64. The standard collection of Coptic magic, with numerous illustrations, is A.M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte* (Brussels 1930 [1931]); see also the good selection in translation by Meyer and Smith (*AChrMag*).

double process of necessary vulgarisation for pastoral purposes and the methods of Christian acculturation that provided fresh materials for 'superstitious' and magical praxis. Looking from the other side, we could just as well term it selective appropriation: the indigenous magical tradition, including literati and thus members of the clergy, selected those aspects of simplified Christian belief that best fitted its needs. Whereas in the past magical practitioners (outside the Graeco-Egyptian tradition) and individuals seeking revenge, success or justice had had to find authority where they could, often through appeal to local deities, the institutionalised authority of the Church offered a unified and powerful textual resource across the whole range of society. In my view these two aspects have not been taken sufficiently into account when analysing the persistence of 'paganism' in Late-Roman Christianity, but rather dismissed as marginal, even obvious, considerations. In the final instance, however, I believe that they jointly underpinned the continuation into the late Visigothic period of the custom of creating magical texts, whether defensive or aggressive.

2. *A Continuing Tradition of Magical Practice*

Such texts are the most easily accessible representatives of practice on the frontier between orthodox belief and 'superstition', on the fine line between what was permitted and what was proscribed, between official ritual and illicit imperative. As I have argued elsewhere,[10] they represent widely-distributed cultural forms, inasmuch as such rituals were known, and performed, throughout society, regardless of the social status of the individuals involved. Protective phylacteries and amulets were widely used; virtually everyone believed in the potential power of magical texts or properly invested sacral objects to accomplish the ends envisaged. Although texts such as the ensemble from Porta S. Sebastiano at Rome were composed by professionals,[11] the ideas they used were much more wide-spread: magical rituals, including written texts, were a constituent of the cultural heritage of the Late–Roman period; inasmuch as it carried over from the earlier Empire not merely

[10] See n. 1 above.

[11] R. Wünsch (ed.). *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* (Leipzig 1898) = *DTAud* 140–87.

the practice of different types of magical ritual but also the custom of expressing its anxieties, fears, demands and feelings of injustice by formulating prayers and supplications to major deities and recording them in a variety of media.[12] Private divination of all types, ritual magic, curse-texts, phylacteries and other curative/prophylactic texts, amulets and talismans were all still to be found at every social level of the Empire long after the spread of Christianity.[13] But in the course of the fourth century they came increasingly to be directed not so much to pagan deities as to the Christian God or his angels and saints.[14] There are also a few cases where, as a deliberate religious transgression, Satan and wicked demons are invoked.

One indication of this continuity is the efforts made by the imperial and ecclesiastical authorities to control magic of all types; Victoria Escribano's paper in this volume (p. 105) gives an impression of the repressive imperial legislation of the fourth and early fifth centuries.[15] In general, we may say that "public traces of paganism were

---

[12] See in general K. Preisendanz, Fluchtafel, *RfAC* 8 (1972) 1–28; L. Cesano, Defixio, in E. De Ruggiero (ed.), *Dizionario Epigrafico* 2/3 (Rome 1961) cols. 1558–91; D. Ogden, Binding-spells: Curse-tablets and Voodoo-dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds, in Ankarloo/Clark, 1–90. Phylacteries on precious metals: Kotansky *GMA*; magical gems and rings: C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, chiefly Graeco-egyptian*. Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series 49 (Ann Arbor and London 1950); Michel 2001; eadem 2004.

[13] See e.g. Barb 1963; N. Brox, Magie und Aberglaube in den Anfängen des Christentums, *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 83 (1974) 157–80; Engemann 1975; D.E. Aune, Magic in Early Christianity, *ANRW* II. 23. 2 (1980) 1507–57; F.C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen 1984) 316–448; Clerc 1995, 239–321; H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic: Papers originally… delivered at a Colloquium at Dumbarton Oaks, Feb. 27–28 1993* (Washington 1995); Flint 1999; Dickie 2001, 273–321; A. Bravo Martínez, Ἡ μαγικὴ κακοτεχνία. Materiales para una historia de la magia y la demonología bizantinas, *MHNH* 2 (2002) 5–70; G. Luck, The Survival of Ancient Magic in the Early Church, *MHNH* 3 (2003) 29–54 = 2006, 457–78 (abbreviated); N.B. Hansen, Ancient Execration Magic in Coptic and Islamic Egypt, in *MRAW* 427–45; M. Meyer, The Prayer of Mary in the Magical Book of Mary and the Angels, in S. Noegel, J. Walker and B. Wheeler (eds.), *Prayer, Magic and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (University Park 2003) 57–68 = *MRAW* 407–15; also the contributions on Byzantine magic in J.C.B. Petropoulos (ed.), *Greek Magic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (Abingdon and New York 2008) 39–81 (first published in Greek in 1999–2000).

[14] On the continuity between pagan and Byzantine/medieval Greek magic, see the numerous texts collected by F. Pradel, *Griechische und italienische Gebete, Beschwörungen und Rezepte*. RGVV 3.3 (Gießen 1907); A. Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia 1*. Bibl. Fac. Phil. et Lettres de l'Université de Liège 36 (Liège and Paris 1927).

[15] See also the detailed accounts of H. Funke, Majestäts-und Magieprozesse bei Ammianus Marcellinus, *JbAC* 10 (1967) 145–75; L. Desanti, *Sileat omnibus perpetuo*

indeed eliminated, whereas it proved much harder to curtail private practices such as the use of auguries, amulets, or witchcraft".[16] For example, the council of Elvira/Illiberis (modern Granada), held under the Tetrarchy in 305 CE and attended by bishops from towns in all the Spanish provinces, was very concerned about the prevalence of pagan practices and customs, and the violent conflicts between pagans and Christians. One of the canons (§6) drawn up in this connection is revealing not only because it tacitly acknowledges the efficacy of curses but also in its attempt to suggest that the Christian God cannot be held responsible—the efficacy of curses is a matter of idolatry, i.e. involves the worship of other (i.e. pagan) divinities:

> Si quiquumque per maleficium hominem interfecerit. *Si quis uero maleficio interficiat alterum, eo quod sine idolatria perficere scelus non potuit, nec in finem inpertiendam esse illi communionem.*[17]

The second council of Braga (572 CE), evidently following much the same source as that used by Martin of Braga in *De correctione rusticorum* 16 (to which I return below), decreed specific prohibitions against protective magical practices to drive away ills, purifications and lustrations (§71), performing incantations, "following the course" of the sun, the moon or the stars (i.e. observing 'superstitions' connected with the heavenly bodies, as in iatromagical practice) (§72), keeping the Vulcanalia and the Kalends as special days, laying greenery all round the house (§73), using incantations when collecting medicinal herbs (§74), chanting 'magical' formulae while weaving woollen cloth (§75).[18] Virtually all of these can be documented in earlier literature (López Pereira 1996/1997, 55–67).

---

diuinandi curiositas (Milan 1990); M.-Th. Fögen, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager: Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der Spätantike* (Frankfurt a.M. 1993); Clerc 1995, 153–237; T. Breyfogle, Magic, Woman and Heresy in the Late Empire: The Case of the Priscillianists, in *AMRP* 435–54; Flint 1999, 320–24.

[16] Smith 2008, 14.

[17] "Death by witchcraft: If anyone causes the death of another by witchcraft, a crime that is only possible through idolatry, he is to be excommunicated for life": Vives 1963, 3; cf. McKenna 1938, 28ff. On the survivals of paganism as reflected in the canons of this council, see J. Orlandis and D. Ramos Lissón, *Historia de los Concilios de la España romana y visigoda* (Pamplona 1986; orig. ed. Paderborn 1981) 78f.

[18] Vives 1963, 103f. The prevalence of estate-churches, typical for Hispania in the later sixth century, must have provided much of the information on this score available to the bishops.

Given such a tradition, it is not surprising that the appropriate texts began to emerge as Christianity, with its claim to uniform orthodoxy and the possibility of universal membership, became widespread and sought to intervene in people's daily lives. We usually find a simple substitution of powers invoked: pagan deities are replaced by angels, saints and biblical characters give added weight to requests. A good example of the first is provided by a *defixio* from Rome (IV^{p}), which asks the holy angels to inflict on the victim the immobility and silence proper to the souls of the dead, using formulations common in pagan Greek and Latin *defixiones*:

> *Deprecor uos sancti angeli ut quomodo ec anima intus inclusa tenetur et angustiatur et non vede neque lumine ne aliquem refrigerium non habet, sic ut anima mentes corpos Collecticii quem peperet Agnella teneatur ardeat, detabescat usque ad infernum semper ducite Collecticium quem peperet Agnella.*[19]
>
> I earnestly entreat you, holy angels, that, just as this departed is held fast and confined in the grave, and sees no light at all, and has no means of getting cool, so may the spirit, consciousness and physical body of Collecticius, son of Agnella, be held fast—let him burn, let him sicken! Carry off Collecticius, son of Agnella, to the Underworld for good!

Sometimes (as here), the surviving texts contain no clear identifying feature(s) that allow(s) their author definitely to be identified as a Christian; in these cases we can only work on the basis of date, provenance and context. This is because there was a relatively determinate set of generic rules for writing such texts, either local rules, as in the case of the 'prayers for justice' from Bath and Uley in Britain, which nevertheless bear a family resemblance to a much wider range of texts from western Asia Minor and mainland Greece,[20] or, as in the case of texts in the Graeco-Egyptian tradition, models provided by written

---

[19] *AE* 1941: 138, orig. publ. by N. Silva Neto, *Três inscriçoes do latim vulgar*, *Humanitas* 2 (1948–49) 68–80. I take the phrase *non vede neque lumine* to be the equivalent of *nec vidit ullum lumen* (*ved-* for *vid-*; occlusion of final *-t* in verbs; assimilation of neuter into masc., with *-e* as standard oblique-case ending—all common features of Vulgar Latin).

[20] On prayers for justice, formerly 'judicial prayers', see H.S. Versnel, 'May he not be able to sacrifice…': Concerning a Curious Formula in Greek and Latin Curses, *ZPE* 58 (1985) 247–69; idem 1987; 1991, and his contribution to the present volume (p. 275). He suggests that here too "sample books or professional formularies may have played a role" in the transmission to the West, though the diversity of e.g. the Mainz *defixiones* makes that rather uncertain.

formularies. These generic rules—never closely applied and always open to individual choice and preference—continued to be followed, though increasingly loosely, into Late Antiquity; if angels, demons or saints are not specifically invoked, or if there are no Christian symbols such as crosses or other iconographic features, the religious orientation of the authors of *defixiones*, phylacteries or apotropaic texts written in this period must remain indeterminate.

At the same time, we should allow for the continuity of underlying attitudes and feelings, the persistence of a certain mind-set or tradition.[21] Spontaneous coincidence of expression, similar to that found in casual *graffiti*, texts on *instrumenta*, even in funeraries,[22] may sometimes be the best explanation. Normally however we may assume that recurrent ideas are the expression of traditions cultivated throughout the Empire, witnesses to a shared instrumental-religious culture of great antiquity that persisted throughout the Late-Roman period. This point can be illustrated by two related texts on slate from near the ancient theatre of Braga (Portugal), the area now known as Colina de Maximinos. They contain a curse against a certain Serpentius. apparently wishing upon him a quick-growing cancer, and date from the late V^{p}-early VI^{p}.[23]

The first reads:

Obverse:
- - - - - -?
[- - - omi]ne cancer braca-
{r}rice persequiris
[- - - S]erpentiu seruu Rufi-
ne deunde istu ibi non
5 *ducis*[24] *per policis uer-*

---

[21] Flint 1991; K. Jolly, Medieval Magic: Definition, Beliefs, Practices, in eadem, C. Raudvere and E. Peters, *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe,* vol. 3*: The Middle Ages* (B. Ankarloo and S. Clark, eds.) (London 1999) 3–52; Wilson 2000, xvii–xxx.

[22] Cf. I. Velázquez, Dobletes en la epigrafía funeraria latina: materiales para su estudio, *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica* 11 (1996) 77–113.

[23] For a fuller discussion, see Velázquez 2000, nos. 151f. = eadem 2004, 458–62 nos. 151f. Both texts are opisthographic; in spite of the fact that no. 151 seems to be virtually complete, the content is obscure mainly for linguistic reasons. It is to be dated to the long period of acute instability and insecurity in Hispania between 409–584.

[24] These five words present the most difficult problem, with the verb *ducis* preceded by *non*, and somehow linked to *deunde* and *ibi*. I have interpreted the phrase as meaning "(cancer) do not leave him", because although *istu* looks like an acc. masc. sing. with the *–m* dropped, the fact that it is preceded by *deunde* (agglutination of preposition and adverb) followed by *ibi* suggests that is in fact an ablative. The obvious

ticis manos intra
annum summ[um?- - -]
[u]indict[- - -][25]
- - - - - -?

Reverse:
[- - -] deus sante perse-
quiris
(uac.)

Tentative translation:

Obv.:
<You>, cancer, pursue the man from Braga, Serpentius, the slave of Rufina, and do not leave him, enter through the hands, from the fingertips, may he be punished (or: as punishment) within a year.
Rev.:
… holy deity, pursue.…

Several words from this text recur in the second, which suggests they are closely related, despite the absence of the target's name in the latter (there are good parallels for writing more than one version of a curse in an attempt to ensure their efficacy).[26]

The second reads:

Obverse:
- - - - - -?
[- - - h?]omine {can}-
cancer braca-
rice persequi
F I H C E O +[27] *in-*
5 *tro annum*
- - - - - -?

Reverse:
[- - -]sum[28] *uindicti*[29]
ui uia de police
uique uertice

translations, 'do not guide', even 'do not enter', would seem to contradict the general sense (unless it could be understood as a concession).

