

The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells

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A flattened lead "gingerbread man" now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris is deceptively benign at first glance; closer examination reveals two brief texts inscribed at different points on its surface:¹

καταγράφω Εἰσιάδα τὴν Α(ὕ)τοκλέας
πρὸς τὸν Ἑρμῇ τὸν κάτοχον.
κάτεχε αὐτὴ(ν) παρὰ σα(ν)τόν.

καταδεσμεύω Εἰσιάδα πρὸς τὸν Ἑρμῇ
τὸν κάτοχον· [χ]ῆρες,
πόδες Εἰσιάδος, σῶμα ὅλον.

I register² Isias, the daughter of A(u)toclea, before Hermes the Restrainer. Restrain her by your side!

I bind Isias before Hermes the Restrainer, the hands, the feet of Isias, the entire body.

Apparently found at Carystus on the island of Euboea, these two messages date to the fourth century B.C. and are good examples of a uniquely Greek form of cursing known as a *κατάδεσμος*, or *defixio*, terms that I shall use interchangeably to mean "binding spell."³ Nearly six hundred Greek *defixiones* have been published to date and more than four hundred others have been unearthed and are awaiting study.⁴ The earliest examples are found in Sicily, Olbia, and Attica and date to the fifth century B.C.; by the second century A.D. they begin turning up in every corner of the Greco-Roman world. In the classical period they are usually inscribed on small sheets of lead, which are folded up, pierced with a bronze or iron nail,⁵ and then either buried with the corpse of one of the untimely dead (*ἄωροι*)⁶ or placed in chthonic sanctuaries.⁷ In later periods they are more often placed in underground bodies of water (e.g., wells, baths, fountains).⁸ Sometimes the findspot indicates the target of the curse in use; *defixiones* aimed at charioteers, for example, have been discovered beneath the starting gates and amidst the ruins of the *spinae* in late Roman hippodromes.⁹

My aim is to provide an analysis of the function and social context of the *κατάδεσμοι* in early Greek society. The approach will be twofold: I shall (1) analyse the various formulas used in the binding curses and demonstrate that they originally aimed at binding but not destroying the victim and (2) suggest that an

agonistic relationship was the traditional context for the use of *defixiones* and that they were not employed as after-the-fact measures of vengeful spite but rather as effective “preemptive strikes” against a formidable foe in anticipation of a possible or even probable future defeat.

THE BINDING FORMULAE

From the available evidence it is still somewhat unclear whether these binding rituals are a traditional form of self-help to which the ancient Greeks themselves turned in times of crisis or whether a professional “magician” was employed to perform the ritual in their stead. The act of flattening out a soft piece of lead and then scratching a name into it certainly did not require much more effort or technical skill than inscribing a potsherd for a vote of ostracism.¹⁰ On the other hand, Plato refers clearly to peripatetic magicians who perform *κατάδεσμοι* for a price (*Resp.* 364c), and there are several well-documented instances (albeit dating to the Roman period or later) that involve caches of *defixiones* mass-produced by the same individual(s) working from a formulary.¹¹ Four bound lead “voodoo” dolls—each enclosed within a lead box inscribed with a binding curse—were recently discovered in two different graves in the Kerameikos; dating to circa 400 B.C., they seem to have been produced by the same person(s), perhaps providing the earliest extant material evidence for the professional magician at work in Greece.¹²

The actual layout of an inscribed *κατάδεσμος* occasionally bears close similarities to other written forms of public or private communication. A few Attic examples from the early fourth century, for example, consist solely of names designated in the formal manner (i.e., with patronymic and demotic) and laid out neatly in columns (e.g., *DTA* 55 or *SGD* 48); in two cases this imitation of contemporary public monuments is made explicit by the heading *ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ · θεοί* (*SGD* 19 and *DTA* 158). At other times the tablet is referred to as an epistle sent to a chthonic god or a restless *nekydaimon*; such a form would naturally suggest itself to a Greek, since lead seems to have been a common medium for letter writing in the earlier periods.¹³ The efficacy of a few early Attic curses may hinge on the corpse’s ability to read the tablet placed in his grave and act accordingly.¹⁴ One curse from Piraeus (*DTA* 103) reads, “I send this letter to Hermes and Persephone”; while another (*DTA* 102) takes the form of a bill of lading: “I send a letter to the daemons and Persephone bearing NN (name of person to be supplied).”¹⁵ In at least three cases, the inscription of the names of chthonic gods on the outside of the rolled-up tablet may be meant to imitate the method in which ordinary letter scrolls were regularly addressed.¹⁶

These parallels to other forms of written documents are infrequent and seem to be idiosyncratic inventions or variations that probably do not point to the origin of this uniquely Greek form of cursing.¹⁷ Some scholars, in fact, have argued that the *defixio* was originally a purely verbal curse, although I prefer to think that both the spoken formula and the attendant gesture (i.e., the distortion of lead, wax, or some other pliable material) developed simultaneously.¹⁸ A cache of some forty blank tablets, rolled up and pierced with nails, may suggest that the name of the victim and

the cursing formulae could merely be recited over the tablet while it was being twisted and perforated.¹⁹ Another clue is the fact that the earliest terms used to refer to *defixiones* do not allude to the act of writing;²⁰ a fifth-century Sicilian curse tablet (*SGD* 91) refers to itself as an *εὐχά* (“prayer” or “boast”) and Plato (*Resp.* 364c) speaks generally of binding spells called *κατάδεσμοι*. The *ῥυμος δέσμιος* (lit., “binding song”) of the Erinyes in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* seems to be a purely verbal form of *defixio*; it aims at binding the verbal and mental faculties of Orestes in hopes of inhibiting his performance at his forthcoming murder trial.²¹ Indeed the very fact that the great majority of the earliest Sicilian and Attic *defixiones* consist solely of lists of names strongly suggests that a verb of binding was uttered aloud sometime during the ritual and that the later development of more-complex, written formulae reflects a desire to inscribe more and more of the spoken charm on the tablet, a process that was undoubtedly accelerated by the gradual spread of literacy in the classical period.

The Greek *κατάδεσμοι* that mention only the name of the intended victim steadily decrease in frequency from the classical age until their total disappearance in the first century A.D. The complex formulae become correspondingly more popular in the later periods²² and can be divided roughly into four groups:²³

1. *Direct binding formula.* The *defigens* (lit., “the one who binds”) employs a first-person singular verb that acts directly upon the victims or specified parts of their bodies, for instance, *καταδῶ τὸν δεινα* (“I bind NN”).
2. *Prayer formula.* Gods or daemons are invoked and urged by a second-person imperative to perform similar acts of binding, for instance, *κατέχετε τὸν δεινα* (“Restrain NN!”).
3. *Wish formula.* The victim is the subject of a third person optative, for instance, *ὁ δεινα ἀτελής εἴη* (“May NN be unsuccessful!”).
4. *Similia similibus formula.* This type employs a persuasive analogy, for instance, “As this corpse is cold and lifeless, in the same way may NN become cold and lifeless.”

The direct binding formula (no. 1) is best described as a form of performative utterance that is accompanied by a ritually significant act, either the distortion and perforation of a lead tablet or (more rarely) the binding of the hands and legs of a small effigy. Often various bodily parts or personal possessions are listed alongside the person’s name as more specific targets, for instance, *DTA* 52 (Attic, third century B.C.): “I bind Mnesithides and the tongue, work, and soul of Mnesithides.” The most common elaboration of the direct binding formula is the addition of the name(s) of a deity or deities who appear as witnesses or overseers of the act, for instance *DTA* 91 (Attic, third-century B.C.): “I bind Ophelion and Katheris before (*πρός*) Hermes Chthonios and Hermes Katochos.” Most of the other verbs used in the first-person (e.g. *κατατίθημι*, *παραδίδωμι* or *καταγράφω*), like *ἀπο-* and *ἐγγράφω* on the early Sicilian tablets, seem to be legal or technical terms that shift responsibility for the binding to the divine sphere;²⁴ thus the *defixio* that reads simply, *καταδίδωμι τὸν δεινα* (“I assign NN”) is probably shorthand for the full expression that would include a “prayer formula” as well, such as on the text from

Carystus quoted above: "I register NN before Hermes the Restrainer. (You, Hermes,) restrain her by your side!"

The prayer formula (no. 2) brings the gods more directly into the action as the actual agents of the binding. It, too, was often accompanied by the manipulation of lead tablets and images. Limited evidence from Sicily seems to suggest that the prayer formula was used as early as the mid-fifth century B.C., but it is impossible to know this for certain.²⁵ By the early fourth century it appears frequently in Attica and elsewhere. Like any proper Greek prayer, these tablets begin with an invocation of a particular chthonic god who is addressed directly in the second person.²⁶ Hermes, Ge, Hecate, and Persephone are (in that order) the most common deities to appear on the tablets. As is true for most traditional forms of prayer, there is an unlimited opportunity for the *defigens* to expand the text at the invocation, either by multiplying the number of gods invoked or by increasing the number of epithets and powers of the god(s) already invoked. This opportunity is used with greater frequency in the Roman period when the addition of any and all foreign-sounding deities, epithets and *voces magicae* was thought to increase the efficacy of every "magical" operation. The verbal form that followed the invocation was usually a second-person imperative,²⁷ for instance, Ἑρμῇ κάτεχε τὸν δαίνα ("O Hermes, restrain NN!"), but this is occasionally replaced by a third-person passive imperative, for instance, DTA 105a (Attic, third century B.C.) Ἑρμῇ χθόνιε ὁ δαίνα καταδέσθω ("O Hermes Chthonios, NN must be bound!").²⁸

It must be granted that Kagarow's designation of simple, unadorned imperatives as "prayer formulae" uses such general criteria for defining "prayer" that it could conceivably include "coercive" imperatives (e.g., with a verb like ὀρκίζω understood) as well as "submissive" imperatives (e.g., with a verb like ἵκετεύω understood). As such it might be argued that it is of little or no use as an analytical category in a taxonomy of *κατάδεσμοι*. I would suggest, however, that whenever such distinctions were important to the *defigens*, he or she took pains to make them clear; thus we do have a few examples of clearly submissive terminology in *defixiones* from the early period (see Versnel's treatment of the "borderline" *defixiones*, chap. 3). The most important fact is that the overwhelming majority of early Greek *κατάδεσμοι* that directly address the gods make no attempt whatsoever to inform the deity that the approach of the *defigens* is either coercive or submissive; I suggest that concern over such matters is related to later and perhaps non-Greek religious mentalities. The author of a text that simply reads, "O Hermes Restrainer, restrain NN!" has stripped his prayer down to the bare essentials (the invocation and the request) undoubtedly because he thinks that such a simple, blunt approach is effective exactly as it stands. Thus Kagarow's rather general definition of the "prayer formula"—although its usefulness is limited when analyzing later, more verbose texts—is particularly suited for the analysis of early Greek *defixiones* because it is ultimately dictated by the nature of the texts themselves.

The third category ("wish formula") is distinguished on formal grounds here, but in actual practice it is usually employed as the second part of the so-called *similia similibus* formula (category no. 4). This final category is potentially the most revealing type because it seems to give us insight into the rationale behind many of the details that constitute these binding rituals. A fourth-century Attic curse (DTA

67) appears to be the earliest extant example of this type of formula; it refers to the fact that the text of the tablet is inscribed in retrograde: "Just as these words are cold and backwards (lit., ἐπαρίστερα, "written right to left"), so too may the words of Krates be cold and backwards." A popular tactic is to allude to the fact that the *defixio* has been placed in a tomb, for instance, DT 68 (Attic, fourth century B.C.): "Just as this corpse lies useless, so too may everything be useless for NN." Another Attic tablet, DTA 106b (third century B.C., cf. DTA 105 and 107), uses the lead medium as a point of reference: "Just as this lead is useless (ἄχρηστος), so too may the words and deeds of those listed here be useless." As all three of these types of *similia similibus* formulae might be interpreted as proof of the homicidal intent of the *κατάδεσμοι*, a detailed discussion seems warranted here, especially in light of some recent anthropological work on modern misconceptions about so-called sympathetic magic.

