

Portrait of a Magician

Nature of the Evidence - labeling the other vs. self-labeling

Self-Labeling

Executed Examples vs. Recipes

Advertisement vs. Defensive Systematic Theorizing

The Term “Magic” in the Greek Magical Papyri

Labeling the Other

Marvelous & Extra-Ordinary vs. Abnormal & Improper

Accusation vs. Literary Representation

Social Context of Accusations

Infighting at the Margins

Explaining the Inexplicable

Literary Context - the Nature of the Evidence

Literary Fantasies - Narrative Logic vs. Ritual Logic

Greek Sources vs. Latin Sources

Genre - Epic, Erotic Lyric, Comedy, Tragedy, Novel, History

Magic as the transgressive other

magic as other than normal religion

magic as other than normal science

value of transgressing the norms

etic models of understanding - criteria of legitimacy

Weber/Gordon::

objectivity

performance

ends

political-social location

Bourdieu: objective and intentional profanation

Extra-ordinary: non-normative, other, abnormal

Edmonds

efficacy

performance

ends

socio-political location

Historical Context - paradigm shifts in socio-religious organization

Archaic Greek formation of the city-state - 8th - 6th centuries BCE

Classical Greek city-states – 5th-4th centuries BCE

Hellenistic transition from city-state to kingdoms - 3rd - 2nd centuries BCE

Roman transition from Republic to Empire - 1st century BCE - 1st century CE

Roman Empire's transition from pagan to Christian - 4th century CE

Late Antiquity: 5th- 9th century CE

Portraits of Magicians

Charismatics - of an other god

Jesus of Nazareth

Apollonius of Tyana

Alexander of Abonouteichos

Simon Magus

Foreigners - other in nationality

Thessalians

Egyptians

Persians

Chaldaeans/Babylonians

Women - the other gender

old & ugly

young & beautiful

wise women & night-witches

prostitutes & goddesses

Greek witches - Circe, Medea, Deianeira, Simaetha

Roman witches - Canidia, Erichtho, drunken bawd-witches, Meroe, Pamphile

Plotinus II.9.14

In the sacred formulas they inscribe, purporting to address the Supernal Beings- not merely the Soul but even the Transcendents- they are simply uttering spells and appeasements and evocations in the idea that these Powers will obey a call and be led about by a word from any of us who is in some degree trained to use the appropriate forms in the appropriate way- certain melodies, certain sounds, specially directed breathings, sibilant cries, and all else to which is ascribed magic potency upon the Supreme. Perhaps they would repudiate any such intention: still they must explain how these things act upon the unembodied: they do not see that the power they attribute to their own words is so much taken away from the majesty of the divine.

Proclus On the Sacred Art

From these facts, the masters of the Sacred Art found the way to pay divine honours to the Higher Powers, by following what lay in front of their eyes, and by mixing together some things and removing others, as appropriate. And when they made use of a mixture of things it was because they had observed that unmixed each thing has some quality of the God, but taken alone was not sufficient to invoke them. So by mixing together many different things they unified the emanations referred to previously and by the production of one thing from many, they made a likeness of that Whole which exists before every thing else comes into being. And so they often constructed images and incenses from these mixtures, mingling into one the divided Divine Sigils, and making by art that which a God contains essentially. Thus they unified the multiplicity of powers which when dispersed are weakened, but when combined lead back up to the essential Form of its Archetype.

For Discussion:

- How does a recipe in a formulary such as PGM IV. 154-285 create a portrait of the magician who is reading/using the spell? Write notes to post to Moodle.
- Break into groups and analyze two passages each:
 - What features of alterity does each description ascribe to the user of magic?
 - What is the genre of the passage?
 - How does that affect the description and its effects on the reader?
 - How might the use of magic be analyzed in terms of Weber's criteria of legitimacy? In terms of efficacy, performance, ends, and socio-political location? In terms of Bourdieu's objective vs. intentional profanation?
 1. O59 Apollonius of Tyana – O102 Ovid's Dipsas
 2. O64 Alexander of Abunoteichos – O96 Lucan's Erichtho
 3. O65 Simon Magus – O69 Ovid's Medea
 4. O91 Horace's Canidia O105 Apuleius' Zatchlas
 5. O82 Euripides' Andromache – O89 Theocritus' Simaetha