

CHAPTER ONE

TRADING PLACES

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As the novelist, Tom Robbins, has observed, all human beings may be divided into just two classes: those who think that everything can be divided into just two classes, and those who don't. The putative category "magic" is a prime example of such duality. Indeed, in the history of its imagination, it has been doubly dual, being counter-distinguished from *both* elements in another persistent and strong duality—from both "science" and "religion." On logical grounds alone, this reduplicated dualism should give rise to some suspicion of duplicity, for, if something is the opposite of one member of another opposition, it ought to have, at the very least, a close affinity to the second member of the pair. But, in the "pre-logical" modes of thought which so often characterize anthropological and religious studies discourse within the human sciences (and so rarely characterize the thought of those peoples they claim to study), the law of the excluded middle has long since been repealed, most commonly by means of a shift from a logical to a chronological rhetoric. Employing an evolutionary hierarchy, the one ("magic") is encompassed by either one of its opposites ("religion" or "science"), with "magic" invariably labeled "older" and "religion" or "science" labeled "newer." (Note that this same hierarchy is often applied to the relations between "religion" and "science.") In this strategic model, as Rick Shweder describes it,

The image is one of subsumption, progress and hierarchical inclusion. Some forms of understanding are described as though they were incipient forms of other understandings, and those other forms of understanding are described as though they can do everything the incipient forms can do plus more.¹

Hence, many accounts of "magic" adopt a *privative* definition of their subject matter. "Magic" resembles "religion" (e.g., Rodney

¹ R. A. Shweder, *Thinking Through Cultures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 118.

Stark and William Bainbridge²) or "science" (e.g., Robin Horton³) lacking only some of the latter's traits. In such formulations, a promised difference in kind turns out to be a postulated difference of degree—or, more pointedly, of development—and one is entitled to ask what sort of difference that sort of difference makes?

This is, perhaps, the largest single family of theoretical, substantive definitions of "magic": "magic" is "religion" or "science," or an incipient form of "religion" or "science," but for the lack of this or that—or, less commonly, but for an excess of this or that. (More popular in early apologetic accounts, but still present in scholars such as H. D. Betz,⁴ is the reverse ploy which sees "magic" as a degraded form of "religion" or "science.")

This dominant understanding is an odd sort of definition. Not only does it break the conventional definitory rules (especially those against the use of a negative definiens), but also because it is typically inconsistent in its application of differentia. For example, many phenomena that we unhesitatingly label "religious" or understand to be "religions" (notwithstanding the long and tortured debates over how those terms are to be defined) differ among themselves, on some scale of absent or excessive characteristics, at least as much, if not more, than "magic" does from "religion" in many theories. What privileges the characteristics chosen for the "magic/religion" duality? Or, to ask this question another way, if the purpose of a model in academic discourse—if the heart of its explanatory power—is that it does *not* accord exactly with any cluster of phenomena ("map is not territory"), by what measurement is the incongruency associated with those phenomena labeled "magical" by scholars (rather than, say, "religious") judged to be so great as to require the design and employment of another model?

This becomes clearer if we turn to the second major family of theoretical, substantive definitions of "magic." While exhibiting many of the strategic features of the first, this second group adopts an atemporal rather than an explicit (or implicit) developmental perspective. This approach holds that "magic" is essentially *synonymous* with this or that aspect of the total ensemble of "religion." (Note that this understanding mimics the first family in

² R. Stark and W. S. Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* (New York: P. Lang, 1987), 40 *et passim*.

³ R. Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science," *Africa* 37 (1967): 50-71, 159-87.