[25] Either *vindicet[ur* (syncopation of vowel) or assume the noun *vindicta*, summarising the general thought.

[26] E.g. *DTAud* 43f. = *SEG* 36 (1987) 351f. (from Arcadia, not Megara); *SupplMag* nos. 49–51 (Oxyrhynchus); or the three Flavian texts from Ampurias discussed by Marco Simón elsewhere in this volume (p. 399).

[27] Conceivably *persequis/ ihc* (for *hic*) *eos* or *persequi-/ri h<i>c eos*.

[28] Perhaps *su<mmu>m* as in the previous document.

[29] Perhaps *uindicis* (i.e. *vindices* in Classical Latin).

4 *non ducis.*

Tentative translation:

Obv.:
<You>, cancer, pursue the man from Braga, here (?)…within [one] year.
Rev.:
- - -]*sum* may you punish (him) by the power, through the finger and by the power (and) do not come out from the tip (?).

This text is more lacunate than the first, though the odd word is more clearly readable. Even so, it is clear that they are not exact copies. The addressee, *Deus sanctus*, suggests a Christian context, but is scarcely hard evidence. Despite the late date, the general drift, and especially the use of the verbs *uindicare* and *persequi*, is consistent with the model of Versnel's prayers for justice. We might for example compare a text from Mariana in Corsica, probably I^{P}, which contains similar features:

------ / -----]ule vindica te. Qui tibi male f[ecit], qui [--- / ---v]indica te et si C. Statius tibi nocuit, ab eo vind[ica te --- / --- persequa]ris eum, ut male contabescat usque dum morie[t]ur / (et qui)cumque ali(u)s, et si Pollio conscius est, et illum persequaris, / ni annum ducat.[30]

------- ULE avenge yourself. Whoever has done you harm, avenge yourself on him, and if it is C. Statius who has done you harm, avenge yourself on him, [pursue] him so that he may be consumed by a horrible disease until he dies; (and whoever) else (is involved, for example) also Pollio if he is an accomplice, pursue him so that he may not live more than a year.

Here, as usual with prayers for justice, the complainant has ceded the stolen object(s) to the deity, and calls on him to engage himself as a *vindex* in its recovery. In our much later case, however, there is no obvious reference to a stolen object, and we should assume that the forms of *vindicare* have the sense 'punish' (active and passive). Nevertheless the underlying idea of the prayer for justice is still present in the request to the deity to pursue the target and take justified revenge on him.

[30] *AE* 1982: 448 (revised reading by H. Solin, *Arctos* 15 [1981] 122f.), cited by Versnel 1987, 15 and 1991, 82, who reads *f[ecit]* for Solin's *f[aciet]* in l. 2.

3. *The Simplification of Christian Ideas*

Having pointed to the existence of a continuing mind-set in which instrumental-religious practice had an important place, I can now turn to the claim that, at any rate in Hispania, it was Christian catechists who unintentionally provided the simplifications of Christian concepts that helped give Christian magic its specific shape. Here I have space only to adduce, by way of illustration, the evidence of a well-known work by Martin of Braga, *De correctione rusticorum*, written in the later sixth century under the inspiration of Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus*, and itself part of a much wider 'pastoral' effort to reach out to the population of the hinterland of the urban settlements.[31] As Bishop of Braga and president of the second council held there in 572 (see above), Martin was in a position to push through various canons that reveal the Church authorities' continuing anxieties about the persistence of paganism, usually called *superstitio*. The (nominal) background to the tract is that Bishop Polemius of Astorga had asked Martin to write about the origin of the pagan gods and their wicked deeds (*scelera*). The aim was to help focus Polemius' efforts to get the country-folk to give up their pagan beliefs and practices: *pro castigatione rusticorum, qui adhuc pristina paganorum superstitione detentes cultum uenerationis plus daemoniis quam deo persolvunt* (*Corr. rust.* 1.1).[32] Martin explains that it would be advisable to present them with a basic idea of Christianity beginning with the creation of the world, in order to catch their attention, but that it would need to be brief and in simple language:

---

[31] Recent eds. include: *Sermón contra las supersticiones rurales*, ed. R. Jove Clols (Barcelona 1981); *Contro le superstizioni*, ed. M. Naldini. Biblioteca patristica 19 (Florence 1991); *De correctione rusticorum*, ed. J.E. (= X.E.) López Pereira (Corunna 1996/1997); *Instruçaõ pastoral sobre superstições populares*, ed. A.A. Nascimeto. Medievalia 11 (Lisbon 1997); *Pro castigatione rusticorum,* ed. G. Lopez. Biblioteca di cultura romanobarbarica 3 (Rome 1998). I have used the text and section-numbering proposed by López Pereira, which incorporates the readings of the additional mss. adduced by Naldini with some further suggestions. There is an English tr. in C.W. Barlow, *Iberian Fathers, 1: Martin of Braga, Paschasius of Dumium, Leander of Seville.* Fathers of the Church n.s. 62 (Washington 1969). The obvious parallel is with Caesarius, bishop of Arles (501/2–542), cf. H.G.J. Beck, *The Pastoral Care of Souls in S.E. France during the Sixth Century* (Rome 1950); more generally, J. McClure, Handbooks against Heresy in the West, from the Late Fourth to the Late Sixth Centuries, *JThSt* 30 (1979) 186–97.

[32] "To upbraid the country-dwellers who, clinging to their ancient pagan superstition, still worship the demons rather than God."

> *Sed quia oportet ab initio mundi uel modicam illis rationis notitiam quasi pro gustu porrigere, necesse me fuit ingentem praeteritorum temporum gestorumque siluam breuiato tenuis compendii sermone contingere et cibum rusticis rustico sermone condire.*[33]
>
> *Corr. rust.* 1.2.

However, it would be a mistake to think that the style is as *humilis* as the author claims; the rhythm, rhetoric, syntax and vocabulary used are all far from 'rustic'.[34] The work was intended for someone who was a bishop like Martin himself, and probably as educated as he: the expression *rustico sermone* was very much a stock phrase. On the other hand, the story of God's creation of the world and of how paganism originated—the pagan gods are of course identified with fallen angels, demons—, of redemption through Christ and the recommendation to live a good Christian life are indeed presented in a simple manner. It is in fact a catechetical work,[35] with descriptions of superstitions that make it particularly interesting for the study of pagan survivals.[36] The remainder is taken up with advice on how to instil the true faith in Christians, and convince them that the only genuinely powerful *signa* are those of the Church.

In the present connection however what mainly interests me about *De correctione rusticorum* is its tendential simplification of Christian ideas. Given the situation, the need to address people who, living in the countryside in their ancestral settlements, while nominally catholic nevertheless still also believed in pagan deities, in 'demons', observed unorthodox practices, and were moreover quite uneducated, without

---

[33] "But because (I thought it) best to offer them an account so fitted to them that it would take their fancy, I had to sketch out a vast extent of past ages and events in a brief compass, and give the country-dwellers their sustenance in language familiar to them."

[34] Cf. A. Fontán, *Humanismo romano* (Barcelona 1974) 215; M. Banniard, Normes culturelles et réalisme langagier en Galice au VI^{e} siècle: Les Choix de Martin de Braga, in *Actas del XIV Centenario Concilio III de Toledo (589–1989)* (Toledo 1991) 661–76.

[35] On the genre (sermon or homily), cf. F.J. Tovar Paz, *Tractatus, Sermones atque Homiliae: El cultivo del género literario del discurso homilético en la Hispania tardoantigua y visigoda* (Cáceres 1994) 184ff.

[36] Mackenna 1938, 84ff.; M. Meslin, Persistances païennes en Galicie vers la fin du VI^{e} siècle, in J. Bibauw (ed.), *Hommages à M. Renard* (Brussels 1969) 2: 512–24; J.N. Hillgarth, Popular Religion in Visigothic Spain, in James 1980, 3–60; M. Sotomayor, Penetración de la Iglesia en los medios rurales de la España tardoromana y visigoda, *Settimane* 28 (1982) 639–70; Herrin 1987, 220–24. For parallel 'superstitions' in northern Europe, see I.N. Wood, Pagan Religions and Superstitions East of the Rhine from the Fifth to the Ninth Centuries, in G. Ausenda (ed.), *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians* (Woodbridge 1995) 253–68.

any theological training, certainly called for simple explanations that were easy to understand and which could be appreciated in much the same way as they had learned ancestral pagan practices.[37] But meeting this need, it seems to me, also had unintended consequences.

The history of the world is presented as a contest between good and evil, symbolised by angels and demons, who are equated with pagan *daemones*:

> *Tunc diabolus uel ministri ipsius, daemones, qui de caelo deiecti sunt, uidentes ignaros homines, dimisso creatore suo, per creaturas errare, coeperunt se illis in diuersas formas ostendere et loqui cum eis et expetere ab eis, ut in excelsibus montibus et in siluis frondosis sacrificia sibi offerrent et ipsos colerent pro deo*.[38]
>
> *Corr. rust.* 7.1.

These demons took on the names of wicked humans, such as Jupiter, Juno, Minerva and Venus, Mars and Mercury (here a spot of the usual apologetic Euhemerism). The clear implication is that these 'gods' actually existed, and indeed continue to exist: for it is undeniable that in the past there were depraved persons (*perditi homines; homines pessimi et scelerati*: 8.1; 5) just as there are now, and perfectly reasonable to suppose that the old gods subsequently took their names, and later induced all other men to treat them as gods and build them temples and erect statues in their honour (8.3f.). Other demons inhabited the natural world, the sea, the rivers, springs and woods, and demanded worship there, as Neptune, Lamias, nymphs and Dianas.[39] The simplified story about the origin of the false gods had to allow that they had once indeed existed, and might well still exist.

Martin later introduces another potentially misleading comparison by putting the sign of the Cross and central formulations of Christian belief on the same semiotic level as various demonic 'signs'

[37] The second Council of Braga envisages the bishop deliberately allocating time to himself teaching congregations the elements of Christian belief and morality (canon §1).

[38] "Then the Devil and his henchmen, the demons, cast out from heaven, realising that humans were ignorant because they had abandoned their Creator and were wandering about among the other creatures, began to reveal themselves to them in different shapes, held conversations with them, and required them to offer them sacrifice on high mountains and in leafy forests, and to worship them instead of God."

[39] There are still thirty-two toponyms in the Basque area containing the name Lami-; they seem to have been local riverine deities, similar to Nymphs: López Pereira 1995, 59f.

(i.e. divinatory signs), simply claiming that the former is holy and the latter are wicked:

> *Dimisistis signum crucis, quod in baptismum accepistis, et alia diaboli signa per avicellas et sternutos et per alia multa adtenditis… Similiter dimisistis incantationem sanctam, id est symbolum quod in baptismum accepistis, quod est Credo in Deum patrem omnipotentem, et orationem dominicam, id est Pater noster qui es in caelis, et tenetis diabolicas incantationes et carmina… Similiter et qui alias incantationes tenet a magis et maleficis adinventas, incantationem sancti symboli et orationis dominicae, quae in fide Christi accepit, amisit et fidem Christi inculcavit, quia non potest et Deus simul et diabolus coli.*[40]
>
> ibid. 16.4; 6; 7.

Clearly under the influence of Augustine's theory of signs, Martin here nullifies the obvious differences between the semiotic function of the sign +, conceived as a medium that establishes direct communication with God, and traditional pagan divinatory signs; and likewise with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.[41] Not only are all the comparisons extremely forced, he conveys a quite misleading impression of the theoretical status of Christian ritual utterance. In doing so, he issues a more or less unguarded invitation to treat fragments of such utterance as parallel to key elements of pagan prayer and incantation.

4. *Authoritative Citation, 1: Christian Magic in Egypt*

The most fertile surviving source of Christian magical texts, whether in Greek or Coptic, is Egypt. They provide important evidence for the merging of pagan and Christian themes in the Graeco-Egyptian tradition, which had of course already absorbed, at least superficially, a

---

[40] "You have abandoned the sign of the Cross, which you received at baptism, and have accepted other devilish signs given by birds, sneezes and so on…By the same token, you have abandoned the holy formula, the sacrament you received at baptism, namely *Credo in Deum patrem omnipotentem*, and the Sunday prayer, namely *Pater noster qui es in caelis*, and now accept devilish formulae and incantations. By the same token, anyone who accepts formulae concocted by magicians has abandoned the formula of the sacred sacrament and the Sunday utterance, which he accepted as a Christian, and spurned Christianity, in that it is not possible to worship both God and the Devil."