Although Wunsch recognized from the very beginning that lead was probably used because it was a cheap writing medium in classical Attica and elsewhere (it is a by-product of silver mining), he suggested that the peculiar coldness and color of the metal ("like the pallor of a corpse") might have made its use for *defixiones* especially appealing.²⁹ Other scholars, such as Kagarow, went so far as to suggest that the *similia similibus* formulae can be used as proof that the use of lead, as well as the employment of retrograde writing and the deposit in tombs, was originally of great importance to the efficacy of this kind of curse. Some evidence, however, points to the use of media other than lead. One fourth-century Attic *defixio* suggests that *κατάδεσμοι* inscribed on wax, another cheap and popular writing material, may have been used as well: "I bind all of these people in lead and in wax" (DTA 55a); here we might imagine that two tablets, one wax and one lead, were inscribed with the same text in hope of doubled efficacy. Unfortunately, only the lead tablet has survived the passing of the centuries. Ovid (*Am.* 3.7.29) imagines a person performing a *κατάδεσμος* by writing a name on wax and then piercing it: *sagave poenicea defixit nomina cera*.³⁰ There are no extant wax *defixiones*, nor would anyone expect them to survive in the harsh climate of the Aegean. A similar state of affairs occurs with the material evidence for Greek voodoo dolls of which only lead and bronze examples survive.³¹ Here, too, there is reason to suspect that these are only the more durable representatives of effigies fashioned from a wide variety of equally inexpensive materials.³² In his discussion of the different forms of malevolent magic that he would prosecute under the laws pertaining to nonfatal injury Plato (*Leg.* 933a–c) mentions the fears that overtake some men when they see "molded images of wax" (presumably voodoo dolls) at the crossroads or in graveyards. Wax and clay images, moreover, regularly appear in the stock scenes of erotic magic in hellenistic and Augustan literature (e.g., Theoc. *Id.* 2.28–29; Verg. *Ecl.* 8.75–80; and Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.30–33 and *Epod.* 17.76). Examples of wax and clay dolls (sometimes employed in conjunction with lead *defixiones*) have actually survived in the more stable climate of Egypt.³³

The popular habit of inscribing *defixiones* in retrograde during the late classical period provides a clue to the process by which lead came to be the preferred medium for written binding curses in the Roman and late antique periods. In classical times, Attic *κατάδεσμοι* are somewhat regularly inscribed in reverse on lead or (more

rarely) in boustrophedon style, as were many inscriptions regardless of the medium into which they were scratched or chiseled.³⁴ When in the later classical period the habit of writing retrograde was generally abandoned in other profane forms of inscription, the originally accidental direction of inscribing *defixiones* became "petrified" in the ritual and henceforth assumed greater significance—a significance that then came to be expressed in certain curse formulae (such as that quoted above) that rationalize their part in the ritual.³⁵ Similarly, we might imagine that when papyrus and other cheaper writing materials became more popular for day-to-day writing, the use of lead was similarly retained in the binding ritual and thereby was thought to be the preferred-if-not-necessary medium in the later periods.

The *similia similibus* formulae and the voodoo dolls employed in Greek binding spells are traditionally referred to as "sympathetic" or "homeopathic" rituals, but they can be more precisely described as "persuasively analogical" according to the definitions laid down by the anthropologist S. J. Tambiah.³⁶ He argues against the prevailing theory that "sympathetic" or "homeopathic" magic is based on (poor) observation of empirical analogies and differentiates instead between the operation of "empirical analogy" used in scientific inquiry to *predict* future action and "persuasive analogy" used in ritual to *encourage* future action. In order to increase their crop, the Azande prick the stalks of bananas with crocodile teeth while saying, "Teeth of crocodile are you. I prick bananas with them. May bananas be prolific like crocodile teeth."³⁷ This ritual act is not based on any (mistaken) empirical analogy between bananas and crocodile teeth but rather on the hope that correct performance of the ritual gesture and the incantation will "persuade" the bananas to become analogous to crocodile teeth with regard to their plenitude. The crucial difference is the use of the optative in the second part of the analogy, which (like the second part of a *similia similibus* formula) "urges" or "persuades" an object to become similar in a circumscribed way (i.e., in the case of a lead *defixio*, with respect to coldness or uselessness) to something that is obviously dissimilar. The rationale of this kind of ritual is not, therefore, based on poor science or a failure to observe empirical data but rather on a strong belief in the persuasive power of certain kinds of formulaic language.

It is important to note the limitations that are placed on the analogies in the *similia similibus* formulas, for it is all too easy to assume that the ultimate purpose of the *defigens* is to kill the victim when he encourages an analogy to a corpse or some inorganic material. In fact, in stark contrast to funerary imprecations or other traditional forms of cursing that specifically call for the utter destruction of the victim (with all his kith and kin), the ultimate goal of early Greek *defixiones* is very rarely the death of the victim.³⁸ Thus when a formula says, "Just as this corpse is unsuccessful, so may NN be unsuccessful" or "Just as this lead is cold and useless, so may NN be cold and useless," one must recognize that the analogy is limited to the corpse's lack of success or the frigidity and uselessness of the lead and does not imply that the lifelessness of both are wished upon the victim. Such an inference would be equivalent to supposing that the Azande believed that the incantation quoted above would cause their bananas to become like crocodile teeth in every aspect (i.e., hard, sharp, white, inedible, and not just plentiful). The limited scope of the persuasive analogies in the Greek *defixiones* clearly suggests that their main motivation was restraining or inhibiting, not destroying, the victim.

A comparison of these private binding spells (both the voodoo dolls and the inscribed lead tablets) with analogous public rituals used to protect entire Greek cities seems to confirm the circumscribed effect of Greek *κατάδεσμοι*. The Orchomenians, at the direction of the Delphian Apollo, erected a bronze statue of Actaeon and bound it to a rock with iron as a means of protecting their people against the attacks of his vengeful ghost.³⁹ In the first century B.C. the people of Syedra, plagued as they were by the incessant attacks of pirates, were advised by the Clarian Apollo to erect a statue of Ares bound in the "iron chains of Hermes" and supplicating a figure of Dike.⁴⁰ They were also advised to continue their own defensive military maneuvers, and it seems as if the binding ritual was meant to tip the scales in their favor. In addition, we know of three archaic silver statuettes buried (facing north) in an old sanctuary in Thrace, which were unearthed in the fourth century A.D.; each figurine has its arms bound behind its back like many of the extant Greek voodoo dolls employed against individuals. According to the local people these effigies had been so deployed to inhibit the incursions of three different barbarian tribes to the north.⁴¹ In all three reports, there is no hint that the enemy is destroyed by the creation and binding of the civic voodoo dolls; they are employed defensively—almost like phylacteries—to restrain an enemy and prevent him from doing harm. Indeed, this sense of binding magic as a defensive act against an enemy or rival with an "unfair" advantage recurs below in the rare texts where we get some sense of the motivation behind these spells.

Sophronius, a late sixth-century A.D. Christian writer, gives us the only detailed narrative of a person's escape from a binding spell.⁴² He reports how an Alexandrian paraplegic named Theophilus is visited in a dream by two saints and told to go down to the harbor and offer a large sum of money to the fishermen there to buy their next catch, sight unseen. He does as he is bidden, and when the nets are hauled up a small box is discovered amidst the struggling fish; some bystanders pry it open and find a bronze statuette with nails driven into its hands and feet. As each of the nails is withdrawn from the effigy, the paralysis in the corresponding limb of Theophilus ceases immediately. Although certainly no one would vouch for the historicity of this particular incident, the need for verisimilitude in the details of such miracle stories suggests that the underlying assumptions about the paralyzing but nonfatal effects of voodoo dolls were common knowledge, at least in the early Byzantine period.

The rationale behind the placement of the tablets in graves and chthonic sanctuaries has been similarly misinterpreted. It is true that contact with the coldness and inertia of corpses provides the motivation of some *similia similibus* formulae, but, like the formulae that refer to the lead medium or the retrograde writing, these formulae seem to rationalize what was originally a rather mundane procedure—the practice of communicating with the gods or the dead by means of sealed *πινάκια* or *libellae* (e.g., the oracle questions and petitions discussed in detail by Versnel, chap. 3). In fact, this technique also helps explain the two peculiar variants of the direct binding formula discussed above: the use of prepositional phrases to implicate the gods in the procedure, namely, "I bind NN before (*πρός*) or near (*παρά*) the god(s)" and the use of technical or legal terminology such as *καταγράφω* to "register" or "transfer" the responsibility of the binding to the divine sphere of activity. Such verbs are usually very loosely translated as "consign" or "devote,"

which often wrongly implies that by such an action the victim is literally sent to the underworld, that is, killed. Again, the evidence collected by Versnel suggests that these expressions ought not be taken in the literal sense, but rather in a legal or technical sense, that is, they refer in an abstract way to the domain of the god's jurisdiction and influence.⁴³ An inscribed lead tablet from Crete,⁴⁴ dated to the imperial period, provides an interesting parallel: "I hand over (*παράδιδωμι*) this gravestone to the gods of the underworld to guard." Two nearly identical statements appear directly on two Attic grave steles of comparable date (*IG II²* 13209–10) and seem to confirm the usage; the gravestones are placed under the control of the underworld gods, not literally "sent to the underworld" or destroyed. What is so illustrative about the Cretan example is the fact that the transfer was inscribed on a lead document separate from the gravestone itself and then placed nearby or buried beneath it as a sort of "legal writ of cession."

Thus, there are three very different styles of binding spells in ancient Greece:

1. The direct binding formula, which is a performative utterance, that is, a form of incantation by which the *defigens* hopes to manipulate his victim in an automatic way
2. The prayer formula, which is exactly that—a prayer to underworld deities that they themselves accomplish the binding of the victim
3. The so-called *similia similibus* formula, which is better understood as a form of "persuasive analogy" (also an incantation), in which the binding is accomplished by a wish that the victim become similar to something to which he or she is manifestly dissimilar.

It is important to emphasize the heuristic purpose of these divisions and to point out that within fifty years of the first appearance of written *κατάδεσμοι* all three types of formulae are being employed side by side, sometimes on the very same tablet (see, e.g., the Carystus tablet quoted above, which contains both a direct binding formula and a prayer formula).

THE AGONISTIC CONTEXT

Defixiones, then, provide a means of binding or restraining enemies without killing them. I shall now investigate the social context in which such a powerful weapon was deployed. More than three quarters of the published Greek *κατάδεσμοι* are inscribed with names only or are so laconic that they give us no hint whatsoever of their specific purpose; the more discursive texts, however, contain details that allow us to place them into four⁴⁵ general categories according to social context: commercial curses (25 examples); curses against athletes or similar kinds of public performers (26 examples); amatory curses (38 examples) and judicial curses (67 examples). As will be discussed below in further detail, the amatory curses can be further subdivided into two rather different types: "separation" curses and "aphrodisiac" curses. Generally speaking, the judicial and commercial curses date to the classical and hellenistic periods, while those that bind public performers usually date to the

late Roman period (from the second century A.D. onwards). The few separation curses that we have seem to be evenly distributed, while the aphrodisiac curses are exclusively a late phenomena. Keeping these important chronological limitations in mind, I propose to examine these four categories (excluding, for reasons that will become clear, the aphrodisiac *defixio*) and to argue that an essential feature of all four types is that they refer to agonistic relationships, that is, relationships between rival tradesmen, lovers, litigants, or athletes concerned with the outcome of some future event.

Hesiod begins the *Works and Days* with a eulogy of the beneficial kind of rivalry that existed among the craftsmen and artisans of his day. There is some evidence from the classical period that such tradesmen (and innkeepers as well), in their efforts to stay ahead of the competition, employed *defixiones* to inhibit the success and profit of their rivals. The popular habit of qualifying many of the victims' names on *defixiones* as tradesmen may or may not point to a context of commercial competition.⁴⁶ The likelihood, however, increases dramatically in the case of twenty-five tablets that explicitly bind the business, profits, or workshop of others.⁴⁷ The earliest example (c. 450 B.C.) comes from the necropolis at Camarina in Sicily (SGD 88): "These people are registered for (lit., "written down for") a downturn in profits (*ἐπὶ δυσπραγίᾳ τῶν κέρδων*)."⁴⁸ A third-century-B.C. Attic curse (SGD 52) binds two net weavers, as well as their *ἐργαστήρια* (workshops), while a contemporary Sicilian tablet (SGD 124) reads, "I bind the workshops of these men . . . so that they may not be productive but be idle and without luck." A rather long Athenian *defixio* (DTA 75, Attic, third century B.C.) curses two workshops, one inn, and one store. A fourth-century-B.C. *κατάδεσμος* found buried in the mud-brick wall of a house situated in the ancient Athenian industrial quarter binds a number of bronze workers (SGD 20). There is some later literary evidence that magic was popular among certain types of craftsmen, especially in those professions like bronze working where delicate heating and cooling processes were necessary to avoid breakage; Pollux (7.108), for example, refers to talismans that bronze workers placed in their foundries to ward off the evil eye, and Pliny (*HN* 28.4) discusses the incantations that potters were said to cast against the kilns of their rivals.