⁴ See, for example, H. D. Betz, "Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri," in C. A. Faraone and D. Obbink, eds., *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 244-59, esp. 253-54.

viewing "magic" as encompassed by "religion" and as exhibiting either a lack or an excess. The old notion of magic as "compulsion," for example, judges "magic" to be either an inadequacy or an exaggeration, depending on the overall theoretical [and apologetic] stance of the scholar.) Thus, Stanley J. Tambiah, in his recently published Morgan Lectures, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, reviews and criticizes the usual roundup of suspects—from Tylor and Frazer to Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard—in order to make his main point, that magic is essentially "performative utterance."⁵ True, but even leaving aside the on-going arguments with and reformulations of Austin's original proposals in differing ways by both philosophers and linguists, so are a whole host of human utterances in a wide variety of concrete, pragmatic contexts, including a large number of expressions, as Tambiah would acknowledge, usually classified as "religious" rituals.

The second family of theoretical, substantive definitions depends, as has been already suggested, upon a notion of some aspect of "magic" being synonymous with some aspect of "religion" (albeit often with a different valence). Synonymy is theoretically useful precisely in that two (or more) terms are thought to be so close that their micro-distinctions take on enormous clarificatory power. While of no use whatever for scholarly purposes, I refer, for a sense of what I mean, to the entry "magic" in *Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms* (1968 edition):

Magic, sorcery, witchcraft, witchery, wizardry, alchemy, thaumaturgy are comparable rather than synonymous in their basic senses. In extended use they are sometimes employed indifferently without regard to the implications of their primary senses and with little distinction from the most inclusive term, magic, but all are capable of being used discriminately and with quite distinctive implications.

But if one cannot specify the distinctions with precision, as is usually the case in definitions of this second type, the difference makes no difference at all.

From E. B. Tylor's notion of "magic" as misapplied logic (a strong example of the first family) to Claude Lévi-Strauss's under-

⁵ S. J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 58, 82-83, *et passim*. Cf. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man*, n.s. 3 (1968): 175-208, and Tambiah, "A Performative Approach to Ritual," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 65 (1979): 113-69. These latter two articles are a more sophisticated presentation of his thesis than that in *Magic, Science, Religion*.

standing of magic as an exaggeration of human analogies (an equally strong example of the second family), substantive definitions of "magic" have proven empty in concrete instances and worthless when generalized to characterize entire peoples, whole systems of thought or world-views. Such substantive definitions have failed for the logical and procedural reasons already suggested (among others). In their turn, these flaws have been brought about by the fact that in academic discourse "magic" has almost always been treated as a *contrast* term, a shadow reality known only by looking at the reflection of its opposite ("religion," "science") in a distorting fun-house mirror. Or, to put this another way, within the academy, "magic" has been made to play the role of an evaluative rather than an interpretative term, and, as such, usually bears a negative valence.

While such negative valuations can, at times, be traced to specific ideologies, causality is rarely that clear. The notion of "magic" as "other" is far more deeply engrained. It is already present, to be used rather than created by these ideologies. As is the case with the majority of our most disturbing and mischievous hegemonic formulations, the negative valence attributed to "magic" has been, and continues to be, an element in our common-sense—and, therefore, apparently unmotivated—way of viewing cultural affairs.

Consider the shifting taxonomies and genealogies we employ (without ever troubling to account for the shift). For example, in most late 19th and early 20th century works, shamanism is the very type of "magic." In more recent treatments, shamanism has been transferred to the "religious." (For Mircea Eliade it is the most transcendent form of "archaic religion"; for Tom Overholt it is the very type of "prophetic religion.") What has changed is *not* the data—by and large, the old, circumpolar ethnographies continue to be the prime sources—what has changed is the attitude of the scholar.

For these (and for other) reasons, I see little merit in continuing the use of the substantive term "magic" in second-order, theoretical, academic discourse. We have better and more precise scholarly taxa for each of the phenomena commonly denoted by "magic" which, among other benefits, create more useful categories for comparison. For any culture I am familiar with, we can trade places between the corpus of materials conventionally labeled "magical" and corpora designated by other generic terms (e.g., healing, divining, execrative) with no cognitive loss. Indeed, there would be a gain in that this sort of endeavor promises to yield a set of middle-

range typologies—always the most useful kind—more adequate than the highly general, usually dichotomous, taxa commonly employed ("sympathetic/contagious," "witchcraft/sorcery," "benevolent/malevolent"—or even Christina Lerner's more sophisticated typology of three types with two sub-types⁶). Similarly, such mid-range taxa would be more adequate than the highly specific categories employed for particular cultures, usually constructed either anthropologically by function, or philologically by native vocabulary, formulae, or text-type.