[41] Augustine, whose influence on the Christian concept of *superstitio* is incalculable, treated it as an aspect of his theory of signs. Since he distinguished simply between natural and conventional signs, he was forced to treat pagan signs as comparable to Christian ones, albeit superfluous or even maleficent (e.g. *Doctr. christ.* 2.20).

number of Jewish words of power, such as the names of God, of angels and archangels, and of one or two patriarchs such as Abraham, and indeed in one or two cases show a far greater indebtedness to Jewish magical practice (especially exorcism).[42] They are also suggestive concerning the means by which Biblical passages and sentences from the Old as well as the New Testament were absorbed into magic formulae. The earliest Christian magical texts in both Greek and Coptic date from late III^{p}-early IV^{p} but are mainly V–VII^{p}. It has been calculated that roughly 14% of all Christian literary texts retrieved in Egypt reflect magical ideas and practice in some way.[43]

The great majority of these papyri belong to the category of phylacteries and protective amulets.[44] There are however a fair number of malign magical texts,[45] and one or two simplified prayers for justice. One of these is *PGrMag* 16 (IV^{p}), an appeal to God to preserve the principal from the brutal mistreatment of a certain Theodosius, which begins by invoking the Holy Trinity (repeated three times), followed by a prayer to the Lord through the mediation of the Holy martyrs:

---

[42] Esp. Kotansky *GMA* nos. 2, 32 ('Phylactery of Moses'); 33; 35, 51, 56. On the absorption of Jewish elements into the Graeco-Egyptian tradition, see R. Wünsch on *DTAud* 242 in *Antike Fluchtafeln*^{2} (Berlin 1912) no. 4; A. Pietersma, *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres the Magicians: PChester Beatty XVI*… RGRW 119 (Leyden 1994); D.R. Jordan and R. Kotansky, A Solomonic Exorcism, *Kölner Papyri* 8. Papyri Colon. 7.8 (Opladen 1997) 53–69 (*PColon*. 338); H.D. Betz, Jewish Magic in the Greek Magical Papyri, in *EM* 45–63; P. Alexander, Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and Magic, c. CE 70–c. CE 270, in W. Horbury, W.D. Davies and J. Sturdy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism, 3: The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge 1999) 1052–78. Apart from the still useful older work by L. Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen*. Jahresbericht für das Schuljahr 1897–98 der Landes Rabbinerschule in Budapest (Straßburg 1897/98, repr. Graz, 1974), and the texts of the Cairo Geniza (*Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, eds. P. Schäfer and S. Shaked, 3 vols. [Tübingen 1994–99]), on Jewish magic see: P. Alexander, Jewish Incantations and Magic, in E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 3. 1, rev. ed. by G. Vermes and F. Millar, §32. VII (Edinburgh 1986) 342–79; P. Schäfer, Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, *Jewish Stud* 41 (1990) 75–91; idem, Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism, in *EM* 19–43; M.D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic. Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton NJ 1996); G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic. A History* (Cambridge 2008).

[43] Judge 1987, 343.

[44] P. Crasta, Graeco-Christian Magical Papyri, *Studia Papyrologica* 18 (1979) 31–40; M. García Teijeiro, Sobre los papiros mágicos cristianos, *Helmantica* 45 (1994) 317–29; Gelzer et al. 1999; R. Kotansky, An Early Christian Gold *Lamella* for Headache, in *MRAW* 37–46 (with further refs.).

[45] None of those in *PGrMag* or *SupplMag* are malign; Meyer and Smith translate 24 malign Coptic texts in *ACM* nos. 88–111. None of the late formularies of V–VI^{p} contain malign magical recipes—where the intention is clear, they are all for healing purposes.

καὶ γάρ οὐκ ἀγνωεῖ τ[ὸ] ἡμῶ[ν πάθος ὁ] ἄνγελος, "For the angel is surely not ignorant of our suffering".[46] Requests to God, Christ or the angels to provide cures or protection, or to ward off great evils were much more easily squared with orthodox teaching about magic than those for revenge. The tendency today is to treat them as evidence of "sound and vibrant lay religiosity".[47] Nevertheless, there is often a fine line between the fervent plea by a Christian driven by his faith, and the belief that he can achieve his aims by using procedures that border on superstition. Texts against storms and other natural disasters are especially likely to contain a mixture of pagan and Christian elements.[48]

The rhetorical emphasis of such documents is placed less on God and Christ, though of course they are frequently invoked, than on Judaeo-Christian angels. Just as the practitioner's authority was demonstrated in the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition by the range of divine names, epithets, references and synonyms he commanded, so in Christian magical practice knowledge of the names of individual angels, not merely the seven archangels who protected Solomon's seal, such as Michael and Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel, which are "almost universal in classic rabbinic literature", but many others, largely taken from apocryphal texts, was the privileged means of displaying authority.[49] We may add to these familiarity with Biblical names of power such as Sabaoth, Iao or Adonai, which had long been absorbed into the repertory of pagan practice.[50] Knowledge of angelic and Biblical names is one type of authority; another is the ability to cite texts,

---

[46] *PGrMag* 16 l. 3f. Another example is *PGrMag* 15c = *PRainer* 19929 (VI^{p}), intended to obtain divine vengeance on an enemy who has usurped the principal's position or office: ἐκδίκησόν με μετὰ τοῦ ἐναντιοῦντός με καὶ μετὰ τοῦ ἐκβαλό<ν>τος με ἀπὸ τοῦ τόπου μου, cf. Judge 1987, 341; Coptic example: *ACM* no. 112.

[47] M.D. Bailey, Concern over Superstition in Late Medieval Europe, in Smith and Knight 2008, 115–33 at 117.

[48] See the contribution to this volume by F.J. Fernández Nieto (p. 551).

[49] Citation from P. Alexander, 3 Enoch, in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.) *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City NY 1983) 1: 223–315 at 239. Good examples are Kotansky *GMA* no. 33 (Mazzarino, Sicily: thirty names); 41 (Phthiotis, Thessaly, more than twenty); also no. 52 (with commentary) and the related Berne *lamella* (= *SEG* 49: 2383), which also invoke at least twenty angels, besides names of God, and patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Methuselah (see Gelzer et al. 1999, 88–110; 152f.).

[50] E.g. *PGrMag.* 2, 2^{a}, 3, 6^{a}, 7, 11, 19; *SupplMag* 24, 29, 32. Judge 1987, 339 n. 1 notes Judaeo-Christian elements of various kinds in *PGrMag* III, IV, VII, XII, XXXVI (all formularies), XXIIb ('Prayer of Jacob') (one might add LXXIX–LXXX).

analogous to the pagan *historiola*.[51] I can here cite just a selection of such references: the imprisonment of the 960 demons in the *Testament of Solomon* (*SupplMag* 24);[52] biblical passages, such as *Isaiah* 6.3 (*SupplMag* 25.5f., 29.15–17) and 50.6 (*PGrMag* 20.2f.), *Psalm* 90.1f. (*SupplMag* 26.6–8; 29.10–13), *Matth.* 4.23 (*PGrMag* 9.11f.; *SupplMag* 30.3; 31.2; 33.2–4) or 8.1 (*PGrMag* 17 I), *John* 1.1 (*PGrMag* 5c.6; 19.1), 5.2 (*PGrMag* 5b7–9) or *1Thess*. 5.23 (*SupplMag* 30.5); apocryphal texts (e.g. *PGrMag* 7); and liturgical items such as the Lord's Prayer (*SupplMag* 29.13–15 = *Matth*. 6. 9–11), the trinitarian formula (Kotansky *GMA* no. 53.1–3 = *Matth*. 28.19) or allusions to the Creed (*SupplMag* 23.1–6; 31.1; 35.1–7). Just as, in the pagan tradition, sheer accumulation of material was considered to lend extra authority to the utterance, so also in Christian magic: *PGrMag* 19, for example, consists of a catena or doxology of biblical phrases, successively all four Gospel incipits plus *Psalm* 90.1, *John* 1.23, and *Matth*. 6.9.[53] Another type of knowledge that could be displayed is familiarity with Christian symbols.[54] A fine example is *PGrMag* 4, which consists of a series of crosses (5 across x 3 down) laid out over a piece of parchment and composed of the words of *Matth*. 4.23f. In the case of protective amulets, the obvious example is the Seal of Solomon, which depicts a mounted warrior subduing a demonic enemy (Lilith), and is known in several dozen examples.[55]

It seems to me that the likeliest explanation for this reduction of Scripture to a formal device is the process of selection—one might almost say the stylisation—of Christian texts practised both in schools and in the process of educating the rural population in the rudiments of the faith. The usual procedure was for the teacher or church reader to read excerpts from Biblical and liturgical texts; in church contexts, the catechumens would then drill the congregation in the most signifi-

---

[51] D. Frankfurter, Narrating Power, in *AMRP* 457–76. According to Judge 1987, 341, 15 of the 38 Christian texts in *PGrMag* display some deployment of Scripture.

[52] Cf. Preisendanz 1956, 666f. The story is not narrated in the exorcism, merely alluded to.

[53] Cf. Judge 1987, 341. The citation of Psalm 91 ends up with καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς, implying a considerable degree of routinisation.

[54] E.g. *PGrMag* P1 *ad init*; 3.10; 5a; 8a verso; 15a–c, 16, 19; *SupplMag* 22, 23, 27, 29 *incipit*, 34 etc.; oddly enough, there seem to be no examples among the Christian items in Kotansky *GMA*.

[55] Preisendanz 1956, 680–84; Michel 2001 nos. 430–50 (with bibliography on p. 269f.); eadem 2004, 323f. §44.

cant texts.[56] In Egypt, to judge from the papyrological finds, the earliest Biblical texts were copied in book form only, but already by III^{p}, and increasingly in IV^{p}, we begin to find short excerpted texts, mostly in unpractised hands, and with signs of folding, which cite or allude to a variety of brief Biblical and related texts. *POxy* 3407 (III/IV^{p}), for example, entitled προσευχή and written in shaky uncials on an unused sheet, alludes to *Psalm* 145.6 = *Acts* 14.15 and probably *Ephes.* 1.21; *POslo* inv. 1644, apparently likewise from Oxyrhynchus, is an unused sheet, never folded, that cites *Matth.* 6.9–13, *2 Cor* 13.13, *Psalm* 90.1–4 and some other texts, all defectively, i.e. from memory.[57] The practice of excerpting Scripture becomes very common between V/VI^{p} and VII–VIII^{p} and then gradually disappears. This is not the same as claiming that all such excerpting implies 'Christian magic', merely to point to the effects of a certain style of instruction and teaching that seems to underlie the clearly magical texts.

The range of skill and knowledge revealed by the latter, i.e., the Christian magical texts from Egypt, Greek and Coptic, reflects the different degrees of literacy and knowledge communicated in such instruction (and in the school system, insofar as it existed).[58] Some are garbled and incompetent;[59] many others demonstrate a degree, sometimes a high degree, of skill and confidence. The existence of the latter probably implies that the authors were themselves priests, deacons or monks, or at any rate educated and fully conversant with Christian practice and, in particular, with the composition and adaptation of formulae in prayers. A simple example is *PGrMag* 15a and b, which are related

[56] Judge 1987, 346; more generally, M.R.M. Hasitzka, *Neue Texte und Dokumentation zum koptischen Unterricht* (Vienna 1990); R. Cribriore, *Writing, Teachers and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta 1996).

[57] See Table 2 in Judge 1987, 347, compiled from J. van Haelst, *Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens*. Série Papyrologie 1 (Paris 1976).

[58] Cf. the discusion of *PGrMag* 18 by M. Naldini, Testimonianze cristiane negli amuleti greco-egizi, *Augustinianum* 21 (1981) 17–88, cf. idem, Due papiri cristiani della collezione fiorentina, *SIFC* 33 (1961) 216–18.

[59] E.g. *PGrMag* 17, a poorly-written text of V^{p} or VI^{p} which was composed at least partly on the basis of *Matth.* 6.9f. (Lord's Prayer) and the *Exorcism of Solomon* but, at least on E. Schäfer's reconstruction, without any real comprehension of the texts. In the original, these must have been written in columns, but in each line the copyist of the surviving text seems to have copied all the first lines, then the second and so on, leading to complete confusion.

texts of unknown provenance.[60] Each begins with an invocation for aid to the angels and archangels, specified as those "who watch over the cataracts of the heavens, who cause the light to come".[61] Though the case is a little unclear, both seem to be amulets against demonic attack. This is most clearly the case in 15b:

> Angels and archangels, guardians of the cataracts of the heavens, who cause the light to shine all over the inhabited earth. Inasmuch as I am at odds with a headless dog (ὅτι δικασιμὸν ἔχω μετὰ κυνὸς ἀκεφάλου), overmaster him if he appears, and set me free through the power of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. AΩ, Sabaoth.
>
> Mother of God, incorruptible, spotless, immaculate, mother of Christ, remember you said this. Heal once more she who bears <the amulet>. Amen.

The 'headless dog' seems to be an expression for a demon in animal form; Mary is presented not merely as a perpetual virgin but as the subject of an implicit *historiola* concerning exorcism.[62] The second appeals rather to the blood of Christ, as often in amulets against evil and in exorcisms, in other words contexts where God's protection is at issue:[63]

> 15a: Angels and archangels, who watch over the cataracts of the heavens, who cause the light to come from the four corners of the world. Inasmuch as I am at odds with some headless ones (ὅτι δικασιμὸν ἔχω μετά τινων ἀκεφάλων), overmaster them and release me through the power of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Blood of my Christ that was shed at the place of the skull, deliver me and have mercy. Amen, amen, amen.

---

[60] *PGrMag* 15a (4 × 24 cm, VI^{p}) was bought in Cairo in 1910; b is or was in the Edward Collection of University College, London before 1892; undated, no dimensions given.

[61] The first appeal to the angels alludes to the story of Noah and the flood (Gen. 7.11).

[62] F.X. Kraus, followed by Preisendanz ad loc., argued that the *akephalos/oi* must allude to the extreme Monophysites of Egypt and Syria in the Homoousian controversy, who, after their rejection of Acacius' *Henotikon* in 482 CE, were nicknamed *Akephaloi* (because they had rejected the position represented by the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch). The expression δικάσιμον ἔχω, "I have a lawsuit with…", might seem to support this, but it seems highly implausible that we should have two independent lawsuits with Monophysites, esp. since 15b clearly treats the formula as protective. Though the phrase ἐὰν ἔλθῃ might mean "if he appears before the tribunal", it more naturally implies demonic attack.

[63] See Kotansky *GMA* no. 35, comm. to ll. 8f.

