

REPORTING THE MARVELLOUS: PRIVATE DIVINATION IN THE GREEK MAGICAL PAPYRI*

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The study of ancient magic, to whose current efflorescence this volume itself is yet another testimony, seems to have reached something of an impasse. On the one hand, with one or two notable exceptions,¹ there has been a loss of faith in the traditional underpinnings of the category magic itself—that is, psychological realism and the definitional polarity with religion. Virtually everyone seems to feel with the social anthropologists and the early modern historians of the 1970s that there no longer is much point in ‘reification of trans-cultural categories at the expense of history, culture and social context’.² Unable to stand on its own feet, Magic has become ‘magic’. Given that the characteristic social-anthropological strategy of studying accusations instead of magic itself is more or less excluded for the ancient world for lack of evidence,³ the inference generally drawn

* I should like to express my gratitude to Prof. Peter Schäfer for providing me with the opportunity to attend the Magic Symposium at the Institute. Both setting and occasion I remember with pleasure.

The following abbreviations have been used:

PDM = Papyri Demoticae Magicae; the acronym used in *PGMT* for the translations by Janet H. Johnson of the Demotic magical papyri.

DT = A. Audollent, *Defixionum tabellae* (Paris, 1904).

PGM = K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*², 2 vols., ed. A. Henrichs (Stuttgart, 1973–74) (ed. 1, 1928–31).

SM = R.W. Daniel and F. Maltomini (edd.), *Supplementum Magicum* Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Sonderreihe Papyrologica Coloniensia, 16.1–2 (Opladen 1990–92).

PGMS = texts additional to those in Preisendanz as numbered by *PGMT*.

PGMT = H.-D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*², 1 (Chicago and London, 1993) (ed. 1, 1986).

¹ For example: H. Versnel, ‘Some reflections on the relationship magic-religion’, *Numen* 38 (1991), 177–97.

² J.M. Atkinson, ‘Shamanisms today’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992), 307–30 at 308; cf. S.J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge, 1990), 29.

³ 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, an attempt to use a social-anthropological

is that we must redefine the notion in terms more appropriate to ancient perceptions. This in practice has led to the emergence of the expression 'ritual power': the key feature of the texts and traditions favoured by this view, the Egyptian and Graeco-Egyptian magical texts and their Mesopotamian, Coptic and Christian analogues, is their 'claim to empower people, in ways similar to those commonly assigned to religious texts and traditions, by channeling, summoning, adjuring, realizing powers without and within'.⁴ On the other hand, as one of the most forthright proponents of this shift of focus has recognized only too clearly, magic in something uncomfortably like its traditional sense is 'cross-culturally, a native, first-order category, occurring in ordinary usage which has deeply influenced the evaluative language of the scholar'.⁵ There is probably no society, certainly no complex society, which does not differentiate between licit and illicit forms of symbolic power, and seek in one way or other to sanction this distinction. The most terrible image of such power is the night-witch, who as it may be rides on hyenas, flies through the night, sucks the entrails from living children, feasts on corpses—but who can never be accused because he or she stands beyond the social order, an image of the very inverse of social and moral order.⁶

Viewed from within, then, magic looks like religious power; viewed from outside, like—well, magic: the enemy of religion. Both approaches, the phenomenological and the evaluative, seem equally valid; but they also seem to have little to say to one another. The problem is particularly acute in relation to the Graeco-Roman world. For here the historians of religion have long since distinguished between 'normal' and 'abnormal' religion,⁷ and we can easily trace the history of distinctions between licit and illicit symbolic power; but are faced also with the emergence of numerous magics, magic as the social other, as the political other, magic as affront to the natural order, magic as absurdity, magic as the power inherent in nature, magic

approach on the unusually rich late-antique evidence, has been widely admired but imitated only by mediaevalists, e.g. E. Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law* (Hassocks, 1978).

⁴ M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, 'Introduction', in: eidem (edd.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 129 (Leyden, 1995), 3.

⁵ J.Z. Smith, 'Trading places', in: M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (see n. 4 above), 13–27 at 17.

⁶ L. Mair, *Witchcraft* (London, 1969), 36–42.

⁷ Cf. A. Brelich, *Il politeismo* (Rome, 1958); D. Sabbatucci, *Saggio sul misticismo greco* (Rome, 1979).

ironised, magic vain, magic the language of the gods, as the demonic, as fraud, as prestidigitation.⁸

It would be prudent to conclude that magic is primarily 'good to think (with)', that each society has the magic it can or will imagine, and that the harder one looks, the more the ethnoclassification has to offer by way of insights into images of the social body and its elements, moral understanding, fate and chance, conceptions and styles of rationality, the nature and limits of power and language. . . . The best way out of the dilemma I have sketched is to dissolve it—to accept the wisdom of the Irishman in the story, and start as it were from somewhere else. That though is a large task before which one might well falter, and which in any case I do not propose to embark on here.⁹ Instead, we might look at the second option, and see whether the phenomenological and the evaluative approaches cannot be brought into some kind of relation. If they can, I stress, it will be an oblique one. I propose to confine my exploration to a single corner of the wood, to Graeco-Egyptian magic, to the diverse collection of texts familiar to us as the Greek magical papyri. And, caveats abounding, I will continue to use the term magician as a shorthand: there is indeed a sense in which these texts are self-conscious about the enterprise they are engaged upon.

The obvious place to start will be with the figure of the magician, whom Marcel Mauss, the only one of the older theorists still worth reading, brilliantly placed at the centre of his account.¹⁰ The Graeco-Egyptian magician, whom we should conceive to have been ordinarily a temple-priest, for example the Hellenistic and Roman successor of the *hry-hbt*, the 'carrier of the ritual book' in Dynastic Egypt,¹¹ a

⁸ Cf. R.L. Gordon, 'Aelian's peony: the location of magic in Graeco-Roman tradition', in: E.S. Shaffer (ed.), *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook* (Cambridge, 1987), 59–95; F. Graf, *Gottesnähe und Schadenzauber* (Munich, 1996).

⁹ The model for such a rethinking is surely J. Favret-Saada, *Les Mots, les morts et les sorts* (Paris, 1977), E.T. by C. Cullen as *Deadly Words* (Cambridge, 1980).

¹⁰ M. Mauss, 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie', *L'Année sociologique* 7 (1902–3) = idem, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris, 1950), Part 1; E.T. by R. Brain as *A General Theory of Magic* (London, 1972); also the fine collection of studies in the same tradition, G. Condominas (introd.), *Le Monde du sorcier*, Sources orientales, 7 (Paris, 1966). It is instructive that the leading German authority on the magical papyri, Karl Preisendanz, found it impossible to think in such terms.

¹¹ On the *hry-hbt* see A.H. Gardiner, 'The house of life', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 24 (1938), 157–79; Th. Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*² 2 (Amsterdam, 1983–90), 8f. § 8; J.F. Borghouts, s.v. 'Magie', *LexAeg.* 3 (1980), 1137–51 at 1146; W. Gutekunst, s.v. 'Zauber', *LexAeg.* 6 (1986), 1320–55 at 1329f.; R.K.

priest of course conversant with Greek; but perhaps too, on occasion, a private—but necessarily literate—individual, a clerk or professional document-writer of some kind, able to draw upon the symbolic power of the temple, the traditional source of such texts,¹² may be represented as the point of intersection between two trajectories. On the one hand lies his aspiration, his model; on the other the humdrum world of everyday, the world of the Roman occupation and the decline of Egypt.

First his aspiration. We may suggest that this consists of a proximate and a wider horizon. The proximate horizon is created by his teacher. Two conceptions of such a teacher seem to be present in the evidence: an older, more experienced, practitioner; and an acquaintance who provides another 'initiate' with the requisite texts. Outsiders certainly took it for granted that one learned magic from a master. Strabo mentions that Bur(e)bista, king of the Getae and a contemporary of Julius Caesar, had a tame magician Dekaineos, who had studied in Egypt and there learned to foretell the future.¹³ The apocryphal autobiography of Cyprian claims that the future bishop spent ten years in Memphis learning magic from the priests there.¹⁴ The young man accused of laying an *agôgimon*, a 'compeller', on a Christian girl with whom he had fallen in love, confessed to St. Hilarion that he had spent a year being instructed *ab Asculapii vatibus*, by the priests of Imhotep (Imuthes-Asklepios) at Memphis, so that he would be able to force her to do his bidding.¹⁵ Arignotus, 'that extraordinarily learned man', claims in Lucian's *Philopseudes* to have been taught

Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, 54 (Chicago, 1993), 218f.

¹² J.Z. Smith has strongly argued for private individuals practising as magicians in Graeco-Roman Egypt, e.g. 'The temple and the magician', in: idem, *Map is not Territory* (Leyden, 1978), 172–207; 'Trading places' (see n. 5 above), 20–27. But see the criticisms of R.K. Ritner, 'The religious, social and legal parameters of traditional Egyptian magic', in: Meyer and Mirecki (edd.) (see n. 4 above), 43–60 at 58f. Hopfner, *Offenbarungszauber*² (see n. 11 above), 9–17 §§ 9–12, noting that even in Dynastic times priests spent only part of their time living in the temple, allowed for both possibilities: priests were also private persons.

¹³ Strabo, *Geogr.* 3.11.1 (304C); cf. C.G. Brandis, *RE* 3 (1899), 2904; F. Stählin, *RE* Suppl. 3 (1918), 328.