John Middleton was right in his meditation on Lévi-Strauss, although he shrunk from its consequences:

If magic is a subjective notion . . . then it can have little or no meaning in cross-cultural analysis or understanding. The concept of magic is in itself empty of meaning and thus susceptible to the recognition of any meaning we care to give it; following this, Lévi-Strauss has implied that the category of magic must be "dissolved."⁷

The matter, however, will not be so simply disposed of. As with a large class of religious studies vocabulary (e.g., "myth"), the name will not be easily rectified. Abstention, "just say 'No'," will not settle "magic." For, unlike a word such as "religion," "magic" is not only a second-order term, located in academic discourse. It is as well, cross-culturally, a native, first-order category, occurring in ordinary usage which has deeply influenced the evaluative language of the scholar. Every sort of society appears to have a term (or, terms) designating some modes of ritual activities, some beliefs, and some ritual practitioners as dangerous, and/or illegal, and/or deviant. (Even some texts, conventionally labeled "magical" by scholars, themselves contain charms and spells against what the text labels "magic."⁸)

These ethnoclassifications differ widely and can be quite complex. Moreover, it is far from clear that, in many cases, these native distinctions as to dangerous, illicit, and/or deviant practitioners and practices can be properly rendered, in all their nuances, by the common English terms "magic," "witchcraft," "sorcery."

⁶ C. Lerner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 80-82.

⁷ J. Middleton, "Theories of Magic," in M. Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 9.88.

⁸ See, for example, the well-known "Moses Phylactery" from Acre, most recently edited by R. D. Kotansky, "Texts and Studies in the Greco-Egyptian Magic Lamellae" (diss., University of Chicago, 1988), text no. 36 (esp. 220-22) and his general treatment of "counter-magic" in the "Introduction" (8-10).

Nevertheless, the observation of these native categories has generated a number of important interpretative strategies, although it is now becoming clear, despite earlier enthusiasms, that these have often complicated rather than simplified the problem.

First, as pioneered by Africanists, the focus on native categories has shifted attention away from the act and actor to the accuser and the accusation. "Magic," in this sense, is almost always a third-person attribution rather than a first-person self-designation, and it becomes essential for the interpreter to explain the charge. Note that this presents a set of extraordinary documentary problems which have been overcome in only a relatively few areas of research. Pay attention to one Africanist's research protocol which catalogues the kinds of data required:

The significant point about a given instance of accusation is not that it is made . . . but that it is made in a given field situation. (An account of this situation would include not only the structure of the groups and subgroups to which the accuser and accused belong but also their extant division into transient alliances and factions on the basis of immediate interests, ambitions, moral aspirations, and the like. It would also include as much of the history of these groups, subgroups, alliances and factions as would be considered relevant to the understanding of the accusation It would further include . . . demographic data about subgroup and factional fluctuations over the relevant time period together with information about the biological and sociological factors bearing on these such as epidemics, rise and fall in the birth and death rates, labor migrations, wars and feuds⁹

Due, in large part, to the absence of the sorts of data required, I know of *no* convincing application of this interpretative strategy, for example, to ancient accusations of magic. In this latter area of research, generalities abound concerning power relations—many of which I find intuitively satisfying—but they lack the sociological specificity, the documentary gravity that confers plausibility to some of the work of colleagues in African, European, and American studies, to name the most obvious examples.