One of the most straightforward applications of *defixiones* (and one that most clearly shows their agonistic context) is in situations involving public performances in athletic or theatrical contests, where they are employed by or on behalf of one contestant to alter or impede the performance of an opponent. Pelops' prayer to Poseidon in Pindar's first *Olympian* may preserve the earliest example of this kind of curse (lines 75–78):

Look you, Poseidon, . . . block (*πρόδασον*, lit., "bind!")
the brazen spear of Oenomaos, and give me the fleetest chariot by Elis' river,
and clothe me about in strength. (trans. Lattimore)

Although it can be argued that this particular race was neither fair nor sportsman-like, it is interesting that Pelops demands both the restraint of his rival and at the same time an enhancement of his own ability to win. It is clear that Pelops wishes to protect himself from Oenomaos' sharpshooting (an unfair advantage), and once again we get the impression that, as with the bound effigy of Ares at Syedra, the

binding aims at evening up the odds of a contest that from the perspective of the *defigens* seems rather lopsided.

There are four binding curses written against individuals involved in theatrical competitions, dating primarily to the classical and hellenistic periods. An Attic curse (DTA 45, third century B.C.) reads simply, "I bind NN, the actor (*ὑποκριτής*) in a leaden bond." As with other victims who are only qualified by vocation, one cannot be sure whether this man is being bound by a rival in the theater or whether the title *actor* only serves to differentiate him from other individuals with the same name. Two contemporary lead disks probably written by the same person (DTA 33 and 34) are inscribed in a confused serpentine pattern and carry binding curses against men described as *διδάσκαλοι* and *ὑποδιδάσκαλοι*; the second tablet leaves out the names of the men and identifies them only as "those who are with Theagenes," who is presumably the *χορηγός*.⁴⁹ The anonymity of the *διδάσκαλοι* on the second disk suggests that the real target here may be Theagenes or the rival theatrical group he heads. The *defigens* in a mid-fifth-century-B.C. Sicilian tablet (SGD 91) consigns (on behalf of his friend Eunikos, the *χορηγός*) all the other *χορηγοί* and their children and parents "to futility both in the contest (*ἐν ἀγῶνι*) and outside the contests." On account of the obscurity of the term *χορηγός* in early non-Attic Greek, it is unclear whether the victims listed here are liturgists (as they would be in Athens) or actual performers.⁵⁰ The agonistic context of the curse is, however, unmistakable, and is echoed in a second-century-A.D. *defixio* written in Latin that reads in part, "Sosio must never do better than the mime Eumolpos. . . . Sosio must not be able to surpass the mime Fotios."⁵¹

From the later periods there is much evidence for the continued use of binding spells against public performers, especially athletes and charioteers. As they are all clearly employed in very similar agonistic situations, I include them here in my survey. Five curses against wrestlers (SGD 24–28) were discovered in a well in the Athenian agora and date to the third century A.D., more than six hundred years later than the Attic *defixiones* discussed above. Three of these curses aim at binding and "chilling" the same wrestler, a man named Eutychian, with the expressed hope that he "fall down and disgrace himself." Each curse, however, seems to have been designed for a different match: the first refers to a bout that is to occur on "this coming Friday"; the second refers to a match against Secundus and the third to one against Hegoumenos.⁵² All three of these binding curses contain *similia similibus* formulae of a general nature such as, "As these names (of the invoked daemons) grow cold (*ψύχεται*), so may Eutychian's name and breath, impulse, charm, knowledge, reckoning grow cold (*ψυχέσθω*). Let him be deaf, dumb, mindless, harmless, and not fighting against anyone" (trans. D. R. Jordan). Other athletic *defixiones* offer similarly general imperatives that aim at curtailing the various talents and strengths of the opponent; a *defixio* from Oxyrhynchus is employed to bind the sinews and the limbs of two racers "in order that they should be neither powerful nor strong." The spell goes on to invoke a daemon who is to keep the victims up all night and prevent them from sleeping or eating anything in preparation for the race.⁵³ The only other published curse against a runner was found in the same Athenian well as the three wrestling curses against Eutychian. It contains a rather curious two-part request that suggests that the daemons did not always succeed on the first try: they are asked to prevent a certain Alkidamos from "getting

past the starting lines of the Athenaia [a recurrent ephebic festival]" but add that if he manages to do so in spite of their efforts, they should then make him "veer off course and disgrace himself."⁵⁴

Like the athletic binding spells discussed above, *defixiones* against charioteers begin to appear in the second or third century A.D. With the exception of the so-called *Sethianorum tabellae*⁵⁵ from Rome, they are to be found exclusively in North Africa and Syria.⁵⁶ In a well-known *κατάδεσμος* from Carthage (DT 242, third century A.D.) we find once again the mention of one particular race ("tomorrow morning") and a detailed listing of the parts of the body to be bound: the shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists of the charioteers, as well as their eyes and the eyes of their horses, who are all named alongside the names of their drivers.⁵⁷ Finally there are six Greek binding spells of similar date and provenance that aim at inhibiting the performance of *venatores*, a special class of gladiator who fought wild animals in the amphitheater. In these texts the daemons are exhorted to protect the animals from harm (certainly not out of any humanitarian spirit) and to bind and impede the actions of the *venator* so that he may fall an easy prey.⁵⁸

The third area of intense personal competition in which the Greeks employed *κατάδεσμοι* was the battlefield of Eros, especially in the situation of a "lovers' triangle," where two individuals were competing for the affections of a third. Here, too, if a lover or would-be lover feared the outcome of a contest, he might turn to the use of a *defixio* in order to impede the advances, the flirting, and even the sexual performance of his or her rival. As I mentioned briefly above, it is helpful here to distinguish between two different types of amatory curses: (1) the so-called separation curse or *Trennungszauber*, which was usually aimed at the rival lover, and occasionally at the beloved (i.e., it sought to inhibit the conversation and contact between the two) and (2) the so-called aphrodisiac or erotic curse in which only the beloved is mentioned (i.e., it sought to torture the "beloved" victim with burnings, itchings, or insomnia that could only be assuaged by submitting to the desires of the *defigens*).

The first group, of which there are fifteen published Greek examples,⁵⁹ is attested in the classical and hellenistic periods and fits rather easily into the patterns of use that we have observed in the athletic and circus curses. A long Boeotian curse (DT 85, third or second century B.C.) is designed to restrain a rival lover named Zoilos. As the curse is rather lengthy, I translate only a few relevant sections:⁶⁰

Just as you, Theonnastos (the dead person with whom the tablet was buried) are powerless (*ἀδύνατος*) in the movement of your hands, your feet, your body . . . , so too may Zoilos be powerless (*ἀδύνατος*) to come to Antheira, and in the same way Antheira (to) Zoilos. (Side A 1–4)

Just as this lead is in some place separate (*ἐν τινι τόπῳ*) χωριστῶν from the haunts of mankind (i.e., a tomb), so too may Zoilos be separated (*κεχωρισμένο(ς)*) from the body and the touch of Antheira, and the endearments and the embraces of Zoilos and Antheira. (Side A 8–11)

Just as this lead is buried (*ὁρώρυχται*) . . . , so too may you (i.e., the corpse) utterly bury (*κατορύχους*) the works, the household, the affections, and everything else of Zoilos. (Side B 16–21)

Here, as in the Attic athletic curses discussed above, a rival is being "persuaded" to be inert and kept away from the prize, in this case a woman named Antheira.

A rather simple Attic curse (*DTA* 78, fourth century B.C.) seems to have been written by a jealous wife or fiancée:

Ἀρι[σ]τοκύδη καὶ τὰς φανο(ν)μένας
αὐτῶι γυναῖκας.
μήποτ' αὐτὸν γῆμαι ἄλλην γυναῖ(κα) μηδὲ παῖδα.

[I bind?] Aristocydes and the women who will be seen about with him.
Let him not marry another matron or maiden.

This text is a curious combination of the earliest technique (merely listing the victims' names) and a rare example of a simple wish formula.

Just as the athletic curses target the special body parts and skills of the rival wherein his hope of victory was thought to lie, the amatory *defixio* might also list the charms of the rival. See, for example, another curse from Boeotia that, in contrast to the preceding example, seems to have been written by the "other woman" (*DT* 86a, fourth century B.C.):⁶¹ "I deposit (*παρατίθεμαι*, i.e., for the purposes of binding) Zoïs the Eretrian, the wife of Kabeirēs, with the Earth and with Hermes, her food, her drink, her sleep, her laughter, her company, her cithara playing, her entrance (*πάροδον*?), her pleasure, her rear end, her thought, her eyes."

These "separation curses" aim at inhibiting desire and affection, usually in the rival lover but occasionally in the beloved as well. The main purpose is either to restrain any possible erotic attraction or to break any preexisting bond that the two may have developed.

This is in marked contrast to the second kind of *defixio* used in an amatory context, which more properly belongs in the category of aphrodisiac, since its aim is to encourage, rather than inhibit, the sexual desire and activity of the beloved. As these tablets are treated in Winkler's essay on erotic magic (chap. 8), I shall limit my discussion to a portion of one very popular Greco-Egyptian formula, which is adduced purely as a point of comparison:⁶²

Don't ignore [these] names, *nekydaimon*, but arouse yourself and go to every place where Matrona is, whom Tagene bore. You have her *οὐσία*. Go to her and seize her sleep, her drink, her food, and do not allow Matrona (whom Tagene bore, whose *οὐσία* you have) to have love or intercourse with any other man, except Theodoros, whom Techosis bore. Drag Matrona by her hair, by her guts, by her soul, by her heart until she comes to Theodoros and make her inseparable from me until death, night and day, for every hour of time. Immediately, immediately, quickly, quickly, now, now.

Many of the details here are characteristic of later *defixiones*, for instance, identification by matronymic⁶³ and the use of *οὐσία* (lit., "being" or "stuff," magical slang for bits of the victim's hair, nail trimmings, or threads from the clothing).⁶⁴ This curse begins like a traditional *κατάδεσμος* by restraining Matrona's contact with other men, but it goes on to burn and torture Matrona herself, elements that are often found in the later *ἀγωγή* spells, designed to "lead" or "drag" (the word derives from the verb *ἄγω*) the victim into the arms of the performer of the spell.⁶⁵ Although the limited number of both types of amatory *defixiones* does not allow us to make any secure generalizations with regard to the patterns of date,

provenance, or purpose, I would suggest here that the "separation curses" (from the fourth century B.C. to the third century A.D., primarily from Greece proper) were closer in form and purpose to the original Greek phenomenon of *defixiones* and that the emergence in North Africa and Syria of the aphrodisiac-type of curse in the second century A.D. represents some kind of hybrid flowering of a later, more complex magical tradition.⁶⁶

Judicial *κατάδεσμοι*, which make up our fourth and largest category, were once thought to be posttrial "revenge curses" upon the winning party; subsequent research, however, suggests that they were written, without exception, prior to the final outcome of the trial.⁶⁷ They are attempts at binding the opponent's ability to think clearly and speak effectively in court in the hope that a dismal performance will cause him to lose the case. Just as the circus *defixiones* discussed above attempted to bind the parts of a charioteer's body in which his competitive skill lay (i.e., his shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and eyes), so judicial curses are primarily concerned with the cognitive and verbal faculties that are so important for success in the law courts (*DTA* 107, Attic, late fifth or early fourth century B.C.):

Θερσίλοχος, Οἰνό[φιλος], Φιλώτιος καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος Φερενίκωι σύνδικ[ος],
πρὸς τὸν Ἑρμῆν τὸν Χθόνι[ον] καὶ Ἑκάτην Χθονίαν καταδεδέσθω. Φε-
ρενίκο(ν) καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ νο(ῦ)ν καὶ γλῶτταν καὶ βο(ν)λὰς καὶ [τ]ὰ πράττει
καὶ τὰ περὶ ἑμο(ῦ) βο(ν)λε[ύ]εται, ἅπαντ' αὐτῶι ἀντία ἔστω καὶ τοῖς μετ'
ἐκε(ῖ)νο(ν) βο(ν)λεύο(ν)σιν καὶ πρᾶττο(ν)σιν.

Let Thersilochos, Oino[philos], Philotios, and whoever else is a legal advocate for Pherenikos be bound before Hermes Chthonios and Hecate Chthonia. The soul, the mind, the tongue, the plans of Pherenikos, and whatever else he is doing or plotting with regard to me—let all these things be contrary for him and for those who plot and act with him.