¹⁴ [Cyprianus], *Conf.* 3; text in Hopfner, *Offenbarungszauber*² 2.1 (see n. 11 above), 22f. § 15.

¹⁵ Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis* 12.2 (ed. Bastiaensen), repr. in Audollent, *DT* cxxi–ii; cf. G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: a historical approach to the late pagan mind* (Cambridge, 1986), 166.

by Pancrates, the holiest of all magicians.¹⁶ Fusing this motif with another, the motif of the god who provides a spell, for example Osiris *megistos*, who gave Manetho an unsurpassable recipe for foreknowledge,¹⁷ Lucian reports wide-eyed that Pancrates owed his reputation to the fact that he had spent twenty-three years underground in a chamber learning magic from Isis.¹⁸ One or two of the self-consciously elaborate compilations in the Anastasi cache seem to envisage a master-pupil relationship, almost invariably in the context of the requirement not to divulge the contents of the book to any third party.¹⁹ On the other hand, the exchange of texts seems clearly to be envisaged by other Anastasi documents: the author of the 'Mithras Liturgy', certainly the single most elaborate set of instructions for a ritual *praxis* in the extant corpus, apparently takes it for granted that the purpose of committing the procedure to writing is to provide other 'initiates' with a copy.²⁰ Moreover, the detailed instructions to the practitioner in the three full versions of the 'Eighth Book of Moses'

¹⁶ Lucian, *Philopseudes* 34. The autoptic vision witnessed by Plotinus took place in the Isaeum at Rome (Porphyry, *Vit. Plotin.* 10.19f. Henry-Schwyzler).

¹⁷ *PGM* III.439f. *PGM* X.36–50 is ascribed to Apollo, and V.213–303 to Hermes; cf. too Hopfner, *Offenbarungszauber*² 2 (see n. 11 above), 3f. § 3. Hermes (Trismegistus) is also said to have been the author of a magical book or recipe at IV.885f.; XIII.14–16; *SM* 2, #72 = *PGMS* CXXII, 2f. This motif is with difficulty to be distinguished from the more common one of the stela or recipe found in a temple (where they were indeed kept), on which see the references of Daniel and Maltomini, *SM* 2, 111–13.

¹⁸ *Philopseudes* *ibid.*; cf. F. Graf, 'The magician's initiation', *Helios* 21(2) (1994), 161–77. On the literary strategy, cf. F. Gascó, 'Magia, religión o filosofía, una comparación entre el *Philopseudes* de Luciano y la *Vida de Apolonio de Tiana* de Filostrato', *Habis* 17 (1986), 271–81.

¹⁹ For example, *PGM* XII.92–94; the locution *teknon* in the 'Mithras Liturgy' (IV.748), at several points in the first recension of the 'Eighth Book of Moses' (XIII.214; 226; 231; 233; 341–43), and in the preamble to the third recension (*ibid.* 736; 741f.; 755), clearly implies at least the frame-device of a master-pupil relation. For the use of *mystês* and other mystery-language in the papyri, see Hopfner, *Offenbarungszauber*² 2.1 (see n. 11 above), 41–3 §§ 27f.

On the (magical) contents of the Anastasi cache, see most recently W. Brashear, 'Magical papyri: magic in bookform', in: P. Ganz (ed.), *Das Buch als magisches und als Repräsentationsobjekt* 26. Wolfenbütteler Symposion, 11–15. September 1989 (Wolfenbüttel/Wiesbaden, 1992), 25–57 at 31f.

²⁰ The preamble to the text invokes Pronoia and Psychê, but the whole is evidently addressed to the *mystai* of the craft; compare too the insistence that these mysteries are being made available without payment (Eitrem's <ἀ>πρατα must be correct): *PGM* IV.475–77. Although nothing can be directly inferred from the frame-device of the letter to a King in these texts (e.g. Nephtes to Psammetichus, IV.154–285), the preamble to Pnouthis' 'Paredros' also seems to assume an impersonal or distanced relation between author and recipient (I.42–54).

clearly imply an indirect relation between writer and user, who is also assumed to have access to further books in which essential additional items of information are to be found.²¹ Indeed, the very existence of formularies implies the dissolution of close ties between individual practitioners, in that, whatever their origin in the knowledge and industry of another (or others, in the case of books evidently put together from many sources, such as the great Paris codex), their possession makes independent practice possible. *P.Berol.* 5026, which once belonged to Anastasi, but probably did not originally form part of the Theban cache, thus contains an 'Apollonian invocation' whose evident purpose is to supplant, or at least complement, what an adept may have learned from a master or correspondent by direct discussion with the divinity:

And when he enters, ask him what you want to find out about: divination, oracles in verse, sending dreams, revelation by dreams, interpretation of dreams, causing illness, in fact about everything included in the arts of magic.²²

Formularies are a sign simultaneously of the practitioner's membership in a tradition and of his autonomy: at this level, the magician is the creature of his scroll.

The more interesting aspect of the magician's aspiration, however, is the horizon provided by the famous tales of magical performance. The most important of these is the Demotic tale of Si-Osire, the son of Setne Khamwas, which survives in *pBM* 604 verso, a papyrus of Roman date, though the story itself is probably at least Ptolemaic. We may select just three of the incidents in this account to suggest the sense in which such stories offered an ideal model of the skill of the magician in Egypt.

The first is the story of how the twelve-year-old Si-Osire proves to his father that he will be able to read the 'sealed letter' in the hand of a Nubian prince, who is taunting the Egyptian priests with their incompetence.

²¹ Note XIII.22f.; 35f.; 59–61; 120f.; 213–15; 228f. (first recension); 381–83; 423–32 (second recension); 734–39 (third recension); for one account of the relationship between these versions, see M. Smith, 'The Eighth Book of Moses and how it grew (*PLEid.* J 395)', in: *Atti XVII Congresso internazionale di Papirologia (Napoli 1984)* (Naples, 1984), 683–93.

²² *PGM* I.327–31.

My father Setne, go to the ground-floor rooms of your house. Every book that you shall take out of the chest, I shall tell you what book it is. I shall read it without seeing it, staying above your ground-floor rooms.

Setne rose and stood on his feet. He did everything exactly as Si-Osire had told him. Si-Osire read all the books that his father Setne lifted up before him without opening them.²³

It is this skill at deciphering the illegible-invisible that enables Si-Osire to humiliate the Nubian prince: he 'opens' the sealed letter borne by the latter, and 'reads' it:

These words that I have spoken, are they not the ones that are written in the document that is in your hand?

Said the chieftain of Nubia: 'Go on reading. All the words that you have spoken are true.'²⁴

This feat of Si-Osire, which actually became the standard test for the reliability of new oracles in the Roman Empire,²⁵ inspires the ambition of several recipes among the magical papyri, to be able to give truthful answers to the unpredictable questions posed by clients, presumably as a preliminary to more difficult enquiries relating to future undertakings. But the reading of a literal letter has generally ceded to a psychological reading. A simple incantation for foreknowledge thus begins: 'Make me to know in advance today what is going on in each person's mind'.²⁶ Among the benefits a *paredros* can perform for its master is the reading of the consultant's memory—and future: 'And if someone asks you, "What am I thinking?" or "What has happened—or even will happen—to me?"', ask the angel and he will silently tell you (but you answer the questioner as though it came from you).²⁷ But it is the most elaborate version of what a magician

²³ *pBritMus.* 604 verso, 3.19–21 Griffith, tr. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3: *The Late Period* (Berkeley, 1980), 143.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 4.23f. = Lichtheim, p. 145.

²⁵ For sealed letters, cf. R. Ganszyniec, *Hippolytus' Capitel gegen die Magier. Ref. Haer. IV.28–42* Texte und Untersuchungen, ser. 3, ix, 2 (Leipzig, 1913), 31–3; 38–40; 43–45 (on Hippolytus, *Ref. Haer.* 4.28.1f.; 4; 34). The magician's conventional hopes here were effortlessly surpassed by Iarchas the gymnosophist in Philostratus, *Vit. Apollon.* 3.16 (p. 95. 6–11 Kayser), who pointed out that the sealed letter he was offered contained a spelling mistake.

²⁶ *PGM* III.264f., cf. 328–31.

²⁷ I.174–77. A *daemon* 'who will declare everything to you precisely' is acquired by means of the recipe in *PGM* I.1–42. A *paredros* will discover any hostile thoughts or intentions an enemy has against the practitioner (or, presumably, a client): XIa.25f.

might be called upon to reveal that also suggests a link back to Si-Osire:

What is going on in the minds of everyone, Egyptians, Greeks, Syrians, Ethiopians, of every race and kind . . . what has happened and what is going to happen . . . their skills, habits, trades and livelihoods, and their names and the names of their fathers and mothers and siblings and relatives, including those who are dead . . . those who ask me questions, coming before me, whether they speak or keep silent, that I may announce to them what has happened to them, is presently happening and what will happen to them in the future. . . .²⁸

The origin of this plea in the tradition of spectacular performance represented by Si-Osire's feat is suggested by the immediate appearance in the same context of the reading of a sealed letter: '(that I may) read a sealed letter and tell them everything truthfully'.²⁹

Si-Osire turns out in fact to be the avatar of the long-dead magician Horus-son-of-Paneshe, whose exploits occupy much of the rest of the papyrus. One of these involves the modelling of a litter and four slaves, into whom he breathes life.