Second, focus on the accusation and the accuser implies that one can usually speak only of the "magician" rather than of "magic." Almost any act, or, in some cases, no act at all (this latter possibility alluding to the long-standing discussion engendered by Evans-

⁹ V. Turner, "Witchcraft and Sorcery: Taxonomy versus Dynamics" (1964), reprinted in Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 115.

Pritchard's Zande materials¹⁰) can give rise to the accusation. It is the accused individual or group, and their network of social relations and loci in relation to the accusing individual or group, that is held to be the prime motivation for the charge. The "evidence" adduced by the native accuser is held by the scholar to be secondary, and usually utterly conventional.

This has led to a noticeable bias in the literature towards the powerless. But this is an unwarranted simplification. While the accusation of "magic" may well be a power ploy that marginalizes the accused, the accusation may equally well be between members of elite groups (as the practice of "magic" may well be directed by the marginal against elites).

One cannot have it both ways. The shift to a social understanding of the relations between the accuser and the accused *forbids* any attempt at a substantive, theoretical definition of "magic." As Victor Turner has observed,

Almost every society recognizes such a wide variety of mystically harmful techniques that it may be positively misleading to impose on them a dichotomous classification. Their name is legion, their form is protean for the very reason that individual *spite* is capricious.¹¹

I wish I could share the confidence of some scholars that, although a substantive definition of "magic" is rendered impossible by a sociological approach, the sorts of social fissures and conflicts revealed by the accusations are generalizable. A review of the ethnographic, historical and analytic literature makes clear that they are not. Any form of *ressentiment*, for real or imagined reasons (see Aberle on "relative deprivation"¹²), may trigger a language of alienating displacement of which the accusation of magic is *just one possibility* in any given culture's rich vocabulary of alterity.

¹⁰ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937), 21: "A witch performs no rite, utters no spell and possesses no medicines. An act of witchcraft is a psychic act." If this distinction be accepted as generalizable beyond the Zande (by no means an uncontroversial proposal), then so much for Christian apologetic New Testament scholars who would acquit Jesus of magic on the grounds that he employed no spells or magic *materia*. In Zande terms, Jesus may be no sorcerer, but might well be a witch!

¹¹ Turner, "Witchcraft and Sorcery," 124-25, emphasis added.

¹² D. Aberle, "A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory as Applied to Millenarian and Other Cult Movements," in S. Thrupp, ed., *Millennial Dreams in Action* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), 209-14.

Third, by focusing scholarly attention on the accusation, and given most scholars' work-a-day common-sense positivism, it is all too easy to reduce the charge of "magic" to one of mere social placement. One can read entire monographs, especially on European materials, without gaining the sense that anyone might have "actually" practiced "magic" or "witchcraft." As an example, I would call attention to the lively debate which has exercised social historians of Salem for the past decade and a half. While their social analyses agree to a significant degree, they sharply disagree over the question as to whether the accused (or others) "actually" practiced "magic."¹³

Fourth, and closely related to the above, the social approach, ironically, cannot seem to handle those cultural instances where "magicians" function as a craft, as a profession, either as an hereditary office or as a guild with procedures for both training and incorporation. The accusatory model's bias towards the powerless often ignores the positive association of native conceptions of "magic" with power. (The latter was one of the strengths of the evolutionary understanding which stressed, although often in naive or polemical forms, the power relations between what it termed "magic" and priesthood or kingship.) The same issue recurs in those cultural instances where "magic" is a "high class" phenomenon, or where its practice confers social prestige.

A fifth and final caution is more strictly methodological in nature. 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. To remain content with how "they" understand "magic" may yield a proper description, but little explanatory power. How "they" use a word cannot substitute for the *stipulative* procedures by which the academy contests and controls second-order, specialized usage. However, this returns us to the beginning of this essay and the problematics of a proper, theoretical definition of "magic."