Galen (vol. 12 p. 251 ed. Kühn) scoffs at those who believe in the power of "magic" and specifically mentions the popular belief that the efficacy of a judicial curse lay in its power to inhibit the opposing side's ability to speak persuasively during the trial (*καταδεῖσαι τοὺς ἀντιδίκους, ὥς μηδὲν ἐπὶ τοῦ δικανικοῦ δινηθῆναι φθέγγασθαι*). This was, however, a powerful claim, especially in such communities as Athens, where it was necessary for citizens to speak on their own behalf in court.

Literary evidence suggests that a poor performance in court by a talented orator could often result in the accusation that he had been the victim of binding curses. Aristophanes (*Vesp.* 946–48) alludes to the sudden paralysis of the renowned orator Thucydides, the son of Melesias, during an important trial; the scholiast at that point (preserving some fourth-century-B.C. Attic source) suggests that his tongue had been magically bound.⁶⁸ Cicero relates how an opposing attorney suddenly forgot the case he was pleading and subsequently lost the lawsuit; the unfortunate man later claimed that his poor performance was the result of sorceries and incantations (*veneficiis et cantionibus*).⁶⁹ In late antiquity, orators and declaimers (both, perhaps, better classified as professional performers) continued to blame witchcraft for sudden lapses of memory and moments of inexplicable stage fright. Libanius tells us in his autobiography (*Orat.* 1. 245–49) how at one point late in his life he became gravely ill and was no longer able to read, write, or speak before his students. After a time the apparatus of a rather bizarre binding ritual was discovered in his lecture

room—the twisted and mutilated body of a chameleon. Its severed head had been placed between its hind legs, one of its forefeet was missing and the other positioned in such a way as “to close the mouth for silence.” Libanius says that he regained his health after the chameleon was removed.⁷⁰

There are some sixty-seven published examples of Greek judicial binding curses,⁷¹ which with few exceptions date to the classical and hellenistic periods.⁷² The oldest examples—those found in Sicily—date to as early as the fifth century B.C. One from the necropolis at Selinus (SGD 95) is inscribed in a boustrophedon pattern and curses the tongues of four, named individuals, as well as the tongues of all their *σύνδικοι*. Three other contemporary Selinuntine curses (SGD 99, 100, and 108) were excavated in or very near the sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros at Gaggara and contain the rather bureaucratic formula *ἐγγράφω τὸν δεῖνα ἐπ’ ἀτελείαι* (“I enroll NN for failure”), which, with the exception of one other Sicilian curse (substituting *ἀπογράφω*) is unique. All three date to the first half of the fifth century and similarly curse the tongues of a litigant and his *σύνδικοι*.⁷³ With the possible (but not probable) exception of eleven judicial curses from Wünsch’s *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae*,⁷⁴ all of the Attic judicial curses published to date come from the classical period.⁷⁵

Many of the early Attic curses (both those used for judicial purposes and those of unspecified aims) contain names of well-known orators and politicians.⁷⁶ This prompted Preisendanz to suggest that all of these curses might be labeled “political curses,” but even he admitted that given the blatantly political nature of so many of the lawsuits tried in Athenian courts, such a category would be difficult-if-not-impossible to separate from the category of judicial curses.⁷⁷ Although his suggestion is, indeed, of little use in the taxonomy of *defixiones*, his insight into the larger political motivation of some of these curses deserves attention. In a few cases the appearance of female names on ostensibly judicial curses has caused some confusion, especially in the case of *κατάδεσμοι* found in Attica, where the barring of women from every facet of courtroom activity was notorious.⁷⁸ Such confusion may point to a more generalized meaning of some of the “legal” vocabulary that we find in the binding curses. I suggest that when the terms *σύνδικοι* and *ἀντίδικοι* appear by themselves (i.e., with no other allusion to legal procedure), they might occasionally have looser, political connotations equivalent, perhaps, to the Latin terms *amici* and *inimici*, which often appear on Latin *defixiones*.⁷⁹ This would also account for the huge numbers of names that one finds on some allegedly judicial curses, far in excess of any imaginable number of fellow prosecutors or witnesses (e.g., SGD 42 and 107; cf. SGD 48).

Peter Brown describes how in late antiquity, too, the magic that coalesced around smaller arenas of competition often had larger political significance. He points out that the rivalry faced by the charioteer extended beyond his time in the circus and that since he was both the client of local aristocracies and the leader of organized groups of fans, his performance often transcended the realm of mere sport.⁸⁰ This connection between athletic and political competition is not limited to later antiquity; in classical Athens intertribal competitions—albeit in a much less organized fashion—often provided arenas for intracity rivalries, where victories in theatrical performances and even athletic events could be interpreted as indicators of the

waxing or waning of the political power of the liturgists involved.⁸¹ By inhibiting the performance of actors and athletes, the *defigens* could conceivably restrain the political power of their backers and undermine their popularity with their fans, often their only source of political influence. As was the case in my discussion of the three styles of curse formulas, these categories of different agonistic contexts clearly have a limited heuristic value; indeed, several of the narrowly defined conflicts revealed in the *defixiones* discussed above seem to spill over quite easily into larger arenas, sometimes purely as the result of a common Greek habit of thought, as in the case of the Sicilian binding spell quoted above, which binds rival *χορηγοί* “both within the contest and without,” that is, everywhere. Thus the use of *κατάδεσμοι* to bind the competitive power of rival businessmen, public performers, or opponents testifying in the courts could often be more than an act of personal rivalry and could fit easily into a larger pattern of political or social competition.

CONCLUSION: MAGIC AND RELIGION

In light of the larger orientation of this volume, we should ask ourselves at this point whether the categories of “magic” and “religion” are of any value in analyzing the phenomenon of the early Greek *κατάδεσμοι*. It is often a modern assumption that the anonymity and secret burial of the inscribed *κατάδεσμοι*, like the inaudible whispering or muttering of malevolent verbal prayers, can be attributed to the shame of the agent and that such shame indicates an illicit activity.⁸² Often, however, such secrecy is part of the traditional ritual procedure used in approaching the gods for help, while at the same time shielding a person’s private affairs from the inquisitive eyes of his neighbors. There are many examples of communication with the gods by means of sealed, written documents (for instance, the oracle questions inscribed on lead tablets at Dodona and elsewhere). As I mentioned above (with regard to the *defixiones* that employ prayer formulas) graves, chthonic sanctuaries, and underground bodies of water are ideal points of contact with the subterranean gods. From a more practical point of view, moreover, keeping potential victims “in the dark” about the existence of the *defixio* prevented them from using specific phylacteries or defensive spells that could ward off the power of the curse. Burying the tablet in areas governed by taboo (e.g., graves and sanctuaries) or sinking it into deep bodies of water would likewise prevent the victim from finding and then loosening the spell (as the Alexandrian Theophilus did by removing the nails that bound his effigy).

The anonymity of the *defigens* and the hidden nature of the curse could also be governed by the relative social or political positions of the man and his victim. Apollo’s priest Chrysēs, for example, utters his famous curse along the seashore (*Il.* 1.35–43) only *after* he is out of earshot of the Achaean ships; he is certainly not presented as a shameful personality by the poet. Nor is the hero Pelops, who waits until he is alone on a beach in the dead of night to urge Poseidon to bind Oenomaos (*Pindar Ol.* 1.75–78, quoted above). In Euripides’ *Electra* (205ff.) Aegisthus prays out loud to the nymphs for his own continued good fortune and for the destruction of his enemies (a reference, says the messenger, to Orestes and Electra); the undetected Orestes in the meantime prays for the utter reverse but keeps his words

"under his breath." His prayer and that of Aegisthus are identical in form and their different degrees of audibility are attributable solely to tactical, not ethical, concerns; Orestes' prayer, like that of Chrysēs and Pelops, is directed against the "powers that be" and therefore requires some degree of caution.

Most of the argument over the comparison of "pious prayers" and the putatively more malevolent "curse tablets" seems inevitably (and unfortunately) to rest on our subjective appraisal of the attitude of the persons performing the acts, an attitude that is to be discovered in the vocabulary they use to express themselves—that is, the "gut feeling" of a modern reader that Chrysēs is a priest operating on a "religious" impulse and using traditional forms of prayer when he directs Apollo to destroy the Greeks but that the average *defigens* is possessed by some inferior "superstitious" impulse and uses "magical" forms of invocation and coercion. The problem of divining the piety or attitude of the *defigens* is, however, enormously complicated by the laconic nature of the early Greek *κατάδεσμοι*. The texts that we have from much later Roman times are more verbose and allow the kind of profitable psychological examination that Versnel offers in his essay (chap. 3). Indeed, by the Roman period we do encounter rather lengthy tablets from Africa, Anatolia, and Asia Minor that entreat, beg, threaten, and command gods and daemons to do what they request. For the preceding centuries, however, any assessment of the psychology or piety of the *defigens* is wholly dependent upon unavoidably subjective inferences drawn from connotations of single words.

A recent debate on some early first-century-B.C. lead tablets from Morgantina underscores the difficulties inherent in establishing criteria for normative piety in the earlier Greek *κατάδεσμοι*. Ten inscribed lead tablets (all but two rolled up) were discovered during the excavation of a sanctuary of some as-yet-unidentified chthonic god or goddess. Nabers argued that of the six legible examples only one was employed as a *defixio* and that the remaining five were "pious prayers offered to the underworld on behalf of persons already dead." The text of the allegedly sole *defixio* (Nabers's no. 6, SGD 120) reads as follows:⁸³

Γᾶ Ἑρμῆ θεοὶ
κα[τ]αχθόνιοι
ἀπαγάγετε τὰν Βενοῦ[σταν]
τοῦ Ῥούφο[υ τὰν] δού-
[λαν.]

Earth, Hermes, gods
of the underworld
snatch away Venusta,
[the slave] of Rufus.

Two of the remaining "pious prayers," however (Nabers's nos. 4 and 5) seem to refer to the same woman. I give the text of number 4 (= SGD 118), as it is undamaged:

Γᾶ Ἑρμῆ
θεοὶ κατα-
χθόνιοι πο-
τιδέξεσθε

τὰν Βενοῦσταν τοῦ
Ῥούφου τὰν θεράπει-
ναν.

Earth, Hermes,
gods of the underworld
receive graciously
Venusta,
the servant of Rufus. (trans. Nabers)

The rest of the tablets have an identical form except that some of them use a third verb *παραδέχομαι* and name other individuals. Despite the fact that the two tablets quoted here came from the same place and are addressed the same gods in the same form about the same individual, Nabers argued (and convinced a renowned epigraphist)⁸⁴ that the first tablet used a verb appropriate to a *defixio* while the second used a verb more fitting to a religious context. But it is clear from the shared placement, form, and function of these two tablets (and from the elsewhere-attested habit of using multiple curses against the same individual) that all of these tablets are in fact *defixiones*.⁸⁵ The confusion on the part of these scholars is in itself instructive, for it highlights the fact that a *defixio* employing the prayer formula is exactly that, a prayer to the chthonic deities. Whether the prayer is benevolent or malevolent is immaterial to the pious belief that the gods addressed can and will do what they are asked provided they are approached in a ritually correct manner.

A third-century-B.C. inscribed pillar from Delos preserves a rather lengthy account in epic hexameters of the successful founding of the cult of Serapis on the island.⁸⁶ The central miracle in this aretology is the god's timely intervention in a lawsuit that threatened the existence of his newly built temple. Because the end result is so strikingly similar to the outcome that is often envisaged by the inscribers of the judicial binding curses discussed above, this miraculous event is of great interest (lines 85–90):

... φῶτας γὰρ ἀλιτρο(ν)οὺς ἐπέδησας
οἳ ῥα δίκην πόρσνον, ἐνὶ γναθμοῖς ὑπανύσσας
γλώσσαν ἀναύδητον τῆς οὔτ' ὅπιν ἔκλεεν οὐθεὶς
οὔτε γ(ρ)άμμα δίκης ἐπιτάρροθον· ἀλλ' ἄρα θείως
στεῦντο θεοπληγέσσιν εὐκότας εἰδῶλοισιν
ἔμμεναι ἢ λάεσσιν·

For you bound the sinful men who had prepared the lawsuit, secretly making the tongue silent in the mouth, from which (tongue) no one heard a word or an accusation, which is the helpmate in a trial. But as it turned out by divine providence, they confessed themselves to be like god-stricken statues or stones.