He commanded them, saying: 'Go to the land of Nubia this night. Bring the ruler down to Egypt, to the place where Pharaoh is. He shall be beaten with 500 blows of the stick in public before Pharaoh, and you shall return him to the land of Nubia, all within six hours'. They said, 'Certainly, we shall not omit anything'.³⁰

The art of modelling figurines and then causing them to live, and serve the will of the practitioner in some context, is one of the most familiar *praxeis* of the magical papyri, one closely related to the provision of drawings of divinities, which intimates the desired epiphany.³¹ But these marvels of Si-Osire are in fact more closely related to the *paredroi* of the papyri, the spirits of different statuses who are conjured as divine factota, the antecedents of the genies of the Arabian Nights. These spirits are conceived in the papyri in various ways, some being

²⁸ V.257–66; 291–97.

²⁹ V.301f.

³⁰ *pBritMus.* 604 verso 5.20f. = Lichtheim p. 147; cf. too the account of Naneferkaptah in the earlier (Ptolemaic) story of Setne-Khamwas, *pCair.* 30646, 3.27 Griffith, tr. Lichtheim pp. 129f.

³¹ On the making of wax figurines in Egyptian magical praxis, see M.J. Raven, 'Wax in Egyptian magic and symbolism', *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 64 (1983), 7–47; on blowing, Ritner, *Mechanics* (see n. 11 above), 88f. The significance of the drawn images is discussed by Brashear, 'Magical papyri', (see n. 19 above), 40–51.

'gods', others *daimones*, yet others a fusion between a material object, generally organic but also an inscribed surface, and a spirit; and once even as the practitioner's own shadow.³² The narrative of Si-Osire can produce such marvellous servants at will, having no duty to realism; but the magical papyri conceive them sometimes as brought into being for a particular purpose: 'I conjure you, the daimon that has been aroused in this place, and you, the daimon of the cat that has been endowed with spirit, come . . . and perform for me the NN deed';³³ sometimes as lifelong slaves: 'and she will love you all (your) life'.³⁴

The essence of the practitioner's ambition here is complete mastery over another being, the fantasy that inspires so many of the *agôgima*-scenarios.³⁵ But whereas the object of the fantasy in these spells is (generally) a woman, a member of a sex ready inscribed with the stigmata of inferiority, the true frisson in the case of the spells for a divine assistant is that here the practitioner has to reduce to submission—to the status of an ideally submissive and obliging slave—one of range of higher beings. In the case of the slave-shadow, the challenge lies in cleaving what can in the ordinary way of things not be cloven. Once the door to the commonsensically impossible has been thus pushed ajar, there is no limit to the promise that offers itself. The letter from the *hierogrammateus* Pnouthi(o)s to 'Keryx' in *pBerol.* 5025 provides us with by far the most fully-imagined vista of this imaginary world, a long list of assorted marvels. Some of these are simply the run-of-the-mill subjects of practitioners' spells—sending dreams, forcing women and men, bewitching to death, destruction (of crops), raising winds, provision of wealth, opening prisons and locked doors. . . .³⁶ But others draw upon motifs to be found in popular marvellous narratives. One concerns a splendid banquet the *paredros* can prepare: he will create rooms with golden ceilings and walls faced with marble, and provide daemonic servants with decorative clothes,

³² See recently, L.J. Ciruolo, 'Supernatural assistants in the Greek magical papyri', in: Meyer and Mirecki (see n. 4 above), 279–95, who unfortunately confines herself to texts mentioning the word *paredros*, and thus omits analogous cases such as *PGM* III.1–164 (spirit of cat); 612–32 (one's shadow as *paredros*); XII.270–350 (god Ouphor in form of a gem).

³³ *PGM* III.48–51, tr. J.M. Dillon (*PGMT*).

³⁴ VII.913f.

³⁵ Cf. J.J. Winkler, 'The constraints of Eros', in: C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (edd.), *Magika Hiera: ancient Greek magic and religion* (New York and Oxford, 1991), 214–43 = 'The constraints of desire: erotic magic spells', in: idem, *The Constraints of Desire* (New York and London, 1990), 71–98.

³⁶ *PGM* I.97–101.

not forgetting the expensive wines.³⁷ We must be reminded of Apollonius of Tyana's encounter with the Lamia of Corinth, who had by enchantment brought into being 'gold and silver and the other decorations of the dining-room' in which she was to marry Menippus, all of which, in the flame of Apollonius' fierce contempt, 'proved to be as light as air and all fluttered away out of their sight, while the wine-bearers and the cooks and all the retinue of servants vanished'.³⁸ And the gilded chambers, the ghostly servants and the wonderful wines must equally remind us of the experiences that greeted Psyche on her first entry into the palace of Amor.³⁹ The offer to bring down heavenly bodies evokes the 'Thessalian trick' of bringing down the moon.⁴⁰ Other details draw on popular lore of magic animals: 'he stops ships and releases them' is the familiar ability of the *echenêis* known already to Aristotle;⁴¹ 'he puts dogs to sleep and renders them mute' is precisely the power ascribed to hyenas in the Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha and other sources;⁴² another alludes to metamorphosis, the shape-shifting of Proteus and his mythic analogues: 'he changes into whatever form you wish, of a flying creature, a water creature, a four-legged one, a snake'.⁴³ The offer to make walls blaze with fire, and to make one invisible, both relate to feats performed before Pharaoh by the Nubian alter-ego of Horus-son-of-Paneshe (and both trumped by the superior power of the latter).⁴⁴ Others again seem to evoke the feats of prestidigitation known as 'Democritus' tricks'.⁴⁵

³⁷ *Ibid.* 108–13.

³⁸ Philostratus, *Vit. Apollon.* 4.25 (pp. 128.15f.; 129.10–13 Kayser), tr. Conybeare.

³⁹ Apuleius, *Metam.* 5.1–3.

⁴⁰ *PGM* I.124f.; compare D.E. Hill, 'The Thessalian trick', *Rheinisches Museum* 116 (1973), 221–38; A.-M. Tupet, *La Magie dans la poésie latine, 1: des origines à la fin du règne d'Auguste* (Paris, 1976), 92–103; S. Lunais, *Recherches sur la lune*, 1 *EPRO* 72 (Leyden, 1979), 225–33; P.J. Bicknell, 'The dark side of the moon', in: *Maistor: Studies for R. Browning* (Canberra, 1984), 67–75. It was already familiar as a feat of witches in neo-Assyrian Babylonia: E. Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia* Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 85.4 (Philadelphia, 1995), 97–101.

⁴¹ *PGM* I.114f.; compare Aristotle, *HA* 2.14 (505b 18–20); see also A.L. Peck (Loeb edition), ad loc.; Tupet, *Magie* (see n. 40 above), 67.

⁴² *PGM* I.116f.; compare Cassius Bassianus, *Geoponica* 15.1.10f. = J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés* (Brussels, 1938), 2, 193.22f., frg. 052, with p. 196 n. 4; add Aelian, *NA* 6.14 to their references.

⁴³ *PGM* I.117f.; on Proteus, Nereus, Thetis and their analogues, see M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Les Ruses de l'intelligence: la mêtis des grecs* (Paris, 1974), 28f.; 111f.; 138–40; P.M.C. Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths* (Oxford, 1990), 174–79.

⁴⁴ Walls: *PGM* I.126; invisibility: 102; compare *pBritMus* 604 verso, 6.13 and 22, tr. Lichtheim p. 149.

⁴⁵ *PGM* I.124f.; compare VII.171f.; 177 (noted by E.N. O'Neil in *PGMT* p. 6, nn. 26f.).

We might say that Pnouthis' *paredros* represents a practical theorisation of how magic might work. The relatively prosaic feats offered by any number of recipes in the papyri rub shoulders with marvels gathered from a much wider range of popular narrative and Democritean natural lore, and all are rendered equally attainable by the notion of a divine assistant. But as usual in magic, the explanation once given immediately cedes to the impulse to provide yet another, more comprehensive, account: Pnouthis now feels impelled to explain to 'Keryx' how it is that the *paredros* can do all this: he is the 'sole lord of the air, and the gods will agree to everything; for without him is nothing'.⁴⁶ This inflation of the explanans (a mere *paredros* has now become a superior form of deity, a congener of the 'ultimate divinity' evoked in several texts)⁴⁷ correlates with the inflation of the practitioner's horizon of aspiration. There is no reason indeed to stop anywhere in these flights of the imagination—every narrative fantasy might then sometime be listed among the practitioner's claims to practical achievement—until, that is, the aspiration becomes indistinguishable from an incubus. Pnouthis' letter is valuable to us not least because it reminds us that one of the implicit rules of the formula is that the imagination should only be set free under the strictest control, the control imposed by the respective genres of the recipes. It is this implicit rule, so signally—and unusually—broken by Pnouthis, that as much as anything lends these grimoires their practical air, amounting to a workmanlike reassurance that the instructions they contain are entirely on the level. This is a point we shall have occasion to return to.

It is Horus-son-of-Paneshe in the shape of Si-Osire who performs the third of the magical exploits to be recalled here, the obliteration of the Nubian prince who had thrown down the initial challenge of the sealed letter: 'He made a fire round him; it consumed him in the midst of the court, while Pharaoh saw it, together with his nobles and the people of Egypt'.⁴⁸ True Egyptian magic has a political, and also a regenerative, function. Horus-son-of-Paneshe caused himself to be reborn in the form of Si-Osire after 1500 years because 'there was not a good scribe and learned man in Egypt at this time who

⁴⁶ *PGM* I.128–30; cf. the speculation about the relation between the gods' power and magical incantation in Lucan, *Bell. civ.* 6.492–96.