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I should now like to turn to the Preisendanz corpus, as modified and translated in Betz's edition, and offer some reflections by a generalist for whom the label "Greek Magical Papyri" constitutes

¹³ This debate was largely engendered by the publication of Chadwick Hansen's *Witchcraft at Salem* (New York: Braziller, 1969).

something of a distraction.¹⁴ After all, compared with the fragments, contextless quotations, literary descriptions and artistic representations, the corpus, even as it now stands, represents something quite precious: *one of the largest collections of functioning ritual texts, largely in Greek, produced by ritual specialists that has survived from late antiquity.* The fact that the size of the collection could have been more than doubled by the inclusion of parallel materials from other Greek and Greek-based corpora only serves to reinforce its importance.¹⁵

My own interest in late antique "magical" texts has stemmed, primarily, from my long-standing preoccupation with themes related to place, especially the shift in the locus of religious experience and expression from a permanent sacred center, the archaic temple, to a place of temporary sacrality sanctified by a mobile religious specialist (in this case, the so-called "magician").¹⁶ I propose to continue that meditation by calling attention to some features of the Preisendanz-Betz corpus which have little to do with issues of "magic" as conventionally perceived.

¹⁴ K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1928-41); K. Preisendanz and A. Henrichs, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Verlag Teubner, 1973-74); H. D. Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986-). All citations will be to the Betz translation with occasional small emendations.

¹⁵ Additional "handbook" materials could have been included from the Byzantine documents published by A. Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia* (Paris: E. Champion; Liège: Imp. H. Vaillant-Carmanne, 1927), and the Coptic materials published by A. M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte* (Brussels: Edition de la Fondation égyptologique reine Elisabeth, 1930-33), cf. P. A. Mirecki, "The Coptic Hoard of Spells from the University of Michigan," in M. Meyer and R. Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 293-310, and the greatly expanded version in Mirecki, "The Coptic Wizard's Hoard," *HTR* 87 (in press). Likewise the amuletic materials collected by R. D. Kotansky, "Texts and Studies in the Greco-Egyptian Magic Lamellae" (diss., University of Chicago, 1988). But such expansions accept whatever commonsense criteria for inclusion Preisendanz-Betz had in mind. There are, as well, individual pieces in *PGM* which could trade places with individual items in other Greek collections, and vice versa, especially, M. Bertholet, *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs* (Paris: Ch. -Em Ruelle, 1887-88) and the *Catalogus codicum astrologorum graecorum* (Brussels: Lamertin, 1898-), not to speak of the relations of individual items in *PGM* to even wider circles of texts from herbaria and oracles to Gnostica and Hermetica.

¹⁶ See, among others, J. Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 172-207; Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," in *ANRW*, 2.16.1: 425-39.

As part of a larger pattern of religious persistence and change in late antiquity, and for a diversity of reasons ranging from the economic to the aesthetic, from the political and demographic to the ethical and theological, in a number of traditions, temple sacrifice, especially that requiring animal victims, declined. As sacrifice was the *raison d'être* of the archaic temple, the chief currency of both its divine and human economies, this meant that temples must either be revalorized or abandoned. A temple, an altar, without sacrifice is a mere monument. (See, already, the admittedly polemic account in Joshua 22:10-34.) This meant, as well, that sacrifice would have either to be dis-placed or re-placed.

The rationales and strategies for these latter processes were varied. Sometimes, as in the case of Orphic, Neoplatonic and Neo-Pythagorean traditions, a moral cast—no bloodshed—was given to older cultic rules prohibiting pollution by dead animal products, corpses and blood with a consequent recovery and refocus on archaic practices of cereal and incense offerings. (See, for example, the fumigation recipes which form part of the titula of seventy-eight of the eighty-seven late 3rd century "*Orphic*" *Hymns*.)