The use of the verb *ἐπιδέω* ("bind up") and the specific mention of the tongue as the target of the paralysis are immediate clues that some sort of judicial binding spell has been employed. There is, however, no explicit mention of any kind of overtly "magical" activity by the priest; in the eyes of the poet Maiistas, who composed this poem, the god's intervention is clearly the result of the frantic prayer of the priest (described in the preceding lines, 43–44), who with tears in his eyes begged the god to protect him from conviction. Both the submissive tone of the prayer and the

complete helplessness of the priest fit in perfectly with the genre and purpose of this particular literary product—an aretology. The context, however, of the god's intervention is identical to that of the traditional *defixio*; the third-generation Egyptian priest, when faced with the difficult-if-not-impossible task of swaying a native Delian jury, begs Serapis to restrain the attacks of his enemies. Despite the familiar (to modern sensibilities, at least) "religious" mentality of the prayer, both the agonistic setting and the description of the resulting courtroom paralysis point unequivocally to a "binding spell" accomplished by a deity as the result of an urgent prayer. Indeed, even the "defensive" stance of the priest, who considers himself abused by insane and evil men (lines 37–39), can be paralleled from the Syedra inscription or the story of Pelops, in which the *defigentes* seem to envisage themselves striving against unfairly superior opponents.

Jevons saw that it was impossible to distinguish a *defixio* employing a prayer formula from a traditional Greek prayer, and he attempted, instead, to distinguish "magical" *defixiones* from "religious" ones by noting whether or not they invoked deities to perform the curse. In drawing this distinction he applied Nilsson's dictum that a miracle performed without the help of the gods is a "magical" act and one performed with their aid was a "religious" act.⁸⁷ Unfortunately great difficulties arise when we recall that *defixiones* not employing a prayer formula are often augmented by prepositional phrases that implicate the gods in the proceedings, for instance, "I bind NN before Hermes the Restrainer," a formulation that is also used on the putatively more pious tombstone curses.⁸⁸ The combination, moreover, of different types of formulae on the same tablet or the substitution of one formula for another seems to be completely random, much like the variation of vocabulary in the Morgantina tablets discussed above. Thus, using the different curse formulae to distinguish between "religious" and "magical" *κατάδεσμοι* is a purely artificial exercise that cannot in the end reveal any difference in the social function of the curse or the piety of the *defigens*.

A broadly conceived theoretical dichotomy between "magic" and "religion" is not, therefore, of any great help in analyzing and evaluating the peculiar cultural phenomenon presented by the early Greek *defixiones*. They seem to have evolved from a special form of ritual (a symbolic gesture would have accompanied either incantation or prayer) that was primarily used by individuals involved in often-lopsided agonistic situations, to bind the power of their opponents. As such, they fit easily into the popular competitive strategy of survival and dominance that permeates ancient Greek society, regardless of whether the contests in which they were deployed were international, civic, or personal in scope. The scruple against homicide points quite clearly to the fact that *defixiones* somehow remained within the rules of the game for intramural competition in the Greek city-state. The recurrence of what I have called a "defensive stance" in some of the texts discussed above suggests that the *defigentes* may have perceived such activities as protective in nature and not as aggressive magic at all. Indeed, it is a tempting but, alas, completely unprovable suggestion that the person who would most often employ a binding curse is the one who doubted his or her ability to win without it, that is, that the *defigens* was the perennial "underdog," who, like Chrysēs and Pelops, was protecting himself against what seemed to be insurmountable odds.

Notes

I should like to thank E. Courtney, M. Edwards, M. Gleason, D. Halperin, M. Jameson, D. R. Jordan, R. Kotansky, A. E. Raubitschek, H. S. Versnel, and J. Winkler for their comments and advice on earlier drafts of this essay and to claim as my own all of the deficiencies that may remain. The special debt owed to Jordan's recent published work on *defixiones* is readily apparent in nearly every footnote. It is, however, my special pleasure to acknowledge the inestimable benefits I have received from my private conversations and correspondence with him and from access to his ongoing and as-yet-unpublished work. The excellent article on *defixiones* by B. Bravo ("Une tablette magique d'Olbia pontique, les morts, les héros et les démons," in *Poikilia: Études offertes à Jean-Pierre Vernant*, *Recherches d'histoire et de sciences sociales* 26 [Paris, 1987]) appeared as the present volume was going to the publisher.

The following oft-cited works will be referred to either by author and date or by the abbreviation given in square brackets.

- A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris, 1904). [DT]
 D. R. Jordan, "Two Inscribed Lead Tablets from a Well in the Athenian Kerameikos," *AM* 95 (1980): 225–39.
 ———, "New Archaeological Evidence for the Practice of Magic in Classical Athens," in *Praktika of the 12th International Congress of Classical Archaeology*, Athens, September 4–10, 1983, vol. 4 (Athens, 1988) 273–77.
 ———, "Defixiones from a Well near the Southwest Corner of the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia* 54 (1985): 205–55. [Jordan, 1985]
 ———, "A Survey of Greek *Defixiones* Not Included in the Special Corpora," *GRBS* 26 (1985): 151–97. [SGD]
 E. G. Kagarow, *Griechische Fluchtafeln*, *Eos Supplementa* 4 (Leopoli, 1929).
 K. Preisendanz, "Fluchtafel (Defixion)," *RAC* 8 (1972): 1–29.
 K. Preisendanz and A. Henrichs, ed., *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1973–74). [PGM]
 R. Wünsch, *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae*, *Inscr. Gr.* vol. 3, pt. 3 (Berlin 1897). [DTA]
 ———, "Neue Fluchtafeln," *RhM* 55 (1900): 62–85, 232–71.

1. L. Robert, *Collection Froehner*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1936), no. 13; M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia greca*, vol. 4 (Rome 1978), 248–49. I give Jordan's text (SGD 64), which is based on some recent, better readings.

2. It is difficult to capture all the connotations of this verb in one English word. Other technical and legal definitions add to its semantic range and may also be important here: "enroll," (*LSJ* ii. 2); "summon by written order," (ii. 3) or "convey [i.e., property by deed]," (ii. 4).

3. The Greek term *κατάδεσμος* is derived from the verb *καταδέω* (which appears in Attic dialect in contracted form *καταδῶ*) "bind down" or "bind fast." The late-Latin term *defixio* (from *defigo* "nail down" or "transfix") seems to be the preferred terminology among scholars today, although its popularity has led to some inconsistencies. Epigraphists and archaeologists often use it as a synonym for "lead curse tablet," i.e., any kind of malevolent prayer inscribed upon lead. I shall use the term to refer to all binding rituals regardless of the medium employed, including, e.g., the different kinds of "voodoo dolls," used in antiquity (see n. 31) or even the bound or twisted bodies of small animals that occasionally accompanied the lead *defixiones* (e.g., the bound rooster mentioned in *DT* 241 and the puppy in *DT* 111–12; cf. the chameleon discovered in the lecture room of Libanius [see p. 16 and n. 70] and

the sewnup mouth of a fish, which aimed at binding the tongues of gossips in Ov. *Fast.* 2.577–78). Wunsch, *DTA* and Audollent, *DT* are the basic collections. Audollent includes Latin *defixiones* in his corpus, but since they are derived directly or indirectly from the Greek practice and develop their own unique characteristics, I shall not deal with them in this essay. See K. Preisendanz, "Die griechischen und lateinischen Zaubertafeln," *APF* 9 (1930): 119–54 and 11 (1933): 153–64 for a full bibliography to that date. His work on the Greek material has now been updated and replaced by Jordan's *SGD*. Aside from the prolegomena to the above-mentioned corpora and surveys, the best comprehensive discussions of *defixiones* are Kagarow 1929 and Preisendanz 1972.

4. *DTA* has 220 examples (all Attic Greek); *DT* has 166 Greek tablets. Because of the unresolved controversy over their function, I do not include the 436 inscribed lead tablets from the Piraeus (listed together as *DT* 45) and Euboean Styra (listed together as *DT* 80), each containing a single, different name and betraying scant signs of manipulation or nail holes. Audollent included them in his corpus, but other scholars have contended that they were probably used for registration or counting, much like the several hundred lead tablets from the Athenian agora, each of which lists a single cavalryman and a description of his horse (see A. P. Miller, *Studies in Sicilian Epigraphy: An Opisthographic Lead Tablet* [Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973], 8–9, for discussion). *SGD* lists another 189 published examples and reports the existence of some 461 others awaiting publication. *DT* has 137 tablets inscribed in languages other than Greek (mostly Latin or other indigenous Italian languages). For a survey of more recently published Latin *defixiones*, M. Besnier ("Récents travaux sur les *defixionum tabellae* latines 1904–14," *Rev. Phil.* 44 [1920]: 5–30) gives a checklist of 61 tablets not in *DT*, and H. Solin surveys an additional 48 in the appendix to his *Eine neue Fluchtafel aus Ostia* *Comm. Hum. Litt.* vol. 42, pt. 3 (1968): 23–31. For the ongoing discoveries of large numbers of late Latin *defixiones* in Britain, see Versnel's essay (chap. 3).

5. Sometimes several tablets are pierced by the same nail, or several nails are driven through a single tablet (see *DTA*, p. iii). Jordan (1988) provides the best and most recent assessment of the archaeological evidence. Detailed instructions for the manufacture and burial of *defixiones* are preserved in the magical handbooks of the third and fourth centuries A.D. and seem to be in general agreement with the archaeological evidence for the earlier periods, e.g., *PGM* V 304; VII 394, 417; IX; XXXVI 1–35, 231; and LVIII.

6. Tert. *De Anim.* 56.4 and Servius *In Aen.* 4.382. There is no direct testimony about such beliefs in the classical period, but the scanty archaeological evidence, where available, seems to corroborate some such belief. The idea seems to be that the ghost of the *ἄωποι* ("those who are untimely dead") would remain in or near the grave until they have completed allotted time on earth (*DT*, pp. cxii–xv). See A. D. Nock, "Tertullian and the *Ahoroi*," in *Essays on Religion in the Ancient World*, ed. J. Stewart, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 712–20. Originally *Vig. Christ.* 4 (1950): 129–41. Jordan (1988, 273) points out that "in every period of antiquity when we have been able to estimate the age of the dead who have curse tablets in their graves, that age proved to be young." For similar beliefs about the special status of the *βιαιοθῆναι* ("violently killed people") see J. H. Waszink, *RAC* 2 (1954) 391–94.

7. Jordan (1980, 231 n. 23) gives the following list of published *defixiones* found in chthonic (usually Demeter) sanctuaries: ten from the fifth century B.C. found in or near the sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros in Selinous (*SGD* 99–108); thirteen second-century-B.C.(?) examples discovered in a Demeter sanctuary on Cnidus (*DT* 1–13—see Versnel's essay [chap. 3] for a discussion and bibliography on these much-debated tablets); ten first-century-B.C. tablets from the shrine of an as-yet-unidentified chthonic deity in Morgantina (*SGD* 115–20, discussed in detail at the end of this essay); and fourteen examples of Roman date from the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth. He also discusses some unpublished

examples that date to the hellenistic period: one text from a small, early hellenistic(?) Demeter shrine on Rhodes (see *SGD*, p. 168); and seventeen lead tablets of hellenistic date excavated from a well in the Athenian agora, which probably—like the votive offerings found amongst them—came from a nearby rectangular shrine of a chthonic female deity (Demeter?). To this list I would add the four lead voodoo dolls excavated from the supporting wall of the first-century-B.C. sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos on Delos (see A. Plassart, *Les sanctuaires et les cultes des Mont Cynthe*, *Expl. Arch. de Délos* 11 [Paris, 1928], 292–93), although I should perhaps point out that the deity here could hardly be called "chthonic."

8. W. S. Fox, "Submerged *Tabellae Defixionum*," *AJP* 33 (1912): 301–10; Jordan 1980, 225–39; idem 1985, 205–55.

9. See n. 56 for a description of the charioteer curses found buried in hippodromes in Syria (*SGD* 149) and Apamea (unpublished). A curse against bronze workers (*SGD* 20) was found in the mud-brick wall of a house in the industrial district of ancient Athens (see R. S. Young, *Hesperia* 20 [1951]: 222–23), and Dugas has published four bronze voodoo dolls from Delos that were discovered amongst the ruins of a house dating to the hellenistic period (see n. 31). Cf. also the alleged discovery of inscribed lead tablets (*nomen Germanici plumbeis tabulis insculptum*) in the walls and floors of Germanicus' house after his mysterious death (*Tac. Ann.* 2.69 and *Dio Cass.* 58.18) and the placement of a more grisly binding spell in the lecture room of Libanius in order to inhibit his ability to teach and declaim (p. 16 and note 70).