⁴⁷ Cf. L. Baldini Moscadi, 'Osservazioni sull'episodio magico del VI libro della *Farsaglia* di Lucano', *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica* 48 (1976), 140–99 at 180–85.

⁴⁸ *pBritMus*. 604 verso, 7.4f., tr. Lichtheim p. 150.

would be able to contend with [the Nubian]'.⁴⁹ The new story recapitulates the old one, in which Horus-son-of-Paneshe worsts Horus-son-of-the-Nubian woman and his mother, and returns the indignities inflicted on Pharaoh 'Menk-Pre-Siamun' with interest. The magician defends the honour of Egypt against its external enemies, returning order to its seat, chasing off chaos. Magical practice is a significant element in the Egyptian responses to foreign rule.⁵⁰ One important aspect of this, the shift of private divination into personal 'apocalyptic' revelation, has been noted recently by Jørgen Podemann Sørensen.⁵¹ But it is also worth calling attention to the overt manner in which magical narratives seek to defend the integrity of an image or idea of Egypt, against the background of Graeco-Roman contempt for their religion⁵² culminating in the interdiction by a prefect of Egypt under Septimius Severus of the practice of *ph-ntr* and amuletic divination.⁵³

One example is the well-known account, perhaps dating from the first century AD, by the iatromathematician Thessalus of his attempt to find a more authentic source of knowledge than the book of the Egyptian astrologer-king Nechepso whose recipes had proved so resoundingly incompetent.⁵⁴ Ultimately reaching Thebes (Luxor; Diospolis magna), he finds that almost all the priests are horrified at his rashness in inquiring about magical divination (*ph-ntr*).⁵⁵ But he does

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 6.36–7.1 = Lichtheim p. 150.

⁵⁰ For a nuanced account of tensions and accommodations, note Fowden, *Hermes* (see n. 15 above), 13–74.

⁵¹ 'Native reactions to foreign rule and culture in religious literature', in: P. Bilde et al. (edd.) *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (Aarhus, 1992), 164–98 at 170–80.

⁵² Cf. K.A.D. Smelik and E.A. Hemelrijk, 'Who knows not what monsters demoted Egypt worships?': Opinions on Egyptian animal worship in antiquity as part of the ancient conception of Egypt', in: *ANRW* II.17, 4 (1984), 1852–2000.

⁵³ *pYale inv.* 299, publ. by G.M. Parássoglou, 'Circular from a Prefect: sileat omnibus perpetuo divinandi curiositas', in: A.E. Hanson (ed.), *Collectanea Papyrologica (Texts published in honor of A.C. Youtie)* (Bonn, 1976), 261–74; rev. ed. by J. Rea, 'A new version of *pYale inv.* 299', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 27 (1977), 151–56; cf. R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth, 1986), 213; Ritner, 'Egyptian religion' (see n. 12 above), 56f.

⁵⁴ Cf. recently, J.Z. Smith, 'Temple' (see n. 12 above); Fowden, *Hermes* (see n. 15 above), 162–65; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (see n. 53 above), 37; 143.

⁵⁵ Thessalus, *Enumeratio plantarum*... proem. 12f. (p. 19 Friedrich). Ritner has recently urged against Smith that we should return to the traditional interpretation of the priests' refusal, namely fear of revealing secret knowledge to a foreigner who could not be trusted ('Egyptian religion' [see n. 12 above], 58f.). But Thessalus goes out of his way to mention that he tarried some time with the priests and became friends with them; and insists too upon his friendship with the old priest who finally performs the service: proem. 13f. (pp. 19/21 Friedrich). To my mind, the refusal fits all too neatly with Thessalus' claim to especially rare knowledge: the fewer the initiators, the more privileged the insight.

find one old priest willing to perform the ritual, and through him obtains a face-to-face encounter with Imhotep-Asclepius.⁵⁶ Amid the decay of the institutions of public Egyptian religion, Thessalus receives proof of the continued efficacy of priestly ritual, which provides him with precisely the type of face-to-face encounter so frequently represented in the magical papyri. Moreover, the god explains why Nechepso's instructions had failed to work: they were not wrong, simply incomplete, since they omitted necessary astro-botanical information concerning the proper times and places of plant-collection.⁵⁷ Here one of the characteristic means by which magical traditions grow in complexity, namely systematization and rationalization, receives explicit notice; a notice that is at the same time an implicit defence of the tradition: the failure of magic is not intrinsic, but contingent—a failure of knowledge, not a failure of the basic insight into the workings of the cosmos. Within the context of a tale told by an *arriviste* from Asia Minor, we find an endorsement of the claims of Egypt to special holiness.

An analogous account, albeit brutally truncated, can be found in the magical papyri in the form of a preamble to a compound recipe:

Pachrates, the *prophētēs* of Heliopolis revealed it, when he was revealing the power of his divine magic to the Emperor Hadrian: for it 'drove' in one hour, caused sickness in two, killed in seven, sent a dream to the Emperor himself, so that he experienced the very truth of his (Pachrates') magic; and, filled with wonder at the *prophētēs*, he ordered him to be given double the usual largesse.⁵⁸

I have already alluded to Pnouthis breaking an implicit rule of the genre of the recipe, the rule which forbids excessive intrusion of the horizon of aspiration. The deliberate rule-breakage brings of course—so long as it is extremely rare—a textual advantage. A similar point holds good here. Part of the effect gained by introducing Pachrates at this point is the violation of the implicit rule according to which the recipe mode should only be framed, if it be framed at all, by an

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 16–24 (pp. 51/53 Friedrich).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 27f. (pp. 55/58 Friedrich).

⁵⁸ *PGM* IV.2446–55. These sentences actually occur after the word *epithuma* (which introduces the directions that follow), which strongly suggests that the ancient editor of the great Paris codex had two versions in front of him, which he was combining.

Pachrates does meet Hadrian in W. Weber, *Untersuchungen zu den Reisen des Kaisers Hadrian* (Leipzig, 1907), 258 n. 937; but H. Halfmann, *Itinera principum: Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart, 1986), 190–210, consigns the incident to the limbo of the unmentioned.

account of the text's source, for example, as a letter to a king, as a stela in a temple.⁵⁹ The encounter between Pachrates and Hadrian forces a micro-narrative into the genre of the recipe. What is the gain? The narrative is grounded upon a series of oppositions, some explicit, some tacit. Most obviously, there is a contrast between the temple and the Emperor, a contrast that is also a contest, which the temple wins hands down: Hadrian's jaw just drops—καὶ θαυμάσας. This contrast is also one between Egypt, the home of true piety towards the gods as exemplified in the truth of magic, and the Roman occupier, who has undermined the power and wealth of the priesthood—a contrast between true merit and secular authority, between power that is the fruit of knowledge and might based on violence. At the same time, true to the collusive or pragmatic strain in Egyptian perceptions of foreign domination, these contrasts are softened by the narrative-type on which the encounter is modelled, exactly as in the story of Si-Osire, the magician demonstrating his power before Pharaoh. The Hadrian who bestows double largesse is the Pharaoh as it were: Pachrates finds himself re-enacting the deeds of Si-Osire. The real Hadrian could never have marvelled at malign magic which killed in seven hours; but Hadrian as Pharaoh can be just as amoral as the Pharaoh 'Menk-Pre-Siamun'.⁶⁰

Penetrative knowledge, stunning powers, a consciousness of the splendour that was Egypt: these we might say constitute the horizon of the Graeco-Egyptian magician's aspiration. The language of the activated spells found in Roman Egypt shows that such aspirations also informed the practice of Graeco-Egyptian malign sorcery—the only evidence we possess of the world of the formularies transposed into action. Although there is only a handful of cases of substantial identity between a formulary recipe and an activated spell, almost all of which relate to the celebrated *agôgimon* 'Ares and victim' in the

⁵⁹ See n. 17 above. I ignore the intrusion of short exclamations of wonder, which I return to below.

⁶⁰ Despite the general acceptance of Reitzenstein's identification of this Pachrates with Lucian's Pankrates (*Philops.* 34–37) (cf. K. Preisendanz, s.v. Pachrates, *RE* 18.2 (1942), 2071–74; Fowden, *Hermes* (see n. 15 above), 166f.), I incline to share the doubts of J. Beaujeu, *La religion romaine à l'apogée de l'Empire, 1: la politique religieuse des Antonins (96–192)* (Paris, 1955), 237 n. 4. I take it there was a historical Egyptian priest the Greek form of whose name was Pachrates, who may even have lived in the early second century AD. The name stimulated Lucian (who had been on the staff of the prefect of Egypt) to his tongue-in-cheek figure of Pankrates: the consonantal modification correlates with the shift from history to comic fiction.

great Paris codex,⁶¹ the activated spells that are known operate with the same assumptions and techniques as those of the formularies. An extremely unpretentious *agôgimon* on a triangle of lead, for example, after five and a half short lines of magical words, addresses an un-stated spirit, presumably the *nekudaimôn* of an interred corpse:

I request and adjure your power and authority: (more magical words) drive Termoutis, whose mother is Sophia, to Zoël, whose mother is Droser, (impelled by) passion, mad, and ceaseless, incorruptible, now, quickly.⁶²

The repeated performatives, the synonyms *dynamis* and *exousia*, the elevated but also violent language of the passion-formula, are so many summary gestures towards a much grander linguistic, rhetorical, and theological arsenal which might have been deployed had the consideration offered been higher.