In the case of the emergent Judaisms and Christianities, spurred only in part by the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the locus of sacrifice was shifted from Temple to domicile, and the act of sacrifice was wholly replaced by narrative and discourse. Early rabbinic traditions talked endlessly about sacrifices no longer performed, in many cases, never experienced, and, in its ritual praxis, substituted speech for deed. The best known example is the dictum attributed to Rabbi Gamliel: "Whoever does not say these three things on Passover has not fulfilled his obligations," with the first of the three being the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb (M. *Pesahim* 10.5). This is a sentence *about* ritual speech which, by virtue of its inclusion in the later *Passover Haggadah*, has itself *become* ritual speech.

Some early Christians developed the utterly rhetorical metaphor of sacrifice as an important component of their narrative understanding of Jesus' death. Over time, the Christian use of the sacrificial analogy was extended to characterize a whole host of human phenomena by traditions that never "actually" sacrificed, including the sacrament of marriage post-Vatican II.

Christian liturgy maintained the language of "altar," "smoke," and of the sacrificial elements—now wholly metaphorized; the eucharistic flesh and blood was subsumed to a narrative of paradigmatic institution which was set in a domestic, non-sacrificial context.

Of all the documents from late antiquity, I know of *none* more filled with the general and technical terminology and the praxis of sacrifice than those texts collected by modern scholars under the title Greek Magical Papyri. They are all the more important because they display, as well, a thoroughly domesticated understanding of sacrifice.

Within the papyri,¹⁷ while a small number of the ritual *topoi* are outside—in an open place (IV.900), a deserted place (III.616), a tomb (III.25,286) or by a river (III.286; IV.27)¹⁸—the vast majority of rituals which give a locale are set in domestic space, in the practitioner's house (e.g., I.83,84; II.148; III.193; IV.2188), or more rarely in the client's place of business or home (VIII.59; XII.104; cf. IV.2373-2440 where it is implied). As a substantial number of rituals are for procuring some sort of dream oracle, "your bedroom" predominates (e.g., II.1-182; IV.62; VII.490, 593-619, 628-42, 664-85). There are, as well, a number of references to rituals performed on "your housetop" (I.70; IV.2711; LXI.6), "lofty roof" (I.56; IV.2469, 2711), or upper room (IV.171), chiefly as a place for receiving a celestial power who is then conducted to "the room in which you reside" (e.g., I.80-84).

Within this domestic space, there is a high concern for purity in both the rituals of preparation and reception. The practitioner is to abstain from sex, from animal food (including fish), and from "all uncleanness" (I.40-1, 54, 290-92, *et passim*). The ritual site is to be a "clean room" (IV.2189), a "pure room" (VII.875[?])—"let your place be cleaned of all pollution" (II.148).

Within the "clean," domestic place, the chief ritual is that of sacrifice, most commonly of generic incense (e.g., IV.215; V.395; VIII.58), with frankincense the most frequently specified (e.g., I.63; IV.908, 1269, 1909). Some dozen other aromatic plant substances, from gums (e.g., III.23) to spices (e.g., III.308; IV.919), were also employed. Other vegetable offerings include roses (IV.2235), sumac (IV.2235), mulberries (III.611), beets (III.614), moss (LXXII.3), cakes (XII.22) and fruits (XII.22), along with libations of wine and/or milk (e.g., III.694).

By contrast to these common vegetable offerings, sacrifices *wholly* made up of animal victims or products are rare. The largest

¹⁷ Please note that my citations from the Betz edition are exemplary and not exhaustive.

¹⁸ Other outside loci include: a bathhouse (II.49); a stadium (II.43); the eastern section of a village (IV.58-9); a bean field (IV.769); "a place where grass grows" (IV.3091); a crossroad (LXX.16).

group requires the sacrifice of a white cock (IV.26-51, 2189-92, 2359-72; XIII.364-82 [+ pigeon]). The only instance of the whole offering of a mammal remains an editorial conjecture (IV.2394-99).