A longer Greek example of rhetorical competence using Christian themes is provided by *PCairo* 10263 (IV–V^{p}), directed against the Lords of Darkness, which begins:

> I invoke you, God of the heavens, and God of the earth, and God of the saints through [your blood], the perfection of the world (τὸ πληρῶμα τοῦ αἰῶνος) come to [us], who came to the world and broke the claw of Charon (κατακλάσας τὸν ὄνυχα τοῦ Χάροντος), who through Gabriel entered the womb of Mary the Virgin, was born in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth, was crucified [gap of c. 10 letters] whence the veil of the Temple was rent by him; rising from the dead in the grave on the third day after his death, he showed himself in Galilee and ascended into the highest heavens, with thousands and thousands of angels to his left, and thousands and thousands to his right, all crying three times as with one voice, "Holy, Holy, King of the world, whose divinity suffuses the heavens, who rides on the wings of the winds". Come, Mercy, the God of the world, who has risen up to the seventh heaven, come from the right hand of the Father, the blessed Lamb, by whose blood the souls were set free, through whom the Brazen Gates opened of their own accord…
>
> *PGrMag* 13.1–10

This text, which was apparently found in or with a mummy, is clearly based on a Coptic apocryphal gospel itself related to the Gospel of Nicodemus, and includes allusions to *Psalm* 104.3/*2Sam*. 22.11 (wings of wind) and *Rev*. 5.11 (innumerable angels).[64] The finest texts in this tradition, however, are in Coptic, though unfortunately too long to cite here *in extenso*; I may simply mention here *PBerol*. 11347, to seal the oil used for healing; *BM ms Copt*. 5525, to protect a pregnant woman named Sura from demonic attack; and the 'Gnostic' tractate in Turin against the powers of evil (the Rossi tractate).[65]

5. *Authoritative Citation, 2: The Visigothic Phylacteries on Slate*

Pagan phylacteries more or less in the Graeco-Egyptian tradition (mainly in Greek) are known in the West from early II^{p}, though few of these early examples betray either skill or knowledge. From early III^{p} onwards such texts become longer and more competent. The earliest Christian magical texts in the western Empire date from IV^{p}. Their

[64] A. Jacoby, *Ein neues Evangeliumfragment* (Strasburg 1900) 31–51 with comm. The provenance is unknown.

[65] Resp. Kropp 1930, 2: 113–7 = *AMC* no. 63; Kropp 1930, 1: 15–21; 2: 199–207 = *AMC* no. 64; Kropp 1930, 1: 63–78; 2: 176–99 = *AMC* no. 71.

techniques are closely comparable to those we have already seen in the case of the Greek texts.[66] One of the most interesting is the amuletic papyrus in Latin possibly found in Fustat (now part of Cairo; V^{p} or V/VI^{p}).[67] After the assertion of authority (*In nomine Patris*…), it begins, as Christian amulets so often do, with a Gospel incipit, in this case St John's Gospel (garbled) and continues into a medley of passages from *Psalm* 20.[68] This 'citation' is followed by the actual invocation:

> *ego scripsi, et tu, medicus caelestis, in cuius nomine e[t virtute] scribo, per angelum Michaelum[u] coniuro et per angelum Gabrielum e[t] per [ang]elum Rafaelum coniuro et perangelum Azazielum et per angelum Urie[lum] coniuro et per angelum Ieremielum et per angelum Fotuelum et per [v]iginti quattuor seniores qui astant ante dominum et quattuorque animalia qui regunt thronum domini et dicunt: "Sanctus, sanctus sanctus dominus deus Sabaoth.*…[69]
>
> ll. 13–19.

The citation of the Sanctus is immediately followed by the Benedictus, apparently for the first time. This remodelling of a psalm, the orotund use of the seven angels to create rhetorical bulk, the splicing of separate parts of the liturgy, the fusing of a reminiscence of *Revelations* with one to *Ezekiel*, all seem clear examples of the methods of excerption and fragmentation of Biblical and liturgical texts practised by church readers and catechumens.

The Hispanic texts I want mainly to bring to the reader's attention in this connection, however, are the Visigothic Latin texts on slate, datable between VI^{p} and early VIII^{p}, found in the central/western

---

[66] Inscribed amulets and phylacteries on metal were found by Orsi in the Christian catacombs of Syracuse and Priolo Gargallo in eastern Sicily: D. Orsi, *NSc* 1893, 301; 1896, 239f. A lead phylactery from S. Giovanni di Galermo (prov. Catania) against all types of φαρμακία bears the LXX version of I Kings 1.1–3: G. Libertini, *Riv. Indo-greco-ital.* 11.3–4 (1927) 105f.; cf. G. Pugliese Carratelli, Epigrafe magiche cristiane della Sicilia orientale, RAL^{8} 8.3–4 (1953) 181–89 at 181.

[67] R.W. Daniel and F. Maltomini, From the African Psalter and Liturgy, *ZPE* 74 (1988) 253–65 = *SupplMag* no. 36. The original is lost, but Daniel and Maltomini discovered a transcript among the papers of Karl Preisendanz in Cologne (the papyrus was originally housed in Heidelberg; the ref. is *PHeidel.* inv. Lat. 5).

[68] The verses from *Ps.* 20 are incorporated in the following order (from ll. 7–14): (parts of) vss. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 4, 3. L.19f. contains an allusion to *Ps.* 118.26.

[69] For Christ as the heavenly doctor, see Daniel and Maltomini's comments on l.13f. (p. 109f.). *Coniuro* here certainly seems stronger than *oro, obsecro*. The four animals supporting (note *regunt* = ?*gerunt*, or similar to Italian *reggere*, 'bear') do not appear in *Rev.* (which describes them in terms similar to the Cherubim and Seraphim) but are a reminiscence of *Ezekiel* 1.5–14.

provinces of Avila, Segovia and Salamanca.[70] Although their content is mostly legal or financial, some contain transcribed liturgical psalms, such as *Psalm* 15, or brief anthologies of liturgical phrases.[71] On the other hand I am inclined to identify a handful of others as phylacteries. One of these is a VII[p] text from a tomb at Santibáñez de la Siera (prov. Salamanca):

[- - -]++en i(n) nece[ssitatibus]
[in m]onte Sinai, ita <a>uerteris ira in[dignationis tuae ? - - -]
[- - -] alleluia qurieleisunt quriel[eisunt]
[- - -]ma maiestatis numero p(er) oc al[- - -]
pro temet a cota pietas a[- - -][72]
[- - -]c Vriel et Gabriel in edi[cula?]

[Comfort] in needs…on Mount Sinai, thus you shall avert the anger [of your indignation…] Alleluia, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy [- - -] of majesty; I consider through this [- - -] through yourself, how much mercy [- - -] Uriel and Gabriel in [the temples?].[73]

Certain expressions, such as *[in m]onte Sinai*, the names of the archangels Uriel and Gabriel, and the form *qurieleisunt* for *Kyrie eleison*, as well as *ita <a>uerteris ira in[dignationis tuae]*, suggest a religious context, a sort of prayer. They seem to be excerpts from or allusions to Biblical and/or liturgical texts. For example, the phrase *ita <a>uerteris ira in[dignationis tuae]* is related to a prayer that, with variations, appears in the *Psalms*, for example no. 84.[74] It also occurs in certain

[70] Rather more than 150 of these fragmentary texts on slate are known; mostly but not exclusively found in village contexts (some were found in apparently uninhabited sites). Some are records of ownership or judgements in disputes; others contain numbers relating to agricultural production. For a brief introduction in English, see Collins 2004, 170–73. For further discussion, see my two recent editions, Velázquez 2000 and 2004; on the social context, cf. I. Martín Viso, Tributación y escenarios locales en el centro de la península ibérica: Algunas hipótesis a partir del análisis de las pizarras "visigodas", *Antiquité Tardive* 14 (2006) 263–90.

[71] Resp. Velázquez 2000 nos. 29 and 7 = 2004, 191–201 no. 29 (Navahombela, Salamanca) and 145–50 no. 7 (Salvatierra de Tormes, Salamanca). Both of these may in fact however be school exercises; no. 7 may well have been copied from a manuscript, as a school exercise. This might also be the case with no. 29, though it is also possible that it was drafted as a prayer, as it seems to have been found in a tomb.

[72] This line is still a puzzle and perhaps needs further study; the reading is still provisional.

[73] Velázquez 2000 no. 3 = 2004, 125–27 no. 3.

[74] I cite *Psalm* 84.4 as a possible reference or source of allusion: *Mitigasti omnem iram tuam, auertisti ab ira indignationis tuae. Conuerte nos, Deus salutaris noster, et auerte iram tuam*. Possible alternatives are *Psalm* 77 or 101. Valerius of Bierzo men-

prayers in the liturgy, one of which likewise includes the appeal *kyrie eleison*. This is the *Breuiarium Gothicum*, fol. 96 (Migne *PL* 86, 202), for the *quarta feria, ad tertiam*, where the following *Preces* are found:

> *Auerte iram tuam a nobis*. P./ *Et miserere*. V./ *Adsit potentia tua, Domine*. P./ Et miserere. V./ *Benedic hereditate tua, Domine*. P./ *Et miserere*. V./ *Concede pacem Ecclesiae tuae*. P./ *Et miserere*. V./ *Delicta dele, ueniam concede, Domine*. P./ *Et miserere*. Reiteretur: *Auerte Domine*. Supplicatio: *Oremus redemptorem. Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison*.

Although too little context survives to be fully confident, these details suggest that the text is best treated as a phylactery, possibly to protect a house.

A slate from Galinduste (prov. Salamanca), in the same area as the other finds, and probably end-VII^{p} or even later, provides another text, unfortunately very fragmentary and difficult to read, which likewise seems to contain phrases associated with phylacteries:[75] The cursive script, various flakes and scratches, and the coat of varnish which the finder, D. Manuel Morillón, applied to the surface, all serve to make the establishment of a reading-text hazardous. The original must have been of a considerable size, since despite the length of the lines no sentences are complete:

Obverse:

[- - -]++ diuum signum {signum} *Saluatoris sig[num - - -]*
numquam remea[76] *quem me dictatus istu[- - -]*
suo[77] *aq(u)arum post resolutione uenist[i- - -]*
diutini retinens neque in omenib(us) neque in p[- - -]
5 *++ audiens relegatus man++ sub retraction[e- - -]*
[- - -]s tu+[- - -]rus e a + e r e +[.]i uider'i's[78] *letare [- - -]*
[- - -]ium +++ [- - -]di++nu++++ uoragi[n- - -]
[- - -]ug[. . .] [- - -]et+uel Carcumiel Mi[chael?]
[- - -]el Gabriel Vriel et Rafael {signum}

---

tions pupils who learned the entire Psalter by heart in six months: *Ordo quaer.* ed. Fernández Pousa (Madrid 1942) 183, cf. Martín Hernandez 1988, 197.

[75] Velázquez 2000 no. 123 = 2004, 409–15 no. 123. In l. 1 of the obverse there is a pentagram between the two components of the expression *signum Saluatoris*, and another at the end of l. 9, after *Raphael*, apparently to mark a break. The remains of a third, framed in a rectangle, occurs at the end of the text on the reverse, as a finale; cf. the large framed X overwritten on slate no. 149.

[76] Alternative readings are *re mea*, *remica*, or even *serica*.

[77] Perhaps *r[i]uo*.

[78] ' 'denotes a later addition.

10 *(uac?) [- - -]r inimicos tuos [- - -]*
[- - -]t [- - -]in m[.?]nu[- - -]
[- - -] per [- - -]
- - - - - -?

Reverse:
[- - -]+in soc<e>rum magnum s(an)c(tu)m [..]ded[- - -]
[- - -]+or(um?) ad eum dicens quicumque u++lu (uac?)
[- - - i]n oratione quisque illis lena p(er)det p(er) natum [- - -]
[- - -]o fulmen in omnib(us) meis +[- - -]
5 *[- - -] p(er)bicti si quis abet muliere[m? - - -]*
[- - -] ad eum dicensque [- - -]

Obv.:
[- - -] divine sign {*pentagram*} of the Saviour, sign [- - -], never return he who has ordered me this, [- - -] his, after the sinking of the waters you came [- - -], [from - - -] lasting, retaining [it] neither in auguries nor in p[ortents?] [- - -], listening, remain apart, in hesitancy [- - -], [- - -]*s tu*+[- - -]*rus e a + e r e* +[.]*i*, you would see him rejoice (killing?), *[- - -]ium +++ [- - -]di++nu++++* [in?] the abyss, *[- - -]ug[. . .]* [- - -]et+uel, Carcumiel, Michael, [Ragu?]el, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael {*pentagram*}, [- - -] to your enemies [- - -] in the [hand?] [- - -].

Rev.
[- - -] to the grandfather-in-law, holy [- - -] *[..]ded[- - -], [- - -]+or(um?)*, saying to him: any woman who [- - -], [- - -] in prayer, everything that prostitutes (?), shall lose through him who was born [- - -], [- - -]*o* misfortune in all my people [- - -], [- - -] fully vanquished, if anyone has a wife [- - -], [- - -] and saying to him [- - -]

The expressions with religious overtones (*diuum signum, Saluatoris sig[num*; the allusion to Noah), the archangelic names (possibly seven) and the pentagrams (which recall slate no. 3 mentioned earlier [n. 73], as well as the tenth-century slate from Carrio cited immediately below), all suggest that the text is to be classified as a phylactery. Certain phrases evoke an atmosphere of torment, misfortune or tribulation, which perhaps the text is trying to exorcise and ward off (on the other hand it might be intended as a threat or warning). Although at some points vaguely reminiscent of some Biblical passage(s), perhaps from the Old Testament, it seems mainly to be an original narrative text.[79]

[79] I have been unable to find an satisfactory parallels to the text, but the expression *ad eum dicens*, which occurs twice (rev. 2 and 6), suggests that citations from third parties are being reproduced, which is a typical feature of referential Christian texts.