10. Wunsch (*DTA*, pp. ii–iii) discusses the plentitude and cheapness of lead in Attica. See Jordan 1980, 226–29 and Miller (see n. 4), 1–30, for more recent discussions. I am unconvinced by the arguments of Kagarow (1929, 24–25) and Guarducci—see n. 1—(pp. 240–41) that the great majority of Athenians were illiterate and had to depend on professional magicians. It is really a question of emphasis, for just as there are examples of ostraca mass-produced for "the lazy and the illiterate," we can imagine that some equally small percentage of the *defixiones* were similarly manufactured. R. Meiggs and D. Lewis (*Greek Historical Inscriptions* [Oxford, 1969], 40–45) discuss the cache of 191 ostraca inscribed by fourteen hands and all bearing the name Themistocles, and give a balanced assessment of the questions these ostraca have raised about Athenian literacy.

11. The fifteen *defixiones* reportedly found in the same well at Kourion on Cyprus seem to be written by the same person who used the same elaborate formula over and over again (*DT* 22–35 and 37). P. Aupert and D. Jordan (*AJA* 85 [1981]: 184) identify the provenance of these tablets as Amathous, not Kourion, and report the existence of more than one hundred more tablets probably from the same deposit, of which random samples have been found to contain texts similar to those published by MacDonald. R. Wunsch (*Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* [Leipzig, 1898]) published a cache of forty-eight lead tablets (= *DT* 140–87) found in a columbarium on the Appian Way, all of which have similar formulae and drawings on them, suggesting that they were the product of one individual or group of individuals working from a model. Jordan (1985) has identified the hand of an anonymous professional scribe of the third century A.D. who carefully inscribed more than twenty lead curse tablets discovered in four wells in different parts of the Athenian agora. The existence of two other tablets in a very inferior script of the same text suggests the existence of a handbook from which the "master magician" was training "apprentices."

12. Jordan 1988.

13. Jordan (1980, 226, n.6) gives a detailed list of the numerous examples from Attica, the Black Sea, and elsewhere, all dating to the classical period.

14. Jordan (1988, 273–74) points to two instances (*SGD* 1 and 2) in which the rolled-up *defixio* was placed in the right hand of the deceased (as if they were scrolls that he or she were meant to read?).

15. This might be the idea behind the "gift giving" mentioned in another Attic curse (SGD 54): "I send NN as a gift to the Earth and the underworld gods."

16. DTA 107, 109; SGD 62. Cf. DT 96 *inimicorum nomina ad . . . inferas* and see Wünsch, DTA, p. iii for a good discussion.

17. The rite of "cursing the name" is a commonly observed phenomenon in traditional societies throughout the world today. For a good—albeit much outdated—discussion of the cross-cultural parallels, see F. B. Jevons, "Graeco-Italian Magic," in *Anthropology and the Classics* (Oxford, 1908), 93–120. The only analogous ancient ritual with which I am familiar is the ancient Egyptian practice of painting the name of an enemy on a simple earthenware bowl and then shattering it. K. Sethe, *Die Ächtung feindlichen Fürsten, Völker und Dinge auf Tongefässsherben des Mittleren Reiches*, Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (1926), no. 5 provides the classic discussion. The aim of this ritual, however, was to destroy the victim(s) completely. The particular features of the Greek practice (e.g., folding and piercing with a nail) seem to be a unique Hellenic invention.

18. E.g., Wünsch, DTA, pp. ii–iii and Audollent, DT, p. xlii. Kagarow (1929, 5–6) believes—wrongly, I think—that the sympathetic action (i.e., piercing the tablet) was the original ritual and that the verbal aspect was a later addition that reinforced and eventually replaced the action as people began to forget its original meaning. See S. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3 (1968): 175–208, for a critique of the tendency of modern scholars (in anthropology, but his point is applicable to classical scholars as well) to underrate the antiquity and importance of verbal magic as "performative utterance." For a similar combination (at the dawn of literacy) of verbal charm and magical object into an inscribed amulet, see Kotansky's essay (chap. 4).

19. Listed together as DT 109. See Wünsch 1900, 268–69 and Preisendanz 1972, 5 for discussion. Jordan informs me, however, that these tablets are now among the missing and that he is suspicious about their description in Audollent and their inclusion in the corpus. Another more easily verifiable example is the use of both inscribed and unscribed "voodoo dolls" in classical Greece (see n. 31).

20. The early Sicilian *κατάδεσμοι* show a unique propensity for using compounds of the Greek verb *γράφω* (write), and on the face of it they may offer evidence for the importance of the act of writing. But with the possible exception of SGD 88 (which alone uses an uncompounded form of *γράφω*), the compound forms of *γράφω* used in the early Sicilian *defixiones* (*ἐγγράφω* and *ἀπογράφω*) and occasionally in those found in Attica (*καταγράφω*) all seem to have legal or technical meanings without any explicit emphasis on the basic meaning of the stem, e.g., "register," "summon" or "accuse." See also p. 1 and n. 2.

21. C. A. Faraone, "Aeschylus' *ὕμνος δέσμιος* (Eum. 306) and Attic Judicial Curses," *JHS* 105 (1985): 150–54. B. M. W. Knox has arrived independently at the same conclusion in a forthcoming essay entitled "Black Magic in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*."

22. Kagarow 1929, 44–49, with graph of formula frequencies, p. 45.

23. This is a simplification of Kagarow 1929, 28–34, which sets up five groups with numerous subgroups. His fifth category (*Kontaminationsformeln*) is too widely conceived to be of any help in analyzing the formulae.

24. Audollent (DT, pp. vii–viii) gives a list of more than twenty alternative verbs, of which the most frequent are *καταδίδωμι*, *καταγράφω* and *παραδίδωμι*. Wünsch (DTA, p. iii) and Jevons—see n. 17—(p. 109) both suggest that *καταδῶ* (shorthand for *καταδῶ ἡλοις* "I [trans]fix with nails"; cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.71) is the Greek equivalent for the Latin *defigo* and alludes directly to the practice of "nailing" the lead tablet. Kagarow (1929, 25–28), gives a sophisticated discussion of the two semantic fields into which these verbs fall: (1) literal binding (verbs compounded with *δέω*) and (2) verbs with technical or legal connotations that either "register" the victims before an imagined underworld tribunal (i.e., compounds of

γράφω) or those that simply "consign" the victims to the control of the chthonic deities (i.e., compounds of *τίθημι* and *δίδωμι*). For more discussion of the compound forms of *γράφω* see n. 20.

25. See, e.g., fifth-century binding curses such as SGD 91, which identifies itself as "the *εὐχά* of Apelles" and SGD 1 and 107, which summon the victim "before the holy goddess (Persephone)."

26. Kagarow (1929, 41–44) gives a survey of formulaic expressions shared by traditional Greek prayers and the *defixiones* that employ the "prayer" formula. He also points out (p. 34, n. 1) that the *anadiplosis* of the names of gods in the *defixiones* occurs almost exclusively in those employing the prayer formula. For this feature of many traditional Greek prayers, see E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig, 1923), 2–9 and n. 1. For an excellent discussion of the traditional forms of prayer in PGM, see Graf's article (chap. 7). These close affinities are at the root of the controversy over the Morgantina lead tablets (see pp. 18–19 and notes).

27. In the Attic curse tablets the verb *κατέχω* (hold fast) is easily the most frequently used verb in the prayer formulas and (as Jevons, pp. 112–13, suggests; see n. 17) must be connected with the epithets of Hermes Katochos and Earth Katochē, the two most frequently invoked deities on the early Attic curse tablets. Both verb and epithet are virtually unknown on *defixiones* found outside of Attica or areas deeply influenced by Athenian culture, such as Euboea. See R. Ganschietz, "Katochos," *RE* 10, 2 (1919): 2526–34.

28. Another very rare approach is the use of a verb of request and an infinitive, e.g., DTA 100 (Attic, fourth century B.C.): "I beg (*ἵκετεύω*) that you oversee these affairs." Versnel, in fact, points out that such a formula belongs to the group of atypical *defixiones* that he labels "borderline" cases (see chap. 3). By the second century A.D., however, this form of curse grows into one of the most popular, especially when compounds of the verb *ὀρκίζω* are employed and there is an overt emphasis on compelling daemons or gods to bind a victim. The use of the verb *ὀρκίζω*, however, cannot be used per se as a criterion for calling a ritual a "magical act." In chap. 2 Strubbe notes the popularity of this verb on tombstone curses of the traditional "religious" type.

29. On the use of lead for daily correspondence, lists of cavalry, oracle requests, and other purposes, see n. 10. Kotansky discusses two fourth-century B.C. lead amulets in his contribution to this volume (chap. 4).

30. The recent discovery in a villa outside of Pompeii of wooden writing tablets coated with reddish "gum lac" instead of the wax probably accounts for Ovid's designation of the wax as *poenicea*, as well as the ms. variant *sanguinea* (cf. J. Reynolds, *JRS* 61 [1971]: 148).

31. Ch. Dugas, "Figurines d'envoûtement trouvées à Délos," *BCH* 39 (1915): 413–23; Preisendanz, "Die Zaubertafeln," (see n. 3), 163–64; and Jordan 1983 all provide detailed surveys. See note 33 below for late antique dolls of wax or clay found in Egypt and used in erotic magical spells. I use the term "voodoo doll" simply as the most familiar modern equivalent in English to *Rachepuppe* or *figurine d'envoûtement*, without implying any connection whatsoever to the Afro-Caribbean religious practices of the island of Haiti.

32. A fourth-century B.C. Cyrenean inscription (Meiggs-Lewis [see n. 10], no. 5, lines 44–49) describes and paraphrases the oath of the seventh-century Thera colonists of Cyrene, which contains the usual conditional self-imprecation. This imprecation, however, involves the hitherto-unknown use of wax voodoo dolls in the oath ceremony: "They made wax figurines and burned them saying: 'Whosoever does not abide by these oaths, but transgresses them, may he waste away (lit., melt or drip down) and run to ruin just as these dolls do, the man himself, his family, and his possessions.'" For a careful and thorough study of the inscription, its relation to Hdt. 4.145–59 and the probably direct or indirect archaic source for the oath and curse, see A. J. Graham, "The Authenticity of the OPKION TON OIKI-ΣΤΗΡΩΝ of Cyrene," *JHS* 80 (1960): 95–111. For the significance of this rather early

attestation of voodoo dolls, see A. D. Nock, "A Curse from Cyrene," *ARW* 24 (1926): 172–73.

33. For the Greco-Egyptian combination of a lead tablet with wax or clay dolls (bound and/or "nailed"), see SGD 152–53 and 155 (and fig. 7), which all seem to have been manufactured and inscribed according to the recipe found at *PGM* IV.335–408. For some terra-cotta examples from Italy, see *DT* 200–207 and Solin (see n. 4), no. 33.

34. The early habit of writing in retrograde is usually attributed to the Phoenician origin of the alphabet; see L. H. Jeffery, *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford, 1961), 43–50.

35. The use of stone or bronze implements in rituals is often thought to indicate an origin in the Stone or Bronze Age, e.g., the use of a flint knife in the ritual circumcision of the Jews or the use of brazen instruments to collect magical herbs (Soph. *Frag.* 534 with Pearson's comments). J. Z. Smith (*Imagining Religion* [Chicago, 1982], 53–56) gives a wonderfully clear exposition of the process by which originally nonsignificant or even accidental elements of the rite are continually repeated due to the conservative nature of rituals in general and how aetiological rationalizations (similar to those in the *similia similibus* formulas discussed above) are invented later on to explain their new-found significance.

36. S. J. Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View," in *Modes of Thought*, ed. R. Horton and R. Finnegan (London, 1973), 199–229. Cf. G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience* (Cambridge, 1979), 2–3 and 7.

37. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford, 1937), 450, quoted by Tambiah on p. 204.