More common than purely animal sacrifices, though less common than purely vegetable offerings, are sacrifices of mixed animal and plant substances. Their usual form is a series of plants plus one animal part, usually its dung or an organ (e.g., I.285; IV.1309-15, 3092). If it is a vegetable series plus a whole animal, the latter is invariably a bird (e.g., IV.2892). Some of the animal *materia* (e.g., dung, eggs, a snake's shed skin) do not require the killing of the animal, while other *materia*—"wolf's eye" (I.285), "frog's tongue" (V.203)—may well be code names for plants (see XII.401-44), as is certainly the case for the ingredient, "pig's snout" (III.468; V.198, 371). Other texts appear to place differing valences on animal and plant offerings, for example IV.2873-79:

For doing good, offer storax, myrrh, sage, frankincense, a fruit pit. But for doing harm, offer magical material of a dog and dappled goat [(gloss:) or, in a similar way, of a virgin untimely dead].¹⁹

The impression that animal offerings were not the central focus is strengthened by the fact that a sharp knife, the one, indispensable requirement in animal sacrifice, is mentioned as an implement just three times in the corpus (XIII.91-96, 373-75, 646-51).

The other ritual implements mentioned introduce another important and highly characteristic element. They are not only highly portable, but appear to be *miniaturized*. The table, the throne, the tripod, and the censer seem, themselves, to be small and to hold relatively small objects. The sacrificial altar—most often constructed of two or more (unbaked) bricks, but never more than seven—seems especially so. What must be the scale of an altar on which is sacrificed "on grapevine charcoal, one sesame seed and [one] black cumin seed" (IV.919)?

In addition to these common, though miniaturized, implements is a set of small wooden shrines. Eight appear to be mentioned in the corpus: a juniper wood shrine that holds a mummified falcon (I.21-26); a small, wooden shrine, set up on a table covered with pure linen, enclosing a tripod, censer and small figurine (III.290-320); a lime wood shrine in which lies a small figurine of Hermes made of dough (V.370-99); a shrine of olive wood containing a

¹⁹ For a most complex example of differing evaluation, in several recensions, see the slander spells involving "hostile" offerings, IV.2571-2707.

statuette of Selene (VII.866-79); a small temple, standing on a table, into which a small dish is placed in which the first morsels of food from a meal are offered (X.1-9); two small (?) temples connected by a single sheet of papyrus (V.159-60, admittedly obscure); and, most suggestive of all, IV.3125-71, which contains a ritual for fashioning a phylactery which will cause any "place or temple" to flourish, to become a "marvel," and to be "talked about throughout the whole world." (It would appear that this "place or temple," for which favor is being asked, is the shop of the ritual's patron [IV.3170, editorial conjecture].) The ritual involves the construction of a small, three-headed wax statue, "three handbreadths high," which is deified by animal (?) sacrifice and placed within a "little juniper wood temple" wreathed with olive. The practitioner is enjoined, "Now feast [with the god], singing to him all night long."

As this last text makes plain, the "little" temples and shrines, in this latter case one housing a figure 0.3 meters high, are treated as if they were major edifices housing a divine image and a cult table. Sacrifice is held before them; a cultic meal follows with a liturgy sung. In other cases, incubation is practiced before the miniature (e.g., V.390-423) rather than sleeping within the large temple precincts. In still other rituals, the divine being is conducted to a small throne, in an ordinary but purified room, from which it gives oracles or provides a powerful guiding presence (e.g., I.293-347; cf. I.74-90), just as in the throne room of a major temple complex. These quite typical procedures within the Greek Magical Papyri suggest that the practitioner's "clean room" and the rituals performed therein are to be understood, to no small degree, as *replacements* of (and for) temple space and rituals.

Alternatively, while the small shrines resemble the portable *naiskoi* commonly carried in religious processions, the little shrines, ritual implements, small statues and ritual practices have their closest parallels, as Fritz Graf has convincingly argued, in small-scale, private, domestic rituals conducted by ordinary householders for their household deities and/or ancestors²⁰ (a comparison that deserves further detailed study). From this point of view, the domestication of ritual has *already* occurred. What is different about the Greek Magical Papyri is that these practices have been divorced from a familial setting, becoming both highly mobile and professionalized.