References to angels appear once again in a late-IX^{p} or even X^{p} slate from Carrio (Asturias), an apotropaic text in which seven (arch)angels, designated as 'patriarchs', some of them with unusual names, are entreated to provide protection against hail:

> *aguro uos o(m)nes patriarcas Micael, Grabriel, Cecitiel, Oriel, Ra[fa]el, Ananiel, Marmoniel, qui illa[s] nubus con{ti}tinetis in manu ues[t]ras, esto; liuera de uila nomine…* [80]

As Fernández Nieto has shown, this text is the final (or possibly the penultimate) link in a long tradition of phylacteries, in Greek and in Latin, intended to ensure protection of crops against storms.[81] It evokes *inter alia* the miracle that occurred at the execution of St Christopher, when hail turned to rain: the blood of Christ and the martyrs, that once symbolically fertilised and purified the earth,[82] now serves to guard against hail, just as mole- or human menstrual-blood was used in the Classical period by the χαλαζοφύλακες at Kleonai near Nemea in the Argolid to protect the crops against hail.[83]

These examples represent the latest documents in Hispania attesting to the process of excerption and synthesis of Christian texts to produce charged phrases that could be deployed in order to lend authority to instrumental prayers. Even allowing for the extremely lacunate state of the texts, it is clear that, except for the incantations against hail, the tradition continued to develop locally from the types of text familiar from the eastern Mediterranean, so much so that no specific Biblical citations can be identified. But the underlying idea of invoking God's authority for instrumental prayer seems still to endure.

---

[80] Velázquez 2000 no. 104 = 2004, 368–84 no. 104 with full commentary. Only one other slate, that from Fuente Encalada (Zamora), is known to date from the same period: E. Esparza Arroyo and R. Martín Valls, La pizarra altomedieval de Fuente Encalada (Zamora): Contribución al estudio de las inscripciones profilácticas, *Zephyrus* 51 (1998) 237–62.

[81] F.J. Fernández Nieto, La pizarra visigoda de Carrio y el horizonte clásico de los χαλαζοφύλακες, in J.M. Blázquez, A. González Blanco and R. González Fernández (eds.), *La tradición en la Antigüedad Tardía*, *Antigüedad y Cristianismo* 14 (Murcia 1997) 259–86; see also his article in the present volume (pp. 551–99).

[82] The Ain Fourna (= Furnos Maius, now in Tunisia) text against hail (*AE* 1939: 136, V–VII^{p}), refers to the vine growing thanks to the blood of Christ: *ibi nata est [–3–] bitis cum senquine Cristi* (l. 9f.).

[83] Seneca, *QN* 4.6; Plutarch, *Quaest. conviv.* 7.2, 700f. Palladius, *Op. agric.* 1. 35. 1, mentions brandishing axes used to kill sacrificial victims to ward off hail; cf. Fernández Nieto 1997, 281, and p. 556 above. The Fuente Encalada slate (see n. 80 above) also alludes to these methods and is therefore likely also to have been prophylactic in nature.

Bibliography

Barb, A.A. 1963. The Survival of Magic Arts, in A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford) 100–25.
Clerc, J.-B. 1995. *Homines magici: Étude sur la sorcellerie et la magie dans la société romaine impériale.* Publications Universitaires Européennes, Série III, 673 (Bern).
Collins, R. 1990. Literacy and the Laity in Early Medieval Spain, in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge) 109–33.
——. 2004. *Visigothic Spain 409–711* (Malden and Oxford).
Dickie, M.W. 2001. *Magic and Magicians in the Graeco-Roman World* (London and New York).
Engemann, J. 1975. Zur Verbreitung magischer Übelabwehr in der nichtchristl. und christl. Spätantike, *JbAC* 18 (1975) 22–49.
Flint, V. 1991. *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton).
——. 1999. The Demonisation of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions, in Ankarloo/Clark, 277–348.
Frankfurter, D. 1998. *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton).
Gelzer, T., Lurje, M. and Schäublin, C. (eds.) 1999. *Lamella Bernensis*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 124 (Stuttgart and Leipzig).
Herrin, J. 1987. *The Formation of Christendom* (Oxford).
James, E. (ed.) 1980. *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches* (Oxford).
Judge, E.A. 1987. The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri, in E.W. Conrad et al. (eds.), *Perspectives on Language amd Text* (Winona Lake) 339–49.
Kropp, A.M. 1930 [1931] *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte* (Brussels).
López Pereira, J.E. (ed., tr., comm.) 1996/1997. *Cultura, relixión e supersticións na Galicia sueva: Martino de Braga*, De correctione rusticorum (Corunna).
Luck, G. 2006. *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*[2] (Baltimore).
McKenna, S. 1938. *Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain up to the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom* (Washington).
Martín Hernandez, F. 1988. La formación del clero en la iglesia visigótico-mozárabe, in *Hispania Christiana: Estudios en honor del prof. J. Orlandis* (Pamplona) 193–213.
Michel, S. 2001. *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum* (London).
——. 2004. *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln auf geschnittenen Steinen der Antiken und Neuzeit*. Studien aus dem Warburg-Haus 7 (Berlin).
Preisendanz, K. 1956. s.v. Salomo 4, *RE Suppl.* 8, 660–704.
Sanz Serrano, R. 2003. *Paganos, adivinos y magos. Análisis del cambio religioso en la Hispania tardoantigua*. Gerión. Anejos 7 (Madrid).
Smith, S.A. 2008. Introduction, in Smith and Knight 2008, 7–55.
Smith, S.A. and Knight, A. (eds.) *The Religion of Fools: 'Superstition' in Historical and Comparative Perspective. Proceedings of the Past and Present Conference held at the University of Essex 20–22 May 2005.* Past & Present Supplement 3 (Oxford 2008).
Velázquez, I. 2000. *Documentos de época visigoda escritos en pizarra (Siglos VI–VIII)*. Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi, Series Hispanica (Turnhout).
——. 2004. *Las pizarras visigodas. Entre el Latín y su disgregación. La lengua hablada en Hispania, siglos VI–VIII*. Colección Beltenebros 8 [Burgos].
Versnel, H. 1987. Les imprécations et le droit, *RHD* 65, 5–22.
Versnel, H.S. 1991. Beyond Cursing: The Appeal for Justice in Judicial Prayers, in C. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford) 60–106.

Vives, J. 1963. *Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos*, 1: *Textos* (Barcelona and Madrid).
Wilson, S. 2000. *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-modern Europe* (London and New York).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

CELTIC *LORICAE* AND ANCIENT MAGICAL CHARMS

Pierre-Yves Lambert

Loricae are prayers characteristic of Medieval Celtic cultures that exhibit several features very close to ancient magical charms. They are meant to protect anyone who recites them (hence the name 'breast-plates', Fr. *cuirasses*). Their most salient features are: 1. an enumeration of the powers invoked; 2. an enumeration of the body-parts to be protected; and 3. an enumeration of the dangers, enemies or obstacles to be avoided or overcome. At the same time, we should note that listing is not specific to the *loricae*, since it is commonly used in other types of prayers too, such as litanies. Indeed, a number of *loricae* resemble litanies (particularly when they develop the first type of list, the spiritual or other powers to be invoked), and Charles Plummer included some of them in his *Irish Litanies* (Plummer 1925).

Modern scholars have reacted to these texts in various ways. Most have found them bizarre and surprising. The Benedictine monk Louis Gougaud, who wrote the main study on the subject, made every effort to differentiate Christian *loricae* from magical charms. By restricting his corpus to acceptable texts, and rejecting others as 'superstitious', he managed to avoid the difficult question of whether they might not be the Christianised form of pagan charms used to obtain protection, specifically protection against malign-magical attack.[1] For example, he considered the *lorica Brendani*, with its long list of invocations, to be superstitious, and would have liked his readers to consider such examples Celtic inventions.[2] But the possibility of a pagan origin, which the

[1] Dom L. Gougaud, Études sur les Loricae celtiques et sur les prières qui s'en rapprochent, *Bulletin d'ancienne littérature et d'archéologie chrétienne* 1 (1911) 265–81; 2 (1912) 33–41; 101–27.

[2] The invocation takes up a good 22 columns in the text re-published in Migne, *PL* Supplement 4 (1967) 2053–64, and consists of *libera me Domine*, repeated 82 times. In view of the fact that these sentences introduced by *Libera me* are designed to commemorate every important example of divine intervention in Biblical History, from the Creation to the raising of Lazarus, we could read this prayer as a learned

good Benedictine disposes of very rapidly, has been raised by other scholars both before and after Gougaud, for example, W. Stokes, J. Vendryes, and Charles Plummer, himself an Anglican canon.[3]

We should then recognise these prayers as Christian, with some unorthodox features. I would like to suggest that the origin of these discrepant features is to be found not in Celtic cultures, but rather in the survival of magical handbooks from late antiquity. The earliest Hiberno-Latin *loricae* date, as far as is known, from the middle of the 7th century: in the case of the Old Irish *loricae*, the names of St. Patrick or St. Columcille are clearly suppositious, their authorship being claimed in order to lend these texts particular authority.[4] I would argue that this type of prayer did not arrive very early in the Celtic area and was perhaps introduced during the period of intensified exchanges due to the foundation of Irish centres in Continental Europe. The mission of St. Columban to the Franks, around the end of the sixth century, may have triggered off the process.

We need first to dispose of two definitional problems, one theoretical (what is a *lorica*?), the other practical (which of the surviving texts are to be called *loricae*?). This is not, however, the place to try to draw up a new list. As for the first question, is the criterion to be the content, so that any prayer invoking divine protection would be a *lorica* provided it include enumerations of the requisite kinds? Or is it to be the occurrence in the title, or somewhere in the text, of the word *lorica* or some equivalent (e.g. OIr. *lúirech*, W. *llurig*, OIr. *scíath*, "shield" and Mod.Ir. *sgiath-lúireach*)?

This second criterion, though in some ways attractive, will not work when we look at the evidence. For example, in a Hiberno-Latin manuscript we find a text, now known as the 'Leyden Lorica', which

---

memorandum designed for private devotion. It mainly requests protection against sin or temptation.

[3] *Revue Celtique* 33 (1912) 477f. (review of Gougaud 1911–12); *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford 1910) 1: cxxxv n. 6.

[4] In the Book of Armagh (beginning of the 9th cent.), the hagiographical dossier of St. Patrick compiled in the 7th cent. by Muirchú refers to a canticum composed by Patrick, no doubt the so-called *Lorica of St. Patrick*. Probably therefore the text already existed in VII^{p}. Its Irish name is *faéd fiada*, "the cry of the Deer". (A possible variation of the same expression, *féth fiada*, referring to a kind of magic in mythological tales, is usually translated "mist of invisibility".) According to the legend, St. Patrick and his companions were miraculously changed into deer and survived an ambush by reciting this prayer.

is in fact a charm designed to inspire love.[5] Dom Gougaud of course omitted it from his list, as did Seán Ó Duinn (Ó Duinn 1990). Both consider it a 'pseudo-*lorica*'; nevertheless Ó Duinn does discuss it in his chapter on lists of body-parts (Ó Duinn 1990, 83f.). The use of the word *lorica* to refer to this love-charm might suggest that the Irish prayers called *loricae* were felt to be rather close to magical charms so that, by extension, any charm might also be called a *lorica*.

The formal criterion (i.e. *lorica* in the title) would also mean that we would have to accept every 'prayer for protection' in Irish or Scottish Gaelic. Yet in fact all they do is invoke divine protection by using classical expressions. In the modern *Sgiath-lúireach Mhuire* (Mary's Shield), for example, the word *sgiath-lúireach* ("shield-breast-plate") in the title is due mainly to a popular belief that the very recitation is itself protective.[6] I may note in passing that the mention of the virtues of a prayer, ancient or modern, in the prologue or the conclusion, is always very important. A Breton folklorist who is also a traditional singer, Yann-Fanch Kemener, has told me that this mention of 'indulgences' is recited as a part of the prayer by many Breton speakers.[7] We should therefore pay some attention to the preambles of the Old Irish (or Hiberno-Latin) hymns preserved in the *Liber Hymnorum*.[8] But I cannot here take account of all the traditional prayers included in Ó Duinn's list: he even includes prayers designed for special occasions, such as protection when setting out on a long journey; when raking

---

[5] Edited by Friedel 1899; bibliography: Kenney 1929, 272; Lapidge and Sharpe 1985 no. 1239. This Leyden Lorica, introduced by Ps. 101, *Domine, exaudi*, contains two different sections: one, beginning with *aescrutentur* (= *excrucientur*) *omnia membra illius amore meo*, lists all body-parts that are to be 'tortured by love for me' (a total of 76 items); the second part, introduced by *euacuat Deus cor N pro amore meo*, addresses the same prayer to different celestial powers (*adiuro uos omnes archangeli ut euacuatis*…): God, archangels, saints, elements, living beings, and finally the four evangelists. In contrast to regular *Loricae*, the two lists (body-parts, and powers invoked) occur in reverse order.

[6] Hyde 1906, 20f., 64f. (this edition includes a prologue mentioning the special virtues of this prayer, 'found on a tomb'); text and music collected by Eugene O'Curry in an article by B. Ó Madagáin, *Béaloideas* 51 (1983) 80–83.

[7] We may quote as an example the *Revelation to St. Brigit, Elizabeth and Mechthilda*, of which English and Irish versions exist [R. Flower in *Béaloideas* 1 (1927) 38–45] as well as Breton: P.-Y. Lambert, Un texte breton de la Révélation de Ste Brigitte, in *Regards étonnés… Mélanges offerts au professeur Gaël Milin*. Les Amis de Gaël Milin (Brest 2003) 272–88.

[8] Bernard and Atkinson 1898. Compare the text edited by Stokes and Strachan 1901–03, 2: 298–358.

the fire [that is, collecting and hiding embers under the ashes in the fire-place], or the prayer to be said before going to bed). These protective prayers are still very numerous in Irish and Scottish traditional folklore, as shown by the collections of Douglas Hyde in Ireland (Hyde 1906) and Alexander Carmichael in Scotland (Carmichael 1928–71).

