

ANCIENT CHRISTIANS AND THE POWER OF CURSES

*Magic, Aesthetics,
and Justice*



LAURA SALAH NASRALLAH

Ancient Christians and the Power of Curses

Ancient Christians and their non-Christian contemporaries lived in a world of ritual practices which were often labelled magic. Sometimes, they used curses as ritual objects to seek justice from gods and other beings; sometimes, they argued against the use of curses. Curses, and the writings of those who polemicized against them, reveal the complexity of ancient Mediterranean religions, in which materiality, poetics, song, incantation, and glossolalia were used as technologies of power. Laura Nasrallah's study reframes the field of religion, the study of the Roman imperial period, and the investigation of the New Testament and ancient Christianity. Her approach eschews disciplinary aesthetics that privilege the literature and archaeological remains of elites, and that define curses as magical materials, separable from religious ritual. Moreover, Nasrallah's use of art and "research creations" of contemporary Black painters, sculptors, and poets offers insights for understanding ancient rituals of cursing as aesthetic practices that marshal historical fragments to critique injustice.

LAURA SALAH NASRALLAH, the Buckingham Professor of New Testament Criticism and Interpretation at Yale University, is author of *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (2003), *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (2010), and *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (2019).

Ancient Christians and the Power of Curses

Magic, Aesthetics, and Justice

LAURA SALAH NASRALLAH

Yale University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education,
learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009405737

DOI: [10.1017/9781009405782](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009405782)

© Laura Salah Nasrallah 2024

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of
relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2024

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Nasrallah, Laura Salah, 1