38. The goal of death or destruction is very rarely mentioned in the texts of the early Greek *κατάδεσμοι*. The verb *ὀλλυμι* ("destroy") and its compounds, which are so characteristic of the other forms of Greek cursing, only appear five times in the published *defixiones*, and in three out of these five instances it is a tentative restoration to a damaged tablet (*DTA* 75a [bis] and SGD 89). A third-century B.C.-tablet from the Chersonese contains a wish that is very much like a traditional curse: "May they be destroyed with their families." L. H. Jeffery ("Further Comments on Archaic Greek Inscriptions," *BSA* 50 [1955]: 73, no. 2) provides the best reading of SGD 104 (Selinuntine, fifth century B.C.), apparently the only other secure example of the traditional cursing formula ("May they be utterly destroyed, they and their kin"), which is then followed by a list of names. Occasionally idiosyncratic phrases do occur that seem to imply the destruction of the victim: "I bind these men *in tombs*" (*DTA* 55 and 87); "I do away with him (*ἀφανίζω*) and bury him under (*κατορύπτω*)" (*DT* 49; cf. SGD 48 and 49); "Restrain him until he comes down to Hades" (*DT* 50, Attic, late?). The last-mentioned must, however, refer to the intended length of the curse (i.e., "May he be restrained for the rest of his life"); for the repeated misinterpretation of similar locutions in Greek poetry, see D. Young, *Pindar Isthmian 7: Myth and Exempla*, *Mnem. Supp.* 15 (Leiden, 1971), 12–14 and 40–42. The formula *καταδῶ καὶ οὐκ ἀπολύσω τὸν δαῖνα* ("I bind NN and I will not release him," cf. *DTA* 158 and SGD 18) seems to imply that a binding curse could have a limited duration or be loosened at a later date. In such cases it is difficult to imagine that the curse resulted in death. See Strubbe's discussion (chap. 2) about the "loosening" of the so-called scepter curses on tombstones and Versnel's report (chap. 3) on the use of *λύω* and its derivatives in the prayers for justice.

39. Paus. 9.38.5.

40. L. Robert (*Documents de l'Asie Mineure Méridionale* [Geneva, 1966], 91–100) and J. Wiseman ("Gods, War, and Plague in the Times of the Antonines," in *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi*, vol. 1, edd. D. Mano-Zissi and J. Wiseman [Beograd, 1973], 174–79) attempt unsuccessfully to redate the inscription to the reign of Lucius Verus using numismatic evidence. See E. Maroti, "A Recently Found Versified Oracle against the Pirates," *Acta Ant.*

16 (1968): 233–38 for a good refutation of Robert, an article of which Wiseman was apparently unaware. With regard to this inscription see K. Meuli and [R. Merkelbach] ("Die Gefesselten Götter," in K. Meuli: *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2 [Stuttgart, 1975], 1077–78), who discuss the myths concerned with the binding of Ares and give two parallels for the binding of his images: Paus. 3.15.7 (the bound statue of Enyalios at Sparta) and Pliny *HN* 35.27 and 93 (the famous picture painted by Apelles that was set up in the Forum of Augustus at Rome: *Belli imaginem restrictis ad terga manibus*; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.294–96 and Servius, ad loc.).

41. Olympiodorus of Thebes in *FHG* 4.63.27 (= *Frag.* 27 Blockley). Valerius, the governor of Thrace at the time and Olympiodorus' eyewitness source, was told by the local people that the statues were consecrated by ancient rites to prevent the depredations of the barbarians. The statues were excavated and carried off, and soon afterward the area was invaded by three successive waves of barbarian tribes: the Goths, the Huns, and the Sarmatians. On the chronological problems of the dating of these events, see J. F. Matthews, "Olympiodorus of Thebes and the History of the West (A.D. 407–25)," *JRS* 60 (1970): 96 and R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Late Roman Empire*, vol. 1 (Liverpool, 1981), 164, n. 20.

42. *Narratio Miraculorum Sanctorum Cyri et Joannis* (= *PG* 87.3, col. 3625); the relevant portions of the Greek text appear in *DT*, pp. cxxii–iii.

43. E.g., Versnel, in chap. 3, suggests that the long-standing debate over the presentation of the Cnidian tablets is a red herring of sorts. He points out that we now have enough examples of both publically displayed and secretly buried curses against unknown thieves and criminals to show that either method was acceptable; i.e., the most important function of these *πινάκια* is that they be delivered to or nearby the abode of the deity, where it serves as a "legal" session to the god of either the guilty party or the stolen property. Any use as a publicly displayed warning is probably a secondary function.

44. *I. Cret.* 2 (17) 28: *παραδίδωμι τοῖς καταχθονίοις θεοῖς τοῦτ' τὸ ἡρώιον φυλάσσειν*. See Jordan 1980, 228, n. 16 for discussion of this text and the two Attic parallels.

45. In addition to amatory, circus and judicial curses, Audollent (*DT*, p. lxxxix) included public proclamations against unknown thieves in his four types; in chap. 3 Versnel rightly reclassifies the proclamations as "judicial prayers," which have a social context different from that of the *defixiones*. Kagarow (1929, 50–55) described five types, adding phylacteries written on lead. Phylacteries are defensive rather than offensive magical operations and as such obviously fall outside the definition of a binding curse. Preisendanz (1972, 9) is impressed by the number of well-known politicians whose names appear on the tablets and suggests still another category, "political *defixiones*," but this is too broad and cannot be adequately distinguished (as he himself admits) from judicial curses. I discuss this phenomenon in the section that follows my survey of judicial curses.

46. E.g., *DTA* 12 (shield maker) and 30 (innkeepers); SGD 3 (silversmith), 11 (innkeepers), 20 (bronze workers), 48 (painter, flour[?]-seller and scribe), 72 (seamstress), 129 (doctor), and 170 (ship's pilot). There are however, some examples of people described by profession who appear as victims in judicial curses, a fact suggesting that designation by trade may have merely been another way of identifying people, like a demotic or a patronymic.

47. They are all from Greece or Sicily and date to the classical or hellenistic periods: *DTA* 68–75, 84–87; *DT* 47, 52, 70–73, 92; and SGD 20, 52, 73, 75, 88, and 124.

48. L. H. Jeffery—see n. 38—(pp. 67–84, no. 18) prefers to read *KEPAON* as a proper name in the accusative. For *kerdos* as the object of a verb of binding, see *DTA* 86: *καταδῶ . . . ἐργασίας κέρδη*.

49. Although one might argue that *διδάσκαλος* could merely mean "teacher," Wunsch

points out (ad loc.) that the term ὑποδιδάσκαλος only occurs in the context of dramatic competition, e.g., Pl. *Ion* 536a. Cf. also *SIG* 692 A 31 (Delphi, second century B.C.) and Cic. *Fam.* 9.18.4.

50. The hereditary nature of the curse and the significant name of Eunikos ("Good at Winning") may suggest a professional actor; see Miller (n. 4), 80–83 for a detailed discussion.

51. This tablet seems to be closely modeled on some Greek prototype; see H. S. Versnel, "May he not be able to sacrifice . . . : Concerning a Curious Formula in Greek and Latin Curses," *ZPE* 58 (1985): 247–48 and 269. Jordan (SGD, p. 167) mentions an unpublished Corinthian *defixio* (inv. MF 69–118) from an underground bath complex cursing a "retired(?) mimic actress."

52. SGD 24–26. See Jordan 1985, 214–18, nos. 1–3 for these translations and an excellent commentary on the curses against Eutychian. No. 4 (= SGD 27) is a curse against the wrestler Attalos, the ephebe, son of Attalos ("Let him grow cold and not wrestle"); and no. 5 (= SGD 28) is against a Macedonian wrestler called Petres, the pupil of Dionysios (" . . . if he does wrestle, in order that he fall down and disgrace himself").

53. SGD 157. See D. Wortmann, "Neue magische Texte," *BJ* 168 (1968): 108–9, no. 12 for text and discussion.

54. SGD 29. See Jordan 1985, 221–23, no. 6 for this translation and commentary. Jordan mentions (p. 214) two other unpublished examples of racing curses that have been unearthed recently at Corinth and Isthmia (both of late Roman date).

55. *DT* 145–87. For a detailed discussion see Wünsch, *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln* (see n. 11). *DT* 141–44 and 153 are written in Latin and are not included in my reckoning. Here and in the case of the binding curses found at Hadrumetum against charioteers and those found at Carthage against *venatores* (discussed below) my separation of Greek and Latin texts found at the same place and dating to the same period is admittedly artificial, since they are all the product of the same social environment.

56. There are thirteen Greek examples from Carthage (*DT* 234–44 and SGD 138–39); two from Hadrumetum (*DT* 285, SGD 144); one from Lepcis Magna in Libya found buried in the starting gates of the circus (SGD 149); one from Damascus (SGD 166); and one from Beirut (SGD 167), which curses the horses of the blue faction. Jordan (SGD, pp. 192–93) also mentions the discovery of charioteer curses at Apamea that bind the limbs of the drivers "so that they cannot drink or eat or sleep" and mentions the excavation of others (presumably still unread) from the *spina* of the hippodrome at Antioch-on-the-Orontes. See also Jordan, *SGD*, pp. 166–67 for a description of an unpublished lead tablet from Corinth that appears to bind the performance of someone (an athlete?) "in the circus." There are a number of extant Latin *defixiones* of similar date from North Africa that bind charioteers, most notably a group of twenty-two from Hadrumetum (*DT* 272–84 and 286–95).

57. Wünsch (1900, 248–59) gives an excellent discussion of this third-century-A.D. Carthaginian circus curse (*DT* 242).

58. *DT* 246–47, 249–50, and 252–53 (Carthage, second or third century). Three Latin examples were also found there (*DT* 248, 251, and 254), as well as an earlier example (first century?) from Caerleon in Wales; see R. Egger, *Ö Jh* 35 (1943): 108–10.

59. *DTA* 78, 89, 93(?); *DT* 68, 69, 85, 86, and 198; SGD 30–32, 57, and 154. The discovery of two additional late-hellenistic Corinthian divorce curses have been announced by S. G. Miller, *Hesperia* 50 (1981): 64–65.

60. The syntax of this tablet is sometimes difficult. See the detailed commentaries of E. Ziebarth, "Neue attische Fluchtafeln," *GöttNachr.* (1899), p. 132, no. 1; Wünsch 1900, p. 70, no. 1; and Audollent ad *DT* 85.

61. See Kagarow 1929, 51 for a good discussion.

62. SGD 156, lines 48–62. For the identical formula in SGD 152 and 153 and the close

correspondences to the recipe for an aphrodisiac *defixio* in *PGM* IV. 367ff., see D. Wortmann, "Neue Magische Texte," *BJ* 169 (1969), no. 1; S. Kambitsis, "Une nouvelle tablette magique d'Égypte," *BIFAO* 76 (1976): 213–30; D. Martinez, *P. Mich.* 6926: *A New Magical Love Charm* (Ph.D. diss. Univ. of Mich., 1985); and D. R. Jordan, "A Love Charm with Verses," *ZPE* 72 (1988): 289.

63. D. R. Jordan, "*CIL* VIII 19525 (B).2: *QPVVLVA* = q(uem) p(eperit) vulva," *Philologus* 120 (1976): 127–32.

64. Jordan (1985, 251), discusses the five extant examples of hair or other kinds of *ousia* rolled up inside *defixiones*. Four of them come from late antique Egypt, and a fifth (of uncertain purpose) dates to the third century A.D. and was found in the Athenian agora.

65. Another important difference between the traditional *defixiones* discussed in this paper and the later aphrodisiac curses is the inclusion of the name of the operator of the spell, which rarely occurs in the former. For a discussion of this genre of aphrodisiac spell, see Winkler's contribution (chap. 8).

66. There are twenty-three published aphrodisiac curses on lead all dating between the second and fourth centuries A.D., from Carthage (*DT* 227, 230–31); Hadrumetum (*DT* 264–71, 304) and Egypt (*DT* 38; SGD 151–53, 155–56, 158–61). Jordan (SGD) mentions unpublished and partially read tablets from Egypt (p. 191), Carthage (pp. 186–87) and Tyre (p. 192). For examples in other media, see, e.g., R. W. Daniel ("Two Love Charms," *ZPE* 19 [1975]: 249–64), who publishes one papyrus and one linen example (both dating to the third or fourth century A.D. and of unknown [Egyptian?] provenance). See also *PGM* O[stracon] 2 (Egyptian, second century A.D.).

67. E. Ziebarth ("Neue attische Fluchtafeln" [see n. 60], 122) asserted that judicial curses were enacted by the losers of a lawsuit, after a decision had been rendered. He was refuted by Wünsch (1900, 68), who argued that the formulas of judicial binding curses all seemed to point to a future event and that they were therefore employed beforehand or while cases were still pending. Audollent (*DT*, pp. lxxxviii–ix, n. 2) supported this view. Years later, Ziebarth, (*Neue Verfluchungstafeln aus Attika, Boiotien und Euboia*, *SBAW* 33 [Munich, 1934]: 1028–32) adopted the compromise view that a judicial curse was enacted while the trial was going on but only after its author had come to the conclusion that he was about to lose his case. P. Moraux (*Une défexion judiciaire au Musée d'Istanbul*, *Mém. Acad. Roy. Belg.* 54.2 [Brussels, 1960]: 42) reviews the debate and concludes that although none of the curses seem to have been enacted after the final outcome of the trial, it is impossible to know at what point before or during the trial the litigants wrote the curses. There seems to be a trade-off between the practical desire to inhibit damaging evidence as early as possible and the litigants' sense of urgency later on. Kagarow 1929, 53–54 gives a chart listing the sixteen different terms that point to a confrontation in the courts, e.g., σύνδικοι, ἀντίδικοι, δικαστήριον, etc.