I therefore take content as my main criterion for defining *loricae*. Here is Gearóid Mac Eoin's list of their main themes:

I. A: Invocation of the Trinity
   B: Invocation of God as Creator
   C: Invocation of God as *Unitas*
   D: Invocation of Christ
   E: Invocation of archangels and angels
   F: Invocation of the different categories of saints: patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, etc.
   G: Invocation of the elements or the forces of nature.
II. List of parts of the body with prayers for the protection of each.
III. List of situations or postures (e.g. lying, sitting, standing) in which protection is asked for.
IV. List of dangers against which protection is asked.
   A: Prayer that the protection requested may lead to eternal salvation
   B: Prayer of a general nature
   C: Repetition of one of the above *vel sim*.

Not all *loricae* contain a list of powers invoked, so this feature cannot be considered essential. But it is frequently found in the older *loricae*. Gearóid Mac Eoin saw a parallel in the list in the *Canticum trium puerorum*, the hymn of praise sung by the three young men thrown into a furnace on the orders of Nebuchadnezzar (*Daniel* 3.52–90).[9] Their prayer is a succession of benedictions, which may be considered the equivalent of exorcisms. Several *loricae* enumerate the different spiritual powers invoked, as in a litany. The prayer by Colgu Ó Duinechda, for example, begins with thirty-four invocations of

[9] The three youths in the furnace occur on some Irish high crosses (e.g. Moone, Arboe, Kells tower), and are mentioned in the Martyrology of Oengus. F. Henry, *Irish High Crosses* (Dublin 1964) 35f., traced the theme back to a very old prayer for the dying, entitled *Ordo commendationis animae*. This hymn has always been very popular: for example, it was directed to be sung at every solemn mass in Spain and Gaul: cf. Fourth Council of Toledo [633 CE] §14, in: G. Martinez Diez and F. Rodriguez (eds.), *La Colección Canónica Hispana* (Madrid 1992) 5: 203f. In later times it was still very popular, and is still now normally sung every day at Lauds.

this type, each introduced by the formula *ateoch frit*: "I invoke…".[10] The same prayer then continues with a new formula, *ar écndairc*, "for the sake of" (fourteen times). It is no doubt the regular rhythm of this text that is responsible for its name, 'The Broom of Devotion' (*Scuap Chrábaid*). It is worth mentioning here, following Kuno Meyer, that Colgu was one of the teachers of Alcuin; and we find Alcuin making use of his former master's prayers on serious occasions. In a letter to him, for example, he writes: *sed (vos) obsecro ut vestris sacrosanctis orationibus manentes vel euntes muniamur*.[11] Colgu was thus already then known for the virtues of his prayers.

Particularly characteristic, as regards both the list of invocations and the list of body-parts, is the *Lorica* attributed to St Gildas, and allegedly brought to Ireland by Laidcend mac Baith Bannaig (the attribution to Gildas is in fact found in only one manuscript, the others attribute it Laidcend himself).[12] Laidcend, the composer of *Ecloga de Moralibus in Iob* and a monk in Clonfert-Mulloe abbey, died in 661. The authorship of *Lorica Gildae* was long debated, but we should probably attribute it to Laidcend, as Herren has argued.[13] This is particularly so because the language is typically Hiberno-Latin, with a profusion of Hisperic words (Hisperic Latin consists in rare words, neologisms, new borrowings from Greek or Latin and any word that might add a flourish to Hiberno-Latin writings).[14]

The prologue to this text in the manuscript called *Leabhar Breac* is typical of this kind of prayer:[15]

> *Gillus (= Gildas) hanc loricam fecit ad demones expellendos eos qui aduersauerunt illi. Peru(enit) angelus ad illum, et dixit illi angelus: Si quis homo frequentauerit illam, addetur ei secul(um) septimm annis, et tertia*

[10] Colgu Ó Duinechda was a scholar at Clonmacnoise abbey, who died in 794 CE. The prayer is sometimes attributed to Airerán of Clonard, who lived in the preceding century, though I find this hypothesis less probable.

[11] *Otia Merseiana* (University of Liverpool, Faculty of Arts) 2 (1900–01) 92–108 at 93f.

[12] Kenney 1929, no. 100 = Lapidge and Sharpe 1985, no. 294. Text in Bernard and Atkinson 1898, 1: 206–210. Also called 'Loding's Lorica' in reference to a variant of Laidcend found in one manuscript (Book of Cerne).

[13] M.W. Herren, The authorship, date of composition and provenance of the so-called Lorica Gildae, *Ériu* 24 (1973) 35–51.

[14] Cf. R.P. Paul Grosjean, *Confusa caligo*, remarques sur les Hisperica famina, *Celtica* 3 (1956) 35–85.

[15] I.e. 'Speckled Book': Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 23.P.16, cat. no. 1230 (early XVth cent.).

pars peccatorum delebitur. In quacunque die cantauerit hanc orationem […]es, homines uel demones, et inimici non possunt nocere; et mors in illo die non tangit. Laidcend mac Buith Bannaig uenit ab eo in insolam Hiberniam, transtulit et portauit super altare sancti Patricii episcopi, saluos nos facere, amen. Metrum undecassillabum quod et bracicatelecticon (= brachycata…) dicitur quod undecem sillabis constat, sic scanditur.

This is a convenient point at which to offer a brief analysis of this *Lorica*:

I. Invocations (l. 1–28):
After *Trinitas* (1,2) come *sublimes caelestis militiae uirtutes* (7–8), repeated as *caelestis exercitus militiae* (12); then *Cherubim, Seraphim cum millibus* (13), *Gabriel et Michael cum similibus* (14), *thronos, uirtutes, archangelos* (15), *principatus, potestates, angelos* (16), *ceteros agonetetas* (19), *patriarchas quatuor, quater profetas* (20), *apostolos 'nauis Christi proretas'* (21) *et martires omnes, athletas* (22), *uirgines omnes* (23), *uiduas fideles et confesores* (24); lastly, *Christus* (27).

A prose colophon describes this part as follows: *finit primus prologus graduum angelorum et patriarcharum, apostolorum et martirum cum Christo*.

II. The remainder lists every part of the body to be protected. This is done in two different ways (parts II and III). A prose introduction calls the first list the 'second prologue': *Incipit prologus secundus de cunctis membris corporis, usque ad genua*. But in fact it ends before we come to the knees; here is the final couplet lines 53–54:

Capitali centro cartilagini
Collo clemens adesto tutamini.

To the centre of my head, to its cartilages, to my neck, kindly bring your protective presence.

In this second section, the names of the parts of the body are in the accusative or the dative, according to the verb employed. Hisperisms are frequent. The following prose sentence is clearly the conclusion, as is shown by an echo of the final invocation of Part I: *Obsecro te domine Iesu Christe propter nouem ordines sanctorum angelorum.*

III. The final section continues enumerating body-parts, but here a fixed formula is employed, the imperative *tege* ("protect!") + accusative. This anaphora carries on over fifteen successive couplets.

It has in fact been suggested that this third part may originally have been an independent text. The word *lorica* is used twice in the first

three couplets, apparently in order to ask for protection against magical attack:

Domine esto lorica tutissima
erga membra erga mea uiscera
ut retundas a me inuisibiles
sudum clauos quos fingunt odibiles
Tege ergo deus forti lorica
cum scapulis humeros et bracchia
Tege ulnas cum cubis (= cubitis) et manibus etc. (ll. 57–63).

Lord, be a very secure cuirass for my limbs and my entrails, and strike away from me the invisible nails of pins which detestable persons forge; protect therefore, o God, with a strong breast-plate, my arms and forearms together with my shoulders; protect my elbows together with my hands…[16]

The list ends with a sort of *praeteritio*:

Tege pilos atque membra reliqua
quorum forte praeterii nomina (l. 87–88).

Protect my hair and all the other parts, the name of which I may have omitted.

After a final *tege* for the five senses and the ten apertures of the body, the prayer lists the dangers or evils to be averted. These are mainly physical sickness or pain: *pestis febris langor dolor…* (94). But the general aim is already made clear in ll. 91–92:

Uti a plantis usque ad uerticem
nullo membro foris intus egrotem.

That I may not ail, from foot-sole to crown, in a single limb, outside or inside.

The aim is physical protection: allusion is made to spiritual matters only in the last three couplets. First, the hope is expressed that one shall be able to off-set one's sins by good deeds, if God allows one to live long enough to do so:

…donec iam Deo dante seniam
et peccata mea bonis factis deleam (ll. 95f.).

[16] *Invisibiles* could also qualify the *odibiles*: "strike away from me the nails of pins which invisible, detestable persons forge".

The second request is that one may be purified from any blemish at the time of one's death, so that one can go directly to Heaven:

> *Et de carne iens labis* (*labe* ?) *caream*
> *et ad alta euolare ualeam*
> *Et miserto deo ad etheria*
> *letus uehar regni refrigeria. Finit, amen* (ll. 97–100).

As Herren noticed, this text shows a considerable knowledge of anatomical words, probably owed to Isidore's *Etymologies*, which had just then appeared.[17] In fact it contains the richest list of body-parts to be found in our corpus, with about 136 items, some repeated from part to part. Most *loricae* list only five or six; those most frequently mentioned are the eyes, head, hands, feet, and sometimes the tongue.

Such lists are not found just in *loricae*, however. They also form a natural element in penitential prayers, for example in the *Book of Cerne*.[18] Dom Kuyper's description is worth quoting:

> In both, there is a minute enumeration of all possible sins, even of crimes the most heinous and unlikely.[19] The penitent speaks as though he had been guilty of them all, and moreover as though every part of him had shared in his guilt. Thus he proceeds to accuse himself of sins of his eyes, ears, nostrils; sins by his mouth, hands, feet, tongue, throat, neck, breast, heart; sins through his bones, flesh, marrow, kidneys; and even through his skin, teeth, hair, nails, tears and spittle: finally he declares: *peccaui in anima mea et in omni corpore meo*.

Dom Kuyper is aware of the existence of similar confessional texts in other parts of Western Europe but nevertheless considers an Irish origin possible.

In one case (*Book of Cerne* no. 17), the list of body-parts is modelled on a description of Christ's body; the prayer asks that one be assimilated to Christ's sanctity and purity.[20] Similarly, and symmetrically to

---

[17] Old Irish glosses explaining these rare Latin words have also proved important for our knowledge of Old Irish vocabulary.

[18] no. 8 = Kuypers 1901, 94: *confiteor tibi cordis mei cogitationes et uerba oris mei, uel pro natura carnis mei, pro pelle, pro renibus, pro ore, pro lingua, pro labiis, pro faucibus, pro dentes, pro capillis, pro ungules (?), pro lacrimas, pro sputo, pro medullas, pro cerebro, pro semine uiri uel mulieris, pro omni durum uel molli, umido uel arido, quodcumque umquam contigisset intus uel foras*; no. 9 = Kuypers 1901, 97: *peccaui in oculis meis et in auribus meis, p. in naribus et in auribus, p. in manibus et in pedibus, p. in lingua et in guttore, p. in collo et in pectore, p. in corde et in cogitationibus, p. in ossibus et in carne, p. in medullis et in renis, p. in animùa mea et in omni corpore.*

[19] He is referring here to prayers 8 and 10 of the *Book of Cerne*.

[20] This is entitled: *Oratio utilis de membra* [*sic*] *Christi*. Typical extracts from this long prayer are: *et per membra tua mundissima, miserere membris meis immundissi-*

a penitential prayer, the supplicant may ask for his body-parts to be sanctified, as in the *Book of Cerne* no. 21:

> *Digneris mihi Domine donare sanctum intellectum qui te cognoscat, sensum qui sentiat te, animum qui te sapiat* [plus three other mental entities, then:] *uiscera quae te ament, cor quod te cogitet, tactum qui te tangat, auditum qui te audiat, oculos qui te uideant, linguam quae te praedicet.*[21]

Elsewhere, we frequently find prayers in which the protection of body-parts is requested not against physical harm but on account of the danger of possible sins. A good example is to be found in the *Oratio Matutina*, incip. *Mecum esto Domine Deus Sabaoth, mane cum resurrexero* …, sometimes ascribed to St. Jerome:

> *Custodi os meum ne loquar uana, ne fabuler saecularia, ne detraham absentibus, ne maledicam maledictionem praesentibus, sed e contrario benedicam Dominum in omni tempore et semper laus eius sit in ore meo;*
>
> *Custodi oculos meos ne uideant mulierem ad concupiscendam eam per libidinem, nec desiderem rem proximi, nec delicias saeculi amplectem, sed dicam cum sancto Dauid: Oculi mei semper ad Dominum, quoniam ipse est qui euellet de laqueo pedes meos [Ps. 24.15] et iterum, ad te leuaui oculos meos qui habitas in caelo [Ps. 122.1];*
>
> *Custodi aures meas ne audiant detractationem, nec mendacium, nec uerbum otiosum, sed aperientur cotidie ad audiendum uerbum Dei;*
>
> *Custodi pedes meos ne circumeant domus otiosos sed fiant in oratione Dei cooperantes menti;*
>
> *Custodi manus meas ne porrigantur saepe ad capienda munera, sed potius eleuantur in praecibus Domini mundi et puri quo possim dicere illud propheticum: Eleuatio manuum mearum sacrificium uespertinum [Ps. 140.2].*

---

mis … et per uestigia tua felicissima, filius Dei, et per flectionem genuum tuorum, confirma gressus meos, et per manus tuas sanctas ac uenerabiles, munda manus meas a malis operibus, etc.

[21] The same type of request occurs in a prayer ascribed to St. Augustine, which may have inspired parts of Patrick's Lorica. Here are some extracts from the *Book of Cerne* fol. 47b–49b (note the reference to *scutum ueritatis* [*diuinae*]):

Deus in quo omnia, sub quo omnia, per quem omnia sunt, parce animae, parce malis meis, parce criminibus;

da cor quod te timeat, sensum qui te intelligat, oculos cordis qui te uideant, aures quae uerbum tuum audiant; […]

aufer, Domine, a corde meo alienatum sensum et cura in me stuporem mentis;

exstirpa in uisceribus meis consilia iniquitatis;

erade a lingua mea detrahendi consuetudinem, mentiendi fallacitatem, loquendi garrulitatem;

protege me, Domine, scuto ueritatis tuae ac fidei tuae ut me diabolica ignita iacula non penetrent;et quidquid illud est quod infelicitas mea a te petere aut non sumit aut non sapit, id tu pro tua pietate tribue. Cf. also Royal ms. 2 A XX in Kuypers 1901, 213.