Yet it is precisely here that the rub lies. The vaster the powers of the magician, the more deplorable the *décalage* between the claim and the effective social power of the magician.⁶³ Social power implies the ability to turn one's will into effect, to cause others to comply with one's wishes. It is a complex amalgam of perceptions, leverages, and status. The Graeco-Egyptian magician faced two inescapable limitations upon his social power. On the one hand, the Egyptian temple, the mainstay of traditional religious practice, was subjectively perceived to be in decay: the best-known illustration is the prediction of the end of Egyptian religion and the decay of social order in the rewriting of the Oracle of the Potter (itself preserved only in second- and third-century AD copies) to be found in the Hermetic *Asclepius*—a prophecy which 'reflects the contemporary situation of the Hermetists as seen by themselves'.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Agôgimon*: PGM IV.296–466; the parallels, close and more distant, are well presented in D.G. Martinez, *p.Michigan XVI: a Greek love charm from Egypt (p.Mich. 757)* American Studies in Papyrology, 16 (Atlanta, 1991), cf. SM I ##46–51; add now W.M. Brashear, 'Ein neues Zauberensemble in München', in: H. Altenmüller and D. Wildung (edd.) *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur*, 19 (Hamburg, 1992), 79–109. The only other case of close parallelism is that between PGM LVIII.1–37 and a *defixio* from Rome, Audollent, *DT* #188.

⁶² P.J. Sijpesteijn, 'Liebeszauber', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 24 (1977), 89f. = SEG XXVII.1243 = SM I #41. The first editor and G.H.R. Horsley, *New Documents illustrating Early Christianity*, 2 (North Ryde, 1982) #11 rightly note that the love formula here, in particular the rare word *akatapaustos*, is related to one found in a much more elaborate spell, SM I #45 l. 49.

⁶³ Cf. R.W. Lieban, *Cebuano Sorcery: Malign Magic in the Philippines* (Berkeley, 1967), 36f.

⁶⁴ *Asclepius* 24–26 (2:326–32 Nock-Festugière), with Fowden, *Hermes* (see n. 15 above),

There will come a time when it will seem that the Egyptians have in vain honoured God with pious heart and assiduous devotion, when their holy reverence for the gods will become vain and ineffectual. For God will return from earth to heaven; Egypt will be abandoned; and the land, formerly the home of religious cult, will be deprived and stripped bare of the living presence of the gods.⁶⁵

This subjective perception, which is now rightly seen as a response to foreign rule expressed in apocalyptic terms, is linked to an objective process, the progressive relative impoverishment of the Egyptian temples and the loss of autonomy of the priesthood under Roman rule. The temples' land and wealth, legally appropriated by Octavian in 31 BC, were massively reduced in the following century by administrative means—they had to make do with a direct grant-in-aid, the *syntaxis*; the priesthood was 'slowly but surely reduced to complete subjection to the secular authority'.⁶⁶ In view of Pachrates' encounter with the Roman power, we may note that it was almost certainly Hadrian who centralised the administration of the temples under an official in Alexandria, the so-called *archiereus*.⁶⁷ The personal exemption of priests from liturgies was poor compensation for the alienation of temple revenue to the state, and the shrivelling of the priests' socio-political rôle. It is emblematic that with the advent of the Roman power the deposition of superb sarcophagi and mummies by the family of the High Priests of Memphis simply comes to an end.

On the other hand, the Roman view of magic made discretion more than ever necessary for the practitioner. The formularies, and Pachrates, may boast of their malign sorcery, but for the Roman authorities such activity was criminal. The location evidently assumed by most of the formulary recipes, the private house or chamber,⁶⁸ implies that whatever the formal status of the practitioners (*viz.* priests) their magical practice was personal. As such, the practitioner could not afford to use the threat of malign magical sanction openly in favour of clients against victims for fear of being himself denounced.

38–44. The citation is from Podemann Sørensen, 'Native reactions' (see n. 51 above), 169. The date of the lost original Greek version, the *Perfect Discourse*, is uncertain, but probably second century AD.

⁶⁵ *Asc.* 24, (2:327.1–7 N-F.), based on the tr. by Fowden, *Hermes* (see n. 15 above), 39.

⁶⁶ A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs, 32 BC–AD 642* (London, 1986), 179.

⁶⁷ Cf. M. Stead, 'The high priest of Alexandria and all Egypt', in: R.S. Bagnall et al. (edd.) *Proceedings of the XVIIth Int. Congress of Papyrology* (Ann Arbor, 1981), 411–18.

⁶⁸ Cf. the materials on private performance collected by J.Z. Smith, 'Trading places' (see n. 5 above), 23–26.

But what is the profit of magical power if in concrete instances it cannot be 'cashed' in terms of social power? To be perpetually the unacknowledged provider of spectacular services to hand-wringing or vengeful clients? The formularies' insistence on keeping recipes secret takes on a new significance, becomes interesting, not so much for its overt intention, to prevent the knowledge from escaping, nor for its secondary purpose, to prevent betrayal to the authorities, but for its resigned acceptance of the social worthlessness of magical knowledge. In that context, Pachrates' *geste* is the expression of an impossible dream, the dream of proud confession, of openly affirming the performance of an art condemned to fretful secrecy.

If such a contextualisation of the Graeco-Egyptian magician is at all appropriate, we may now turn to consider the magical papyri, or rather the formularies, from a fresh angle. The formularies have commonly been read for the information they provide about the interface between Hellenistic and Egyptian culture, about late-Egyptian theological conceptions, the art—and it is an art—of the *historiola*,⁶⁹ and any number of other interesting topics—in a word, are usually read simply as sources. But they may also be seen as documents—texts—in their own right. How are we to understand the rôle of these books? What are the implications of the genre of the magical recipe? What can we make of its tacit rules, its evasions, silences? Several sorts of answer are of course possible; here I propose to read the formularies as mediating between what I have called the magician's horizon of aspiration, on the one hand, and his consciousness of the actual limitations of the magician's rôle in the context of the decay of the temple under Roman occupation; as a means of negotiating between unbounded triumphalism and that condition of the spirit best expressed by the German *Nüchternheit*. As the basis for such a reading, I have chosen the genre we may loosely call the divination-recipe, which includes several distinguishable sub-genres, the request for a dream, divination by means of bowls or light with or without a medium, and the *ph-ntr*, the *autopton*, the direct vision. These recipes were evidently of particular interest to the compilers

⁶⁹ There are two excellent recent accounts of the *historiola* as a rhetorical form: 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: Meyer and Mirecki (edd.) (see n. 4 above), 457–76.

of the Demotic formularies and the Anastasi cache—there are more of them than of any other single genre of recipe.

We may begin with a very simple example of a *ph-ntr*, taken from the Demotic formulary *pLowre* E 3229:

A 'god's arrival' of Thoth according to what is outside,⁷⁰ also saying Formula: 'I call to you, O Thoth, the hearing ear, who listens to everything. I call to you in all your names which are great, which are divine. (Magical words) Awaken to me, O lord of truth! Tell me an answer in truth to the "god's arrival" concerning such-and-such a thing, in truth, without falsehood therein, so that I may awaken and find it (out).'

Its preparation: A new lamp whose wick is of byssus cloth which is very clean; you should fill it with genuine oil; you should burn (it); you should write your command on a new papyrus; you should put it under the lamp; you should put a lobe of 'great of love' plant under the lamp's mouth; and you should recite these names above to it 8 times. It comes to you.

Here is the ink...⁷¹

An obvious feature of this recipe, and its analogues, is the magician's representation of himself as a channel of communication between two worlds. This was the traditional public rôle of the Egyptian priest, and we find it transposed here to the level of private divination. More than any other type of recipe, those for magical divination articulate the claim that the magician is not merely a technician of the word and substance, a self-understanding the language of god-compelling makes plain enough,⁷² but is himself a member of an elect, personally, and not merely institutionally, qualified by learning and purity for such a rôle. The rôle of middle-man, we may suggest, becomes itself the major source of meaning to the Graeco-Roman magician; and nowhere could he display that function more clearly than in divination. That is, the practice of divination provided an arena in which the most startling kind of success—the dissolution of the barrier between Here and There—could be achieved, on highly favourable terms. For in the private séance, the only yard-stick of

⁷⁰ This phrase was evidently inserted by the copyist to make it clear that this title was not found attached directly to the text in front of him.

⁷¹ *pLowre* E 3229, col. 6, 7–17 = PDM Suppl. 149–60, tr. Janet H. Johnson.

⁷² Compulsion rites and threats: *PGM* II.43–50, 50–54, 55–58; 62–4; IV.1035–46; 3110–3114; 3227–3245; V.213–303; 435ff. (two); XII.114–21; XIII.36 = 382; 55 = 426; 752f.; LXII.28–35 (two); PDM xiv.849f. = *GMPT* 1, 238; 1168–71 = *GMPT* 1, 249.

success was provided by the practitioner himself. And in divination the issue of the social worth of magical action could most easily be avoided. I want to argue that the numerous divinatory recipes of the formularies construct an objective, and partly historical or experiential, affirmation of the practitioners' belief in the validity of magical divination; but, in their very determination to defend, betray an unease bred by the failure to address the issue of social profit. In effect, the formularies admit that there can be no return to the uncomplicated world of Horus-son-of-Paneshe.

Let us turn first to the confirmation of the practitioners' faith in the rôle of magical divination. It is of course obvious from the repeated insertion of authorial endorsements—'it is very good for the lamp', 'you will be amazed', 'proved in practice', 'possesses full power'⁷³—that the recipes contain explicit affirmation of the validity of divinatory procedures. But these endorsements belong to the mode of the sales-pitch, refer to relative rankings within the entire range, and do not amount to a strategy of confirmation of the endeavour as a whole. The strategies that concern me are less obtrusive. There are two that I want to examine here, though there are several more, namely what we may call the hierarchy of visions; and the use of personal experience.

It seems reasonable to argue that the divinatory recipes imply a hierarchy of authority within the visions they summon. This hierarchy is arranged in terms of the claimed directness of the encounter. The lowest grade of revelation is the dream, which is plainly marked as a purely mental—not imaginary—phenomenon.⁷⁴ This is followed by the visions obtained in lecanomancy (divination by liquid in a bowl) or lychnomancy (light divination) with or without a medium. The form of divination of highest prestige is the real encounter with a god or *daemon*, the direct vision.⁷⁵ But although these three classes are generally kept distinct, there are many 'intermediate' recipes which seem to fuse them in different ways. For example, about a third of

⁷³ Respectively: PDM xiv.489 = *GMPT* 1, 223; *PGM* IV.161; XIa.40; III.283f.

⁷⁴ Cf. L. Deubner, *De incubatione* (Leipzig, 1900), 28–39; Hopfner, *Offenbarungszauber*² (see n. 11 above), 259–334, §§ 162–211. This marking shows that this is not a 'primitive' conceptual realism of the kind described by C.R. Hallpike, *The Foundations of Primitive Thought* (Oxford, 1979), 415–20.

⁷⁵ The distinction made by D.E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, 1983), 45, between 'magical divination', including dreams, and 'oracular magic' does not seem to me helpful here.

all requests for dreams are in fact requests for visions of speaking gods or *daemons*, and thus difficult to distinguish from direct visions. Conversely, some 'direct visions' are actually dream-requests.⁷⁶ Some spells called direct visions are not readily distinguishable from ordinary lecanomancies; and some seem to imply a direct vision without being so labelled.⁷⁷

Now such fusion may be just a muddle; but it is more likely to be a strategy, to create a continuous sequence of revelatory possibilities from the dream to the personal direct vision. The latter was very difficult to perform and to authenticate; but the existence of a sequence of claimed experiences from dream, universally recognised and accepted, to the private vision assisted in this double task of imagining the feat and legitimating it. The dream was crucial precisely because the world outside that of ritual magic was also in general committed to the claim that—at least some—dreams were revelatory.⁷⁸ It is notorious that ancient accounts of dreams never highlight what appears to us their most obvious feature, bizarre narrative discontinuity.⁷⁹ The practice of oneiromancy legitimated a view of dreams which concentrated upon single images; incubatory narratives likewise structure the experiences so as to make them coherent.⁸⁰ It seems to me that the best explanation of this fact is to assume that the bizarre features of dreams were read in the ancient world as part of the 'frame' and not the content of the experience. We may single

⁷⁶ E.g. PDM xiv.93–114; 117–49 = *GMPT* 1, 200–03; PDM Suppl. 130–38; 149–62 = *GMPT* 1, 328f.

⁷⁷ Spells entitled *autopton* but which are not readily distinguishable from ordinary lecanomancies, lychnomancies etc.: e.g. *PGM* IV.930–1114; V.54–69; XIII.734–1077; PDM xiv.232–8 = *GMPT* 1, 209—this is perhaps where we should classify Thessalus' vision of Imhotep-Asclepius. Spells which seem to expect or describe a direct vision but are not so labelled: *PGM* IV.1–25; 475–829 ('Mithras liturgy'); IV.3056–124 ('Little Mill'); VII.628–42; 846–61; 993–1009; XII.153–60; the three versions of a direct vision in XIII.1–343, 343–645, 646–734; XLVI.1–4 (frg.); PDM xiv.115; 116; 528–53 = *GMPT* 1, 225f.; xiv.695–700 = *GMPT* 1, 232f.; 805–40, esp. 822–24 = *GMPT* 1, 237; 1163–79 = *GMPT* 1, 249.

⁷⁸ S.R.F. Price, 'The future of dreams: from Freud to Artemidorus', *Past and Present* 113 (1986), 9–17; P. Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: studies in the imagination of a culture* (Princeton, 1994).

⁷⁹ S. Byl, 'Quelques idées grecques sur le rêve d'Homère à Artémidore', *Les Études Classiques* 47 (1979), 107–22; J.F. Hanson, 'Dreams and visions in the Graeco-Roman world and early Christianity', *ANRW* II.23.2 (1980), 1395–1427; J. Latacz, 'Funktion der Traums in der antiken Literatur', In: R. Wagner-Simon and G. Benedetti (edd.), *Traum und Träumen* (Göttingen, 1984), 16–30.

⁸⁰ F.T. van Straten, 'Daikrates' dream: a votive relief from Kos and some other *κατ' ὄναρ* dedications', *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving* 51 (1976), 1–38.

out five such features: spatial and temporal cognitive distortion; motor and visual hallucination; delusional acceptance of the truth of such hallucinations; intense emotional response; and amnesia. The cognitive distortions and hallucinations mark the experience as a whole as 'strange', creating an immediate puzzle as to their proper location and explanation. But the prior cultural category 'the Other World' provides a suitable location for the experience: the distortions and hallucinations are seen not for themselves but read as proofs of the otherness of the world from which the images come, as is the amnesia which usually supervenes. Moreover, in dreams there is often the sense of possessing 'memories' which have not been acquired through specific events in the dream, that come from a Derridean past that has never been present. Such pseudo-memories simultaneously suggest the authentically Other source of the dream as a whole and, in their elusiveness, offer a figure for the difficulty and seriousness of the oneiromantic project itself. The delusional acceptance of the veridicality of such phenomena is linked to another set of images which describes the divine world, relating to its superior force, brightness, intensity, vividness.⁸¹ Finally, the authority of the experience is suggested by the subjective emotional response which is generated during the course of the dream. Once these features of dreams have been turned into the 'frame', they become, like picture frames, culturally invisible by comparison with the 'real' message.

Dreaming may thus be seen as providing the model for other types of hallucination employed in realising religious claims—indeed, in neurophysiological terms, there is little difference between these various states. Moreover, the success of magical techniques for inducing dreams helped to ground claims to more difficult feats. Recent work on the nature of dreaming suggests that the methods adopted by ritual magicians for experiencing dream-visions were probably highly effective.⁸² The recipes provide for a context in which the practitioner fixes his mind exclusively upon the question to be answered

⁸¹ E. Ehnmark, *The Idea of God in Homer* (Uppsala, 1935). A version of these qualities, especially *χαρις*, may be in turn temporarily conferred by gods upon mortals: J. Strauss Clay, *The Wrath of Athena* (Princeton, 1983), 160–62.

⁸² Cf. Allan Hobson, *The Dreaming Brain* (New York, 1988). Briefly, on this anti-Freudian view, the higher cortex rationalises, so far as it is able, the 'mad' signals which arrive from the part of the brain which generates the REM-on signals, the brain-stem. On this hypothesis, the most recent contents of the cortex will have a good chance of dominating the sense it seeks to make of the neural impulses.

immediately before falling asleep. The techniques themselves are scarcely important. In one case, the magician picks three reeds before sunrise on the day in question, writes 'names' on each and makes them into a divinatory tripod.⁸³ Or he may be required to enact the passage of the enquiry or the spell into the other world. In this case, as in the *ph-ntr* of Thoth cited above, he places the incantation, including the request, under a lighted lamp;⁸⁴ or he writes it out and lays it before a prepared figurine;⁸⁵ or passes an inscribed *lamella* around rising incense-smoke.⁸⁶ Again, a 'name' may be written on the lamp wick so that it 'ascends' when burned, while the practitioner recites a further incantation, including the request, seven times before going to sleep.⁸⁷ Such techniques are simple versions of the methods for obtaining higher-prestige visions which abound in the recipes involving mediums and in the direct visions.

The second strategy I wish to draw attention to is personal experience. We may reasonably suspect that behind many of the recipes for divination there lie personal experiences of dream, hallucination, trance, and other intermediate mental states. Some passages are too peculiar not to be the result of particular experience. One example occurs in a highly abbreviated lecanomancy with medium: 'Make him lie down on the floor. Utter (the incantation), and a black-skinned boy (or slave) will appear to him', the colour of the boy originally being suggested to the medium, one may suppose, by the twofold reference in the incantation to darkness.⁸⁸ We may also note a moment of weakness experienced after the high-point of the 'Mithras liturgy', when the god has been forced to utter a revelation: 'And you will be rather exhausted in mind and will not be quite yourself when he answers you'.⁸⁹ According to another recipe, when Helios-Apollo appears, he will be holding a libation-bowl; if you ask, he will come and give you a drink.⁹⁰

⁸³ PGM IV.3172-3208.

⁸⁴ Cf. also PGM VII.703-26.

⁸⁵ PGM V.385-90 with G. Ronchi, 'Pterophoras (Diod. Sic. I.87.8)', *Parola del Passato* 21 (1968), 290-95.

⁸⁶ VII.740-55.

⁸⁷ VII.359-69; cf. Deubner, *De incubatione* (see n. 74 above), 35f.

⁸⁸ VII.348-58.

⁸⁹ IV.725f.

⁹⁰ VII.737f.; cf. an account from a rite for obtaining a *paredros*: '[A star] will come down and stand right over your room (or house-top), and when the star has dispersed (?) in your sight, you will behold the angel whom you evoked sent to you...' (I.74-76).