²⁰ F. Graf, "Prayer in Magic and Religious Ritual," in Faraone and Obbink, eds., *Magika Hiera*, 199f.

In either case, the sacrality of the place is established, *temporarily*, through ritual activities, and by virtue of the direct experience of a mobile, professional ritualist (the "magician") with an equally mobile deity.

One further matter. If one reads through the entire corpus with an eye towards ritual activities, it is not purification, nor incubation, nor even sacrifice that predominates. Rather, the chief ritual activity within the Greek Magical Papyri appears to be *the act of writing itself*. The vocabulary of inscription constitutes one of the larger groups. Alongside the evident concern for the accurate transmission of a professional literature marked, among other features, by scribal glosses and annotations is an overwhelming belief in the efficacy of writing, especially in the recipes which focus on the fashioning of amulets and phylacteries—themselves, miniaturized, portable, powerful written texts of papyrus, metal, stone and bone.

The most common writing material is a sheet of papyrus, often described as "clean," "pure," "choice," or "hieratic." While blood and other *magica materia* occasionally function as writing fluids (most dramatically, VIII.70-72), most of the inks, some of which are quite complex, are variants of the common, everyday combination of a burnt substance for pigment (e.g., charcoal, soot, lampblack) and a gum as a fixative. The most frequent combination is "myrrh ink" (*smurnomelan*, or *zmurnomelan*).

The technology of ink mimics the technology of the vegetable sacrifice, with burning and aromatic gums serving as their common denominators:

The (preparation of the) ink is as follows: In a purified container, burn myrrh, cinquefoil, and wormwood; grind them to a paste and use them (II.36; cf. I.244-46).

Within the corpus, the instructions for the preparation of ink are often given a liturgical rubric, *skeuē melanos* (e.g., I.243; IV.3199; VII.998), at times in immediate juxtaposition to the rubric for the sacrificial offering.

The ritual of writing is more than a replacement of the archaic temple as a major site of scribal activities and library of ritual books—although, at times, use is made of the familiar motif of allegedly finding a book or spell in a prestigious temple, as in one of the older, surviving papyri, CXXII.1-4. It is, rather, a displacement of ritual practice into writing, analogous, in important respects, to the displacement of sacrifice into speech in the emer-

gent Judaisms and Christianities (discussed above), as well as a continuation of the impulse towards miniaturization.

In a difficult analogy in *La Pensée sauvage*, Lévi-Strauss has written of "the intrinsic value of a small scale model" as a process of compensating "for the renunciation of sensible dimensions by the acquisition of intelligible dimensions."²¹ In a somewhat similar vein, the literary critic and folklorist, Susan Stewart, who has written the most extended meditation on miniaturization,²² insists that small does not equal insignificant (in both senses of the term), that:

a reduction in the physical dimension of an object depicted can, in fact, increase the dimension of significance The miniature always tends towards exaggeration—it is a selection of detail that magnifies detail in the same movement by which it reduces detail.²³

If ritual, with its characteristic strategies for achieving focus, with its typical concern for "microadjustment," often is, itself, a miniaturization that is, at one and the same time, an exaggeration of everyday actions, as major theorists of ritual from Freud to Lévi-Strauss have rightly maintained,²⁴ then miniaturization, when applied to ritual, as is the case in the Greek Magical Papyri, becomes a sort of *ritual of ritual*, existing, among other loci, in a space best described as discursive or intellectual.²⁵

²¹ C. Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962), 34-36; English translation, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 23-24, esp. 24.

²² S. Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), chapter 2.

²³ S. Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 100-01.

²⁴ Cf. J. Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), 103-12 *et passim*.

²⁵ The second part of this essay has been adopted from my paper, "Constructing a Small Place," delivered at the Joshua Praver Memorial Conference, "Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land," sponsored by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, June 1992.