68. C. A. Faraone, "An Accusation of Magic in Classical Athens (Ar. *Wasps* 946–48)" *TAPA* 119 (1989): 149–61.

69. *Brut.* 217 and *Orat.* 128–29.

70. C. Bonner ("Witchcraft in the Lecture Room of Libanius," *TAPA* 66 [1932]: 34–44) interprets this as a form of *envoûtement* directed against Libanius' oratorical abilities; the cutting off of the one forefoot was directed against the hand with which the orator gesticulated and the position of the other attempted to silence him, as Libanius himself seemed to realize. For the placement of the front foot over the mouth, see Plassart's (see n. 7) discussion of four lead voodoo dolls from Delos, of which the two male dolls had nails driven into their eyes, ears, and mouth and the right hand twisted up to cover the mouth entirely. Bonner ("Witchcraft") and Peter Brown ("Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity" in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed. Mary Douglas [London 1970]) discuss the popularity of magic and accusations of magic among the declaimers of the late empire.

71. *DTA* 25, 38, 39, 63, 65–68, 81, 88, 94, 95, 103, 105–7, and 129; *DT* 18, 22–35, 37, 39, 43, 44, 49, 60, 62, 63, 77, and 87–90; and *SGD* 6, 9, 19, 42, 49, 51, 61, 68, 71, 89, 95, 99, 100, 108, 133, 162–64, 168, 173, 176, and 179.

72. The exceptions are *SGD* 162 (fifth century A.D., Egypt), 163 and 164 (third century A.D. Palestine), 168 (second century A.D., Upper Maeandros Valley), and 179 (third or fourth century A.D., provenance unknown). To these six late examples we must add the sixteen tablets found on Cyprus (*DT* 18, 22–35, and 37), which have little statistical importance because they were written by the same individual against many of the same people (see n. 11). All of the remaining examples date to classical or hellenistic times and were discovered in Sicily (four tablets), Attica (twenty-eight), Olbia (five), Megara (two), and one example each from Melos, Corcyra, Eretria, and Emporion in Spain. Two additional tablets are from mainland Greece, but their exact provenance is a mystery.

73. W. M. Calder, "The Great Defixio from Selinus," *Philologus* 107 (1963): 163–72, has plausibly suggested that a fourth tablet found in the same area (*SGD* 107) is also judicial in nature; it curses seventeen men, who can be grouped together into seven interrelated families, a relationship that suggests testamentary litigation similar to that attested in Attic law, e.g., the lawsuits involving the Dikaiogenes family (Isae. 5) or the Hagnon family (Isae. 11).

74. *DTA* provides the most extensive collection of Attic curses, including seventeen judicial curses (*DTA* 25, 38–39, 63, 65–68, 81, 88, 94–95, 103, 105–7, and 129). Wunsch, however, was cautious, almost agnostic, in his dating of the tablets, assigning all to the third century B.C.—and then only tentatively—unless some overwhelming evidence pointed to an earlier or later date (see his introduction, p. i); accordingly, of the Attic judicial curses enumerated above, he assigned only *DTA* 38 and 107 with confidence to the fourth century B.C. A. Wilhelm ("Über die Zeit einiger attischer Fluchtafeln," *ÖJh* 7 [1907]: 105–26) argued that Wunsch greatly underestimated the antiquity of the *DTA* curses and by way of example he redated a number of them to the fourth century B.C. (including four of the judicial curses, *DTA* 65, 66, 95, and 103) and a few (including *DTA* 38) to the fifth century B.C., using a combination of paleographic and prosopographic evidence. The tablets themselves have since disappeared, and as a result most of them have never been properly redated.

75. Audollent gives five examples of Attic judicial binding curses: four from the fourth century B.C. (*DT* 49, 60, 62–63); and one that he was unable to date (*DT* 77). Attic *defixiones* published subsequent to these two major collections include nine judicial binding curses: four have been assigned to the fourth century B.C. (*SGD* 19, 42, 49, and 51); and two to the late fifth–early fourth century B.C. (*SGD* 6 and 9). Three of the unpublished inscribed lead dolls described by Jordan (1988) date to the end of the fifth century. Jordan (*SGD*, p. 162) reports, however, the discovery of seventeen tablets from a well in the agora (inv. IL 1695, 1704–19), which were found in a late-fourth-to-early-third-century-B.C. context and seem at first glance to be judicial curses.

76. See Wunsch's commentary on *DTA* 28, 47–51, 87, 89, and 167 and idem 1900, 63, where he argues that the Demosthenes and Lycurgus mentioned on *DT* 60 are the famous Athenian orators. A. Wilhelm—see n. 74—(pp. 105–26) gives prosopographical notes on *DTA* 11, 24, 30, 42, 65, 84 and *SGD* 18 identifying several prominent Athenians, including the famous orator Callistratus of Aphidna. E. Ziebarth—see n. 67—(pp. 1028–32) traced many of the individuals mentioned on *SGD* 48 to the political circle of Demades. L. Robert—see n. 1—(pp. 12–13, no. 11) published a lengthy judicial curse tablet (*SGD* 42) listing several politicians from the early fourth century, most notably Aristophon from Azenia. Jordan (1988) shows that three rather rare names inscribed on lead voodoo dolls excavated in the Kerameikos (*SGD* 9 and two of the unpublished dolls) are probably those of active politicians accused in speeches written by Lysias: Mnesimachos in Lysias Frag. 182 (Sauppe);

Mikines in Lysias frags. 170–78 (Sauppe); and Theozotides, the father of one of Socrates' students (Nikostratos mentioned at *Pl. Ap.* 33c), who was also accused in a speech by Lysias (*P. Hibe* 14). Jordan (1980, 229–39) also discusses a *defixio* that curses members of the Macedonian ruling circle during the occupation of Athens: Kassander (the king), Pleistarchos (his brother), Eupolemos (his general in Greece), and Demetrios the Phalerian (the governor of occupied Athens).

77. Preisendanz 1972, 9.

78. E.g., *DTA* 106 (Attic, third century B.C.); *DT* 49 (Attic, fourth century B.C.); and *DT* 87 (Corcyra, third century B.C.); cf. *DT* 61.

79. This suggestion presupposes the existence of some formal or at least organized system of patronage and political alliance similar perhaps to that at Rome, for which see M. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1983), 76–84 and P. J. Rhodes, "Political Activity in Classical Athens," *JHS* 106 (1986): 132–44. For the Latin curses against *inimici* and their *amici*, see the index to *DT*.

80. P. Brown (see n. 70), 25. A curse tablet from Beirut (*SGD* 167, third century A.D.) points, perhaps, to the larger political ramifications of competition in the hippodrome when it curses thirty-four different drivers and/or horses (it is often not clear which is which), identifying them all as members of the "blue" faction.

81. Rhodes (see n. 79), 136. One might see some kind of political competition in the curses against *χορηγοί* (discussed above). The fifth-century Sicilian curse (*SGD* 91) curses the rival *χορηγοί* of Eunikos, and it is written by a certain Apelles "on account of his *φιλία* for Eunikos." For the strong political connotations of the term *φιλία* (= *amicitia*), see W. R. Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth Century Athens* (Princeton, 1971), 30–66 *passim*.

82. See Versnel (chap. 3, pp. 62–63) for the widely held opinion that *defixiones* are self-admittedly shameful because they are hidden and anonymous; and idem, "Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer," in *Faith, Hope and Worship*, ed. H. S. Versnel and F. T. van Straten (Leiden, 1981), 26–28 for a similar discussion of silent and malevolent prayer.

83. N. Nabers, "Lead *Tabellae* from Morgantina," *AJA* 70 (1966): 67–68; idem, "Ten Lead *Tabellae* from Morgantina," *AJA* 83 (1979): 463–64. The restoration at the end of the text was suggested to me privately by L. Koenen; Nabers prints the following: τοῦ Π[ούφο] . . . ιου]. . .

84. L. Robert, *BE* (1966): 518.

85. Guarducci (see n. 1), 250–51; Jordan 1980, 236–38. Nabers provided several parallels from Greek tragedy (e.g., *Soph. Phil.* 819 and *Eur. Alc.* 744) and later sources for the "pious" use of *δέχομαι* uncompounded, but Jordan points out that the imperative *παραδέξασθε* would be the proper Greek equivalent (for that period) for *παραδίδωμι ὑμῖν*, a fairly common expression in the corpus of *defixiones*. It is probable that *παραδέξασθε*, like most of the compound verbs used in the early *defixiones*, is modeled on a legal or technical usage, i.e., it does not mean "receive graciously" (so Nabers, using *LSJ* i), but rather something more technical or bureaucratic modeled along the lines of "admit into citizenship" or "undertake a liability upon oneself, guarantee" (*LSJ* ii. 2 and 6).

86. *IG* XI, pt. 4, no. 1299; I. U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* (Oxford, 1925), 68–71. For direct parallels between this description and the texts of contemporary *defixiones*, see H. Engelmann, *The Delian Aretalogy of Serapis*, *EPRO* 44 (Leiden, 1975), 53–54.

87. Jevons, "Graeco-Italian Magic" (see n. 17), 109–15. He believes that the "magical" form (i.e., the performative utterance) historically preceded the "religious" (i.e., the "prayer formula") and that after both were in use side by side, combination and contamination resulted in the "hybrid" state of the majority of the extant examples. E. G. Kagarow ("Form und Stil der Texte der Fluchtafeln," *ARW* 21 [1922]: 496–97) argues instead for the historical priority

of the third type, the *similia similibus*, the others having developed from it. Both scholars were, perhaps, unduly influenced by the overly simplistic evolutionary models that had been put forth by the anthropologists of their days.

88. For a similar usage in the funerary imprecations, see Strubbe's essay (chap. 2, pp. 34–35) on formulae such as *ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς* plus name of god ("He will have to reckon with the god NN") or *ἔξει πρὸς* plus name of god ("He will give answer to the god NN").

2

"Cursed be he that moves my bones"

J. H. M. Strubbe

The last line of the epitaph of Shakespeare, engraved on the stone slab that covers his grave in Holy Trinity Church at Stratford-upon-Avon, warns, "Curst be he yt moves my bones." The malediction was designed to frighten off the sexton of the church and his successors, who sometimes had to dig up an old grave in order to make room for the newly deceased.¹ Almost the same prohibition and malediction occur in the closing lines of an epitaph from Synnada in Asia Minor: *τίς οὖν π[ο]τε τὰ ὀστέα σ[αλεύσει?], κατάρᾳ αὐ[τῷ] γένοιτο* ("and whoever thus will move[?] these bones, may he have a curse").² Both maledictions had the same purpose: they assured the undisturbed rest of the deceased. But while imprecations written on a gravestone were rather exceptional at the time of Shakespeare's death, they were very common in antiquity, especially in Asia Minor (Anatolia). My concern here will not be with Shakespeare's malediction but with the ancient funerary imprecations that are found in the Greek epitaphs of Asia Minor. By funerary imprecations (I adopt the term used by P. Moraux to denote this kind of curse) I mean curses that are clearly and publicly written on the gravestone by the owner of the tomb (who does not conceal his identity) to warn any potential wrongdoer that evil will befall him in case he should violate the grave in defiance of the legitimate prohibitions to do so.³ Although these imprecations were used by pagans, Christians, and Jews alike, I will restrict this study to the pagan formulae.⁴ A further restriction in this study has to do with the different groups of funerary imprecations that can be discerned. I distinguish two main categories. The first contains all the imprecations that do not specify the punishments awaiting the wrongdoer. I will call this group the "nonspecific" group. The second category includes the imprecations in which the punishments wished for are more or less clearly specified. I will refer to this group as the "specific" group. The nonspecific group contains many different types of imprecations.

The violator of the tomb may be declared to be *ἀσεβής* (impious) or, less frequently, *ιερόσυλος* (sacrilegious) or said to be guilty of *ἀσεβεία* (impiety) or, rarely, of *ιεροσυλία* (sacrilege). The name of a god or several gods is often added. The following texts may give an illustration. At Telmessus in Lycia an epitaph says that the man who will bury a strange corpse in the grave *ἀσεβῆς ἔστω θεοῖς καταχθονίοις καὶ ἔκτος ὀφειλέτω τῷ Τελμησσέων δήμῳ* *, ε' ("will be impi-

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