Important though personal experiences may have been in providing basic material for these texts, they have been transformed in the process of redaction. It is through the medium of the written text that individual experiences, whether of dreaming, hallucination, or vision trance, that is, specific historical events, could be routinely transformed into a model or pattern for a whole class of future events. Underlying claims could thus be made concrete. For example, in a rite for summoning a *daemon* to make a revelation, the practitioner is to throw some bits of food out at a certain spot, and fix up a lamp to singe a scarab suspended from a reed; and must then hurry back home and lock himself in 'in case he [the *daemon*] arrives before you: for if you are caught out of doors, you will be locked out by him'. Having got indoors, the practitioner is recommended to stay calm, 'for he will come up all of a sudden and prevail upon you with threats (he will be armed) to set the beetle free'.⁹¹ The danger supposed to be inherent in practising 'direct vision' is thus made experiential. In the 'Little Mill' recipe, it is suggested that the practitioner, kibbling salt out of doors in the dark, may suddenly hear 'someone's heavy tread and the clink of iron—the god is approaching loaded with fetters, holding a sickle'.⁹² The usual burden of ghost-stories, the stock of collective images of 'things in the night', has been delusionally realised on one occasion and then transformed into a perpetual sign of the correct performance of the recipe.⁹³ The power claimed for the spell is guaranteed by the implied immediacy of the divine response: 'Utter (the incantation) in a pure state walking towards the sun and wearing a cat's tail as a crown at the fifth hour. . . . Having uttered the incantation, you will perceive a shadow in (or on) the sun. Close your eyes, look up and you will see in front of you a standing shadow, then ask what you wish to know'.⁹⁴

Though formally foreign to the genre of the formulary, such passages were incorporated into recipes thanks to an insistent desire to document the success of ritual magical claims. Once universalized in

⁹¹ PGM IV.52-85; the citations are of lines 60-62; 69-71.

⁹² IV.3091-93. The motif may be related to the Arabic rule that salt should be placed in the hole of the hand-mill to prevent the jinns from stealing flour: E. Westermarck, *The Belief in Spirits in Morocco* Acta Academiae Aboensis, Humaniora, 1, 1 (Åbo, 1920), 51. 'Kibbling salt' would be a ruse to attract spirits.

⁹³ Cf. the younger Pliny's story about Athenodorus and the spectre in the house in Athens: *cruribus compedes, manibus catenas gerebat quatiebatque* (Epist. 7.27.5); the detail is omitted from Lucian's version (*Philopseudes* 31).

⁹⁴ PGM VII.846-56.

writing, they helped to reinforce the claim by providing fragments of imagery for each succeeding generation of magical diviners. They were one basis, alongside the prayers, ingredients and instruments of ritual magical divination, for a genuine tradition of willed self-delusion. At the same time, we should note the relative infrequency of such excursions into concrete experience; they exemplify the tacit rule that the imagination in the formulary is to be held strictly on the leash. For if too great a degree of specificity finds its way into the recipe, the historical incident ceases to be an inspiration and turns into a stumbling-block, a form of disconfirmation. The recipe is torn between the urge to draw upon the experiential validity of the historical experience and the danger of over-specification. But sometimes, as in this recipe for obtaining a *paredros*, the urge to describe becomes simply overwhelming: 'First get your room ready in a fitting manner, and prepare all sorts of things to eat and wine from Mendes in Egypt. Have an uncorrupt boy [serve] them silently to the god, until the angel takes his leave'.⁹⁵

Such cases, which all seem to be the result of transposing personal experience into the guise of injunctions, have a further significance besides. For by being shifted from a narrative status to that of prescriptive or conditional utterance, they are removed from the realm of documentary utterance without being consignable to the realm of falsehood. That interstitial position we may consider proper to fiction. These transposed narratives are far from being the only indeterminate, or evasive, elements in the divinatory texts, some of which I want to adduce here to illustrate the other side of the argument, the claim that the divinatory recipes are not merely describing but also defending magical divination, and that this desire to defend is itself an acknowledgement of the issue of social value. For the desire to defend derives from an awareness of the social worthlessness of the magical art, the shift in the status of magic brought about by the experience of Roman rule.

The formularies regularly suggest a strong or literal interpretation of hallucinatory or delusional experiences—willing credence in their objective status as phenomena independent of the mind of the subject. The recipes for divination by medium and the genre of the 'god's

⁹⁵ I.84–87; cf. 168–70. Other examples of such experiences of dining with or serving food to divine beings: PDM xiv.56f. = *GMPT* 1, 198; 549–552 = *GMPT* 1, 225 (related passages); *PGM* III.698 (frg.). A simpler version of the same desire is the Demotic expression 'speaking with their mouths opposite your mouth' (PDM xiv.847 = *GMPT* 1, 238) which recurs in a slightly different form in *PGM* XIII.266.

arrival', which are the specific features of magical divination, and on which it mainly relied for its prestige, provide the most suggestive evidence of such indeterminacy. One example is the language of vision employed in recipes for séances with or without mediums. Formally, all is straightforward: the visionaries really do see, really do hear. In a number of recipes employing mediums, special stress is laid on requests that they be able to see and hear 'clearly through eyes and ears'. The reader is invited to assume that these are physical abilities. The formulae are fairly constant: 'Give strength to the eyes of this youth who is carrying my vessel today, in order to let him see you, in order to let his ears hear you while you are speaking';⁹⁶ 'Give strength to the eyes of HEY HEY, the son of HEY HEY, in order that he see with his eyes; make his ears hear . . .'.⁹⁷ Such prayers, and the frequently-mentioned testing of mediums, make explicit the claim that what the medium sees and hears really is there.

But outside such formal contexts the accounts of the process of witnessing these 'objective' appearances are peculiar and contradictory. Now oddity is clearly to some degree a requirement of the situation, since a vision of or a visit from a god is not an everyday or casual occurrence; and indeterminacy is usual in other Graeco-Roman reports of divine epiphany.⁹⁸ What we might call the prescribed oddity consists in the subject's perceiving a light—or perhaps a 'light': 'bring in the light to me' is a standard expression for requesting a divinatory vision.⁹⁹ This light is an allusion to a mythical occurrence at the beginning of creation: the divinatory séance replicates a mythical moment.¹⁰⁰ It is when the texts attempt to specify what this light is like that difficulties begin.

⁹⁶ PDM xiv.495f. = *GMPT* 1, 223.

⁹⁷ PDM xiv.522f. = *GMPT* 1, 224; cf. xiv.201–3 = *GMPT* 1, 207.

⁹⁸ F. van Straten has stressed the studied ambivalence of the reports of dream encounters in the Hellenistic world, esp. in healing contexts, 'Daikrates' dream', (see n. 80 above), 13f.; cf. H. Versnel, 'What did an ancient man see when he saw a god?' in: D. van der Plas (ed.), *Effigies dei* (Leiden, 1987), 42–55 at 47–50.

⁹⁹ PDM xiv.537 = *GMPT* 1, 225; 634 = *GMPT* 1, 229. 'Let my eyes open to the light' is another form of this request (PDM xiv.1120f. = *GMPT* 1, 248). The same motif in *Poimandres* 4 (1, 7 Nock-Festugière). The theurgic account of the φωτός ἀγωγή is laid out by Iamblichus, *Myst. Aegypt.* 3.14. In PDM xiv.482–4 = *GMPT* 1, 222, the 'light' seems to be identical with the actual light of the lamp at which the boy is staring; in *PGM* VII.547, 'the light and the sun' are to appear to the boy. See also S. Eitrem, 'Die σύστασις und der Lichtzauber in der Magie'. *SO* 8 (1929), 49–53 at 50f.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Corp. Herm.* 1. 4 (1, 7 Nock-Festugière); III.1 (1, 43); also *PGM* XIII.165 = 476, where the double form *Phôs-Augê* appears, recalling earlier Egyptian patterns of syzygy (M. Smith, *GMPT* 1, 177 n. 45; 189 n. 112). In *pOxy* 1381, the aretology to

Sometimes for example, in some obscure way, the light itself seems to produce the gods: 'You should say to the boy, "Open your eyes!" If he opens his eyes and sees the light, you should make him cry out, saying "Be great, be great, O light! Come forth, come forth, O light! Rise up, rise up, O light! Be high, be high, O light! He who is outside come in!" If he opens his eyes and does not see the light, you should make him close his eyes while you recite to him again. [Prayer for light.] If you make him open his eyes and the light is good and he says, "Anubis is coming in", you should recite before him [a prayer to Anubis].'¹⁰¹ On other occasions, the god himself seems to be 'in the flame' or 'in the light' or the gods are seen 'near the lamp'.¹⁰² In one form of heliomancy, the medium is made to close his eyes and stare at the sun; when he opens them, he sees the gods.¹⁰³ In each of these cases, what are claimed to be objective appearances come perilously near appearing private hallucinations.

There are however a number of more deliberate indeterminacies which protect the objective status of the phenomenon more directly. The most interesting of these in the present context are again those connected with the issue of 'seeing'—what is seen, the sense in which it is seen. One is to be discerned in the most explicit account of what was supposed to happen in a direct vision.¹⁰⁴ Here the opening

Imhotep-Asclepius, the motif has been adapted by turning the light into 'shining linen clothes' worn by a 'giant' figure, ambivalent between god and priest, who effects the healing (VI.119f. = M. Totti, *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis- und Sarapis-Religion* [Hildesheim, 1985] #15, p. 41). But divine light commonly attends such visions even in non-Egyptian contexts, cf. Deubner, *De incubatione* (see n. 74 above), 10f.; in Morocco: Westermarck, *Belief* (see n. 92 above), 139.

¹⁰¹ PDM xiv.29–32, 43f. = *GMPT* 1, 197; cf. 545–48 = *GMPT* 1, 225. For divinatory lamps showing Anubis, cf. C.M. Kaufmann, *Ägyptische Terrakotten der griechisch-römischen Epoche* (Cairo, 1913), 94, fig. 62.

¹⁰² 'In the flame': PDM xiv.127f. = *GMPT* 1, 202; 517 = *GMPT* 1, 224; 'in the light': *PGM* VII.575; 'near the lamp': PDM xiv.146 = *GMPT* 1, 203, 'You see a secret figure of a god standing outside the lamp'; 155f. = *GMPT* 1, 204, 'he sees the shadow of the god near the lamp'; 821f. = *GMPT* 1, 237, 'I have seen the gods near the lamp'. A more specific version occurs in a prayer in *PGM* VII.570f.: 'Come here, Lord, borne on the uncorrupted light . . .'; 561–63: 'enter into [the medium's] soul, so that it may model the immortal form in mighty, incorruptible light'.

¹⁰³ PDM xiv.875–80 = *GMPT* 1, 240; cf. 856–75 = *GMPT* 1, 239. In the 'Mithras liturgy', which owes as much to the dialogue with a god as to 'god's arrivals', the disk of the sun suddenly becomes enlarged (*PGM* IV.576f.), but this phenomenon is not closely connected with the revelation, which occurs at 724f. PDM xiv.695–700 and 701–5 = *GMPT* 1, 232f. are versions of a similar spell to the Moon.

¹⁰⁴ *PGM* IV.930–1114, cf. Hopfner, *Offenbarungszauber*² (see n. 11 above), 347–59, § 214–16.

and closing of the practitioner's eyes produces a series of strange experiences. First, he utters a 'light-bringer' incantation seven times standing opposite the lamp with his eyes closed (957f.). Then he opens his eyes and 'sees the lamp-light becoming vaulted'—or more precisely 'in the shape of a vault or arch', *καμοροειδές* (1104f.). Not, note, 'it will seem to you as if' or any expression emphasizing the subjectivity of the experience. The quality of vaultedness is predicated of the light itself. Then he closes his eyes again and recites a prayer apparently three times (1106f.). On opening them again, he will see everything *ἄχανῇ*, 'yawning wide' and a dazzling light *ἔσω*, 'inside'. In this case, the inference that the light really is there in the room (1085f.) is rendered almost irresistible by the following phrase, 'but the lamp not visible anywhere'. The opening and closing of the eyes has effected a passage into the world of the marvellous.¹⁰⁵ And into this world without further ado pops Harpocrates sitting on a lotus: 'And you will see . . .'.¹⁰⁶

The clearest evidence of a determination to believe, however, is the requirement in these divinatory texts to apply 'eye paint' or ointment (*sdm*).¹⁰⁷ This compound substance, for which there are numerous recipes, is normally employed when the practitioner wishes to consult the gods alone, without a medium.¹⁰⁸ Now the function of

¹⁰⁵ Merkelbach understands the work with the light as directed towards the procurement of hallucination: R. Merkelbach and M. Totti (edd.) *Abrasax: ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen Inhalts* Papyrologia Coloniensia, 17.1–2 (Opladen, 1990–1), 1, 10 at § 18; I am concerned with the manner in which the text realizes the transition from one world to another.

¹⁰⁶ A fragmentary 'direct vision' specifies that the practitioner should draw Harpocrates in this form on the floor or ground (*PGM* III.707–09). On the motif, see J.G. Griffiths (ed.) *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff, 1970), 290 on Plutarch *De Iside* 11 (355b); a fine amuletic example at Amsterdam: P.J. Sijpesteijn, 'Four magical gems in the Allard Pierson Museum at Amsterdam', *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving* 45 (1970), 175–7 at 175 #1. Little statues of the god were carried in Egyptian religious processions: F. Dunand, *Religion populaire en Égypte romaine: les terre-cuites isiaques du Musée du Caire* EPROER, 76 (Leyden, 1979), #329f., pl. CVI. On standardized figural representation in relation to fictive worlds, see van Straten, 'Daikrates' dream', (see n. 80 above), 14f.; Versnel, 'Ancient man', (see n. 98 above), 46f.; B. Gladigow, 'Epiphanie, Statuette, Kultbild, griechische Gottesvorstellungen im Wechsel von Kontext und Medium', in: H.-G. Kippenberg (ed.) *Genres in Visual Representations*, Special Issue of *Visible Religion*, 7 (Leyden, 1990), 98–121.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. R.K. Ritner, 'Gleanings from magical texts', *Enchoria* 14 (1986), 95–106 at 101.

¹⁰⁸ The rule that you should use eye-paint if you are not using a medium is stated at PDM xiv.293f. = *GMPT* 1, 212; 696 = *GMPT* 1, 232; 823 = *GMPT* 1, 237. PDM xiv.860 and 876 = *GMPT* 1, 239, 240 however are instances in which the medium has his eyes painted; xiv.1089 = *GMPT* 1, 246 may be another.

this eye-paint is apparently to enable one to see better: the substances act as a sort of telescope into the Other World.¹⁰⁹ But where exactly are they placed? In the eye, or around the eye? If the latter, how exactly do they assist in seeing? If the former, how can one see anything at all when the eyes are filled, for example, with a paste of the 'head and blood of a hoopoe', cooked and dried;¹¹⁰ or a compound including the juice of Egyptian grapes and Nubian yellow ochre?¹¹¹ Commonsensically, we must conclude that the practitioners painted the ointments round the orbit, so that the substances only helped them to 'see'; but the expressions used to describe the act almost invariably suggest that they are actually in the eye and thus cause one to see in a non-metaphorical fashion.¹¹²

I would urge, then, that such evasions or indeterminacies are to be read as signs of disquiet concerning the story so far, concerning the reassurances constructed by the formulary recipes that magical divination is unconditionally successful; that they betray a self-consciousness about the project of reassurance itself, which indeed threatens the integrity of the edifice of ritual magic as a whole. Try as they would, the makers of the formularies could not reconstruct the world of Horus-son-of-Paneshe, but had to make do with the vestigial magical world they still could command. The innocence needed to regain that past world, and the social power that sustained it, was lost with the coming of foreign domination, and definitively with the suicide of Cleopatra VII. Practical documents in some sense the formularies may be; but it would be a pity to take them solely on their own claimed valuation.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. 'Smear the eyes (τὴν ὄψιν) of your proposed assistant with a compound of *kenritis*-juice and rose-oil, and he will see so penetratingly that you will be amazed' (PGM IV.773-75, 'Mithras liturgy').

¹¹⁰ PDM xiv.116 = GMPT 1, 201.

¹¹¹ xiv.1115 = GMPT 1, 247.

¹¹² This slide may have been based upon a dead metaphor in Demotic, where the expression 'open my eye' (*my un n*) means 'teach, instruct me'; cf. also the Coptic expression *ma(e)r eiat*, 'fill the eye', meaning to look intently: W.E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford, 1939), 73b. Two of the hieroglyphic determinatives with the denotation 'eye-paint' are used (at different periods) to qualify various actions or states of the eye, including *dgi*, 'look'.

HOW TO COPE WITH A DIFFICULT LIFE. A VIEW OF ANCIENT MAGIC

FRITZ GRAF

Magic, in ancient Greece and ancient Rome, was not a uniform phenomenon, neither in a synchronic nor in a diachronic approach: over the centuries, there was a wide variation in what was regarded as *μαγεία*, *magia*, and not all Greeks or Romans took it very seriously. Still, magic was there, and it had an important function. In this contribution, I intend to find out just what this function was by looking at some cases, adding in between some theoretical background.

Case 1: *A victim, seen through Christian eyes*

The first case story comes from the life of a Christian saint, Saint Hilarion, who died in the 370s; the account of his life was written by Jerome not very long after Hilarion's death.¹ In Gaza, where Hilarion was active, Jerome writes, a young man had fallen in love with a neighboring girl who happened to be *virgo Dei* 'a virgin of God', a girl committed to perpetual chastity—thus, the youth had no chance whatsoever.² Nevertheless, he persisted in courting her; finally, desolate, he went to Memphis in Egypt to study magic. After a year, he returned and buried under the threshold of her house, as Jerome has it, 'uncanny words and uncanny figures, cut into sheets of Cyprian metal'³—that is copper. It worked—in a somewhat unexpected way: the young woman was seized by madness, threw away her veil, tossed around her open hair, gnashed her teeth and started shouting the young man's name. Her parents, understandably dismayed, brought her to Saint Hilarion—he diagnosed a magical attack and talked to the demon who had taken possession of the girl, a demon from

¹ Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis* 12.

² See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York 1988, 259-284; Susanna Elm, 'Virgins of God'. *The making of asceticism in late antiquity*, Oxford 1994.

³ Jerome, l.c. *portenta quaedam verborum et portentosas figuras sculptas in aeris Cyprii lamina*.

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

(NUMEN BOOK SERIES)

EDITED BY

H.G. KIPPENBERG · E.T. LAWSON

VOLUME LXXV



ENVISIONING MAGIC

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EDITED BY

PETER SCHÄFER

AND

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BRILL
LEIDEN · NEW YORK · KÖLN
1997