I should say a word here, in passing, about theme III in Gearóid Mac Eoin's analysis: the *loricae* do not only list body-parts (theme II), but even actions or positions of the body, so that it may benefit from divine protection in every imaginable posture. Sean Ó Duinn gives numerous examples (1990, 93–105). Here I may just quote the *Lorica Brendani*:

Protege me Domine…
in aere, in terra, in aquis, in mari,
in flexu, in erectione, in gressu, in statione,
dormiendo, vigilando,
in omni motu
et in omni die, in omni hora, in omni loco, in omni nocte,
et in omnibus diebus vitae meae.

Here again, the same feature occurs in confessional contexts. For example, a prayer ascribed to abbot Hygbald or Hugbald reads:

Ut dimittat mihi omnia peccata mea atque crimina quae feci a conabulis iuuentutis meae usque in hanc aetatis horam, in factis, in uerbis, in uisu, in risu, in gressu, in auditu, in tactu olfactuque, uellens (!), nolens, sciens nesciensque, in spiritu uel in corpore delinquens commisi.[22]

Another lorica, much more sober than *Lorica Gildae* and certainly closer to our own concept of devotion, reads:

Obsecro te IHS. XPS filius d(e)i uiui per crucem tu[u]am
ut demittas delicta mea;
pro beata cruce—custodi caput meum
pro benedicta cruce—custodi oculos meos
pro ueneranda cruce—custodi manus meas
pro sancta cruce—custodi uiscera mea
pro gloriosa cruce—custodi genua mea
pro honorabili cruce—custodi pedes meos
et omnia membra mea, ab omnibus insidiis inimici.
pro dedicata cruce in corpore Christi, custodi animam meam et libera me in nouissimo die ab omnibus aduersariis;
pro clauibus sanctis quae in corpore Christi dedicata erant, tribue mihi uitam aeternam et misericordiam tuam Iesus Christus,
et uisitatio tua sancta custodiat spiritum meum.[23]

Here the list takes on another meaning: the aim is that different parts of the body may be protected from the snares of the Enemy, that is,

[22] Ms. Brit. Library Royal 2 A XX = Kuypers 1901, 207.
[23] British Library, Royal 2 A XX, f° 45b, edited in Kuypers 1901; cf. Ó Duinn 1990, 35.

from temptations. We now arrive at a properly religious conception of the desired protection. It is requested in the name of the cross, which was probably signed at each mention. At the end of the prayer, however, after a Greek doxology (*eulogumen patera cae yo cae agion pneuma…amin*), we find a kind of exorcism that alludes to the power attached to any copy of the text, thus bringing us back very close to the world of magic:

> *adiuro te Satanae diabulus aelfae (?) per D(eu)m uiuum ac uerum et per trementem diem iudicii ut refugiatur ab homine illo qui (h)abeat hunc aepist(olam) scriptum (!) secum in nomine d(e)i patris et filii et sp(iritu)s s(an)c(t)i.*

The Old Irish *lorica* attributed to Mugrón follows the same pattern:

> Christ's cross over this face, and thus over my ear, Christ's cross over this eye, Christ's cross over this nose.
> Christ's cross over this mouth, Christ's cross over this throat, Christ's cross over the back of this head. Christ's cross over this side…
>
> Murphy 1962, 32–35

We can observe a change of perspective in the middle of this text: there is a clear shift away from the body of the subject towards the surrounding space, which is to be filled with the divine presence:

> Christ's cross to accompany me before me, Christ's cross to accompany me behind me, Christ's cross to meet every difficulty both on hollow and hill.…
> Christ's cross up to broad Heaven, Christ's cross down to earth,
> Let no evil or hurt come to my body or my soul…

The text finally returns to the subject's own body, now as it were entirely covered by the Cross:

> From the top of my head to the nail of my foot, O Christ, against every danger I trust in the protection of thy cross.

The same attempt at sanctification, internal and external, can be found in other *loricae*, particularly in the famous *Lorica of St. Patrick*. The prayer invokes Christ's presence all around the subject's person: "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ below me, Christ above me". The purpose of listing body-parts here is not to protect them from evil or temptation; the performative 'I girdle' represents the speaker as declaring that divine power is today to supplement his own bodily strength:

I girdle myself today
with God's strength to move myself,
with God's power to uphold me,
with God's wisdom to guide me,
with God's eye to look before me,
with God's ear to make me hear,
with God's word to make me speak,
with God's arm to protect myself,
with God's way to lie before me,
with God's shield to protect myself,
with God's host to defend me,
against snares of devils, against temptations of vices, against inclinations (?) of nature, against every one who shall wish me ill, afar and anear, alone and in a multitude.[24]

These texts reveal many other ways of 'christianising' protection of the body. For example in the prayer of St. Fursy:

May the yoke of God's law be on these shoulders,
May the wisdom of the Holy Ghost be on this head,
May the sign of Christ be on this forehead,

May the hearing of the Holy Ghost be in these ears,
May the smelling of the Holy Ghost be in this nose,
May the vision of the celestial hosts be in these eyes,
May the language of the celestial hosts be in this mouth,
May the work of God's Church be in these hands,
May the benefits of God and of his parents be the business of these feet,
May this heart be one of the dwellings of God,
May this whole person belong to God the Father.
Credo et Pater.[25]

The *Lorica* of Mael Ísu Ua Brolcháin requests that all parts of the body, including sexual ones, may be protected from sin or temptation.

The argument I want to make starts from the observation that malign-magical charms are mentioned in *loricae* with surprising frequency. For example, in the *Lorica of St. Patrick* we find the following:

---

[24] Tr. Stokes 1901–03, 2: 356, with some changes of my own. For the first word, *atomriug*, I adopt D. Binchy's view that it is formed from *ad-rig*, "he binds", not *as-reig* / *atraig*, "he rises": *Ériu* 20 (1966) 232–234. Another list of body-parts in the *Lorica* notes potential threats launched by others:
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

[25] Text in K. Meyer, *Archiv für Celtische Lexicographie* (Halle 1907) 3: 232.

> I summon today all those powers
> against every cruel, merciless power that may oppose (or attack) my body and my soul,
> against incantations of false prophets (*tinchetla sáibfháthe*),
> against black laws of heathenry,
> against false laws of heretics,[26]
> against crafts (?) of idolatry,
> against spells of women, and smiths, and wizards,[27]
> against every knowledge that perverts(?) man's body and soul.[28]

Each one of these different expressions could refer to aggressive magic. We have already noted the reference in the *Lorica Gildae* to the *inuisibiles sudum clauos quos fingunt odibiles*, which clearly implies the use of poppets secretly pierced with nails (rather than *defixiones* proper, which had for centuries ceased to be made). The Klosterneuburg incantation likewise refers to *uptha na mban mbaeth*, "charms of silly women".[29] This text invokes not only *Cris Finnéin*, *Cris Eoin*, "the belt of St. Finnén, the belt of St. John", but also *Cris nathrach*, "the belt of a snake", a clearly magical object. In some cases, the *lorica* envisages a divine counter-attack against magical aggression. One example is the *Dumfett Críst*, a *lorica* attributed to St. Columba, the first abbot of Iona:

> Avert from me the plagues (*muirecha*: magical?) and perverse,
> (avert them) from the hearing of my ears, from the sight of my eyes, from my hundred articulations, from my hundred muscles, from my hundred bones;
> if it is a man that forge them up, let them turn back against his virile parts, if it is a woman, against her female parts, if it is a virgin, against her virginity.

It is this feature of the *loricae* that especially interests me here.[30] Why should there be such an emphasis upon aggressive magic in these texts? One possibility that occurs to me is that the original purpose of the genre was specifically to counter aggressive magic, though not necessarily

---

[26] In these two clauses, some manuscripts give *bricht*, "charm" instead of *recht*, "usage, law".

[27] The expression is: *Fri brichtu ban 7 gobann 7 druad*; "women" = sorceresses.

[28] Or reduces? Text: *ara-chuiliu*. Perhaps *ara-chaéli*, "which restrains", was intended.

[29] W. Stokes, The Klosterneuburg Incantation, *Revue Celtique* 2 (1873–75) 112–15.

[30] From this point on, I am particularly indebted to our editor Richard Gordon, who kindly suggested a new formulation of my conclusions and supplied many references to the argument.

in the written form of the *defixio*. That is, it may have originally been a specialised form of (oral) phylactery, though it later developed into a genuine prayer or litany. A number of early Jewish and Christian phylacteries mention such attacks. For example, the 'Phylactery of Moses', found in Sicily (II^{p}–III^{p}), states that the person who carries it shall not need to fear any sorcerer or aggressive magical attack: [αὐ]τὸ φορῶν οὐ φοβήσῃ μάγον οὐδὲ κατάδεσμον οὐδὲ πνεῦμα πονηρὸν οὐδέ τι δήποτε, "by carrying it you shall fear neither a sorcerer nor binding spell, nor evil spirit, nor anything whatsoever".[31] On a Christian magical prayer from the Fayyûm (c. 300 CE) we read: φυλάξατέ με ἀπὸ παντὸς δαίμονος ἀρσενικοῦ ἤ θηλυκοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ παντὸς στρατηγήματος καὶ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὀνόματος, "protect me from every demon, male and female, and from every (magical) attack and from every aggressive incantation (lit.: name)" (*PGrMag* 22 ll.35–40). A late-antique Christian amulet on papyrus requests that the name of Jesus protect the (female) wearer from all illness, fevers, headaches, and ἀπὸ πάσης βασκοσύνης κ(αὶ) ἀπὸ παντὸς πν(εύμ)α(τος), "from any attack by the evil eye and from all evil spirits".[32] Later still, we find a request for help against τὸν δαίμονα προσβασκανίας, the demon of magical attack (*PGrMag* 9 l.f., VI^{p}).

On the other hand, it is very difficult to suggest a specific literary antecedent. Requests of this kind only occupy a relatively small amount of attention in the eastern Mediterranean world; so far as I know, there are no late-antique Christian texts exclusively, or mainly, directed against aggressive magical attack. Nevertheless there are a number of tendencies in Christian phylacteries analogous to the *loricae*, including elaborate invocation-schemes, extended anaphora, lists of different movements or activities, and lists of body-parts.[33]

---

[31] Kotansky *GMA* no. 32 l.10–12; 25–27. Kotansky suggests ad loc. that the list may be a simplified version of the longer list in Deut. 18:10f., but there is no very good reason to accept this even if we invoke Aquila's translation.

[32] *SupplMag* no. 31 l.4; cf. Kotansky *GMA* no. 52 ll.11–13: ἀπὸ δεμόνων καὶ φαρμάκων καὶ καταδέσμων, from demons and aggressive magic (probably a variant on the traditional phrase for malign magic: φάρμακα καὶ ἐπῳδαί).

[33] Examples might be: a) invocation-schemes: Kotansky *GMA* nos.41 (IV–V^{p}); 52 (IV^{p}); *PGrMag* 13 (IV–V^{p}); *SupplMag* 36 (V–VI^{p}, in Latin); b) anaphora: Kotansky *GMA* no. 52 ll.13–61 (best seen in the transl. on p. 280); 32 ll.43–36 with Kotansky ad loc; 33 ll.1–12; *PGrMag* 23; *SupplMag* nos. 13 passim; 35; 23; 34; c) list of activities etc.: Kotansky *GMA* no. 52 ll.95–109 (this trope is certainly derived from aggressive love magic, e.g. *PGrMag* IV 1510–19; *SupplMag* no. 73 ll.5–7; 43 ll.8f.; d) parts: *SupplMag* no. 30 l.5 (in fact formulaic); *PGrMag* 12 ll.9f. (womb-fixer). The phylactery published

One example commands the wicked spirits not to harm the bearer but "stay away from him, do not hide in the earth here, or under the bed, or beneath the window, or beneath the door, or beneath the bolts, or under the furniture, or under the 'little hole'".[34]

It is clear that such protective charms, particularly fever amulets, were themselves in many cases developed from pagan models.[35] From the Latin-speaking West, I may quote a little-known protective charm from Carthage, apparently against snakes/ scorpions, which reads:

Ca]ele pater, Terra mater, au[c-
(tori)tatem peto qua causa uos [tegatis?]
…me stantem sedentem
…(cub)antem. Serpentem aliqui-
bus tricis istic morare posit. Mer-
(cur)ius et te Hercules qua ibebo n(e)
…] coxsa(m) mea(m) mala bestia
…] storas deto

Father Heaven, mother Earth, I request the authority by virtue of which you [may protect?] me, whether I am standing or sitting or [lying]. May any snake be hindered from surprise attacks when I am in these positions. Mercury, and you, Hercules, (grant) that, wherever I may go, my hip (= my leg?) (be protected from) any noxious animal…(magical words).[36]

This is a typical charm in prayer form (divinity addressed + *peto* + request), in this case addressed to two pairs of related deities.[37]

---

by T. Gelzer, M. Lurje, C. Schäublin (eds.), *Lamella Bernensis: ein spätantikes Goldamulett mit christlichem Exorzismus und verwandte Texte* (Stuttgart 1999), related to Kotansky *GMA* no. 52, is a fine example of several of these features. The tradition continues into Coptic protective magic, cf. the texts translated in *AChrMag.*

[34] *PGrMag* 10 ll.24–29. I take it that βόθυνον is a euphemism for a latrine. If these were supplied with a drain, as in Pompeii (cf. R. Long, *The Insula of Menander at Pompeii, I: The Structures* [Oxford 1997] 91f.; 114f. etc.), this would explain the fear of demons lurking there, as in the baths.

[35] N. Brox, Magie und Aberglaube in den Anfängen des Christentums, *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 83 (1974) 157–80; D.E. Aune, Magic in Early Christianity, *ANRW* II.23.2 (1980) 1507–57; H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic: Papers originally… delivered at a Colloquium at Dumbarton Oaks, Feb. 27–28 1993* (Washington 1995).

[36] From A. Audollent's collection in the Musée Bargoin at Clermont-Ferrand. Photo in CAG 63, Puy-de-Dôme, fasc.2, 61. A preliminary transcription, slightly different from this one, will be found in *RIG* 2.2, 273f. The reference to *coxa* may pick up the reference to sleeping, since it implies the fear of being attacked when lying in bed or on the ground.

[37] Caelus and Terra are an invariable pair, being the most ancient gods (Varro, *LL* 5.57). There are several examples of statues of Mercury and Hercules being dedicated

The genre of the amulet against scorpion stings and snake bites is ultimately Near-Eastern and Egyptian; several examples are known from the magical papyri, some adapted for Christian use.[38] One of these also stresses the creeping quality of these noxious animals: ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ ἑρπετοῦ [καὶ] πράγματος, "from every harmful creeping creature and (every)thing (similar)" (*PGrMag* P2 l.8, VI^{p}).[39] Given the possible provenance, we must remember the Psylli, the Libyan people famous for their skill in killing snakes, scorpions etc. and healing their bites both directly and by means of incantations: Audollent's text may indeed even have passed for a Psyllian charm.[40]

More directly related to the *loricae*, however, there are a number of pagan spells and amulets against illness thought to have been caused by aggressive magic. One of the earliest pagan protective amulets known, from Amisus in Pontus, was intended to protect the wearer from magical attack by identifying him with King Mithradates, who famously had protected himself from being poisoned by regularly ingesting harmful substances.[41] Another early phylactery from Aleppo in Syria asks that Juliana be released ἀπὸ πάσης φαρμακίας καὶ παντὸς πάθους καὶ πάσης ἐνεργείας καὶ φαντασίας δαιμονώδους, "from all sorcery and all suffering and all intervention and spirit-apparitions in the night". Analogous lists of afflictions certainly continued to be used into the Byzantine period.[42] Unfortunately, however, there is no trace of a genre of pagan phylacteries directly counter to the listing of body-parts, which was a common feature of ancient aggressive

---

as a pair, e.g. *CIL* III 633 = *ILS* 5466 (Philippi); XII 1904 = *ILS* 3400 (Vienne); in North African lists of deities invoked for a votive, Mercury is sometimes placed next to Hercules (*CIL* VIII 8247) or near him (4578; 8246).

[38] E.g. *PGrMag* VII 193–96; XIII 261–64 (where the snake is identified with Apophis); *SupplMag* nos. 16–17; *PGrMag* XXVIIIa–c are three versions of a pagan charm against scorpions from Oxyrhynchos still being recopied in V^{p}; *SupplMag* 89 (IV^{p}) seems to show Jewish influence.

[39] Cf. *PGrMag* 3 l.6.

[40] On the Psylloi, cf. still H. Treidler, s.v. Psylloi, *RE* 23.2 (1959) 1464–76; on the Marsi and Hirpi, cf. G. Piccaluga, I Marsi e gli Hirpi. Due diversi modi di sistemare le minoranze etniche, in P. Xella (ed.), *Magia: Studi di storia delle religioni in memoria di R. Garosi* (Rome 1976) 207–31.

[41] Kotansky *GMA* no. 36 ll.15–20 with comm. ad loc. (I^{a}–I^{p}). Φάρμακον slides, as so often, from 'poison' to 'magic'.

[42] Kotansky *GMA* no. 46 ll.10–16, who cites later parallels (p. 241). One word for freeing individuals from such magical attack was λύειν and its cognates, e.g. *PGrMag* XIII 253f.; XXXVI 256–64.

magic.[43] Since there are no clear antecedents to this aspect of the *loricae*, we may have to assume that there were specific conditions in the Celtic Christian world that led to the greater emphasis on the theme of magical attack there.[44] That does not however exclude the possibility that the *lorica* developed out of the pagan and then Christian amuleto-phylactery tradition.[45] Since literacy is surely a pre-condition for the genre, it may well be that it is best understood as a local elaboration, on an ancient basis, of the widespread technique of creating lists as a means of producing impressive performances.[46] That such lists could be used even in mediaeval Christian cultures is clear from a number of rituals, particularly exorcisms,[47] adjurations and oaths.[48]

---

[43] For such lists in malign magic and analogous genres, see H.S. Versnel, καὶ εἴ τι λοιπὸν τῶν μερῶν ἔσται τοῦ σώματος ὅλου…(…and any other part of the entire body there may be…): An Essay on Anatomical Curses, in F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale, Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert, Castelen bei Basel, 15. bis 18. März 1996* (Stuttgart and Leipzig 1998) 217–67. Some examples go into considerable anatomical detail.

[44] Welsh *loricae* are not always given the title *lorica*, *llurig*. B.F. Roberts, Rhai swynion Cymraeg (Some Welsh Charms), *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 21 (November 1964–May 1966) 197–213 at 200, suggests that W *llurig* developed its meaning 'protective prayer' under Irish influence. Only one has been transmitted to us, *Llurig Alexander*, but there are references to other prayers called *llurig*: *Llurig Vair*, "Ll. of Mary", *Llurig Curig*, "Ll. of St. Cyriacus", a name obviously chosen for the rhyme. Many Welsh popular prayers could qualify as *loricae*, particularly *Gweddi Taliesin*, "Taliesin's Prayer", and *Ymgroesiad Taliesin*, "Taliesin Self-crossing", edited by B.F. Roberts, ibid. Gearoid Mac Eoin, Some Icelandic Loricae, *Studia Hibernica* 3 (1963) 143–154, provides examples of similar prayers collected in Iceland in the 19th cent. They are called *brynjabaen*, "prayers of breast-plate". These prayers, probably introduced by the Irish, present the same features as the Irish *loricae*, and likewise refer to protection against magic spells.

[45] This continuity between pagan and Christian magic formulae has been studied by Erik Peterson, *Heis Theos: epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, NF 24 (Göttingen 1924).

[46] Cf. R.L. Gordon, 'What's in a list?': Listing in Greek and Graeco-Roman Malign Magical Texts, in: D. Jordan, H. Montgomery & E. Thomasson (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic: Proceedings of the First international Eitrem Seminar, Athens May 1997* (Bergen 2000) 239–77.

[47] E.g. the *ordo baptismi* in the Stowe Missal includes an enumeration of the parts of the body, according to Dom Kuypers 1901, xxv n. 2.

[48] There is an interesting parallel in the Visigothic text of the *Condiciones Sacramentorum*, where the oath-taker prays that physical injuries may fall on him if he foreswears: *oculi nostri non erigantur ad caelum, lingua nostra muta efficiatur, omnis interiora viscera nostra obduretur et arescat, atque in breues dies spiritus diaboli periurantem arripiat*…: Formulae Visigothicae §24 ap. Zeumer 1882, 592f. Many other texts could also be quoted, e.g. curses pronounced by saints, or curses inserted in sentences of excommunication.

There may however be another argument to support the claim that *loricae* originated as protective magical texts. In every century of Christian history, we can find popular forms of religious behaviour that look like magic. By this I mean primarily the claim, implicit or explicit, that to recite a particular text, or merely to possess a written version of it, *eo ipso* confers supernatural power. This is surely the case even with the christianised forms of these texts, at least in popular belief. It is as much the sheer use of repetition and the formal stylisation as the holy names invoked that generate the protective power of these texts. This feature of the *loricae* may derive from an ultimate origin in pagan defensive magical practice.

Appendix: An Old Irish lorica, *translated into English*

This is the prayer ascribed to Columcille, inc. *Dumfett Cristt cuntt cumhachta*.[49]

May Christ, chief[50] of power, lead me to the King of all countries.
I invoke the sacred Trinity, with their dragon-like strength,[51]
the supreme King will protect me against cruel enemies,
that he may defend me, deliver me and love me with kindness,
that he may give me a spotless reputation, that he may drive away from me wicked and wily accusations, that I may be covered by him with breast-plates for every purpose,[52] against sadness of mind, against cruelty, against excessive softness, against sweet temptations[53] that deprive one of his voice or mind; that their (*rurcc*), their wiles and their cleverness may not stifle nor destroy nor spoil me. (These are) caves which make the sea recede, and the earth split, that their (*athcha*), their hates and their enmity may not reach me, that I may vanquish their perverse[54] guiles.

---

[49] Text edited by K. Meyer, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 6 (1908) 258.
[50] If *cuntt* is equivalent to *cond,* "head, chief".
[51] *tri nert dreconta*, alliterating with the preceding *trinóit*, could simply mean: "(I beseech) with a dragon-like strength".
[52] Lit. "of every use".
[53] The meaning of *eltra* is uncertain.
[54] Reading *saobaib*, 'perverse' for *saoraib*, 'free'.

May I keep healthy in mind and sense, head and body, bones, sight, tongue, [health],[55] elocution and voice. That I may not be stifled, destroyed or vanquished by the venomous power of every injunction,[56] that there be no master[57] on my body, my mind and sense, that the power of sacred Trinity protect me[58] according to the will of God and his command, with the strength of the Father, the sweet Son and the sweet Holy Spirit. That they may remain far from me, the [powerful and saddening blights],[59] from the hearing of my ears, from the sight of my eyes, from my hundred joints, from my hundred sinews, from my hundred bones. If this is sent by a man, may it turn back upon his genitals; if by a woman, upon her private parts; if by a virgin, upon her virginity. That I may be safe from Irish [magic],[60] from Scottish [magic], from the [magic] of wizards, druids, smiths, trappers, 'crane-killers',[61] 'hart-killers', and of every living person which does evil or guile against my body or soul. May their venom and drippings flow back[62] (as) the wind of the sea, and the wave of the shore draw back too.

God the Father be before me, the Son protect me, the Holy Spirit illuminate me. Amen Amen.

---

[55] The word *sláne* perhaps ought to be taken with the preceding word *tongad-sláne*, "health of tongue".

[56] Developing *earcoél(iud)*, i.e. *erchoiled*, *erchaíled*, verbal noun of *as-rochoíli*.

[57] *coimsighe*, = *coimside*, nom. pl. of *coimsid*, "lord, master".

[58] With tmesis, *cotom-…-roathar*, from *con-oí*, "protects, defends", which has also a deponent inflection (*con-oathar*), possibly originating from the present subjunctive (here used as an optative). The interpretation proposed in Contrib. R2, col. 79 lines 37–38 (gen. sg. *ro-athar*, "of the big father") is to be rejected.

[59] Translation uncertain (*meirge*: blight, or banner); the following sentence suggests that this is a kind of malevolent charm.

[60] *feiss* can hardly be the word for 'feast', 'act of spending the night'; might it be *feiss*, 'needle-work'? The context clearly indicates a designation of some kind of magic.

[61] *corr-guine*, "crane-killer", a designation for a kind of sorcerer.

[62] *atshníasat* (subj. pres. 3 pl., not 1 sg.) and *atsnigh* (indic. pres. 3 sg.), probably the same verb, can hardly be *ad-sní*, "he weaves together"; they are more likely to belong to a compound of *snigid*, 'to drip' (with preverb *ad-* from **aith-*, 'back'?).

Bibliography[63]

A. *Primary Texts*

Bernard, J.H. and Atkinson, R. (eds.) 1898. *The Irish Liber Hymnorum*. Henry Bradshaw Society, vols. 13–14 (London).
Carmichael, A. 1928–71. *Ortha nan Gael—Carmina Gadelica*. 6 vols. (Edinburgh).
Friedel, W.H. 1899. La Lorica de Leyde, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 2, 64–72.
Hyde, D. 1906. *Abhráin Diadha Chúige Connacht or the Religious Songs of Connacht. A Collection of Poems, Stories, Prayers, Satires, Ranns, Charms, etc*. 2 vols. (London).
Kuypers, Dom A.B., OSB. 1901. *The Prayer Book of Aedelualdthe Bishop commonly called the Book of Cerne* (Cambridge).
Murphy, G. (ed., transl.). 1956. *Early Irish Lyrics, Eighth to Twelfth century* (Oxford). Repr. 1962 and 1998.
Plummer, Rev. C. 1925. *Irish Litanies: Text and Translation* (London). Repr. 1992.
Stokes, W. and Strachan, J. 1901–3. *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus.* 2 vols. (Cambridge).
Zeumer, K. 1882. *Formulae Merowingici et Karolingi Aevi.* Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Legum, vol. 5, Formulae (Hannover).

B. *Secondary Literature*

Godel, W. 1963. Irisches Beten im frühen Mittelalter, *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 85, 261–321; 390–439.
Kenney, J.F. 1929. *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland* (New York). Repr. 1979.
Lapidge, M. and Sharpe, R. 1985. *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature 400–1200* (Dublin).
MacEoin, G. 1962. Invocation of the Forces of Nature in the Loricae, *Studia Hibernica* 2, 212–17.
Ó Duinn, S. 1990. *Orthaí Cosanta sa Chráifeacht Cheilteach* (= Prayers of Protection in Celtic devotion) (Maynooth).
Stevenson, J. 1999. Altus Prosator, *Celtica* 23, 326–67.

[63] I do not refer here to the standard bibliographies on Irish literature by R.I. Best, *Bibliography of Irish Philology and Manuscript Literature. Publications 1913–41* (Dublin 1942, repr. 1969); R. Baumgarten and R.I. Best, *Bibliography of Irish Linguistics and Literature* (Dublin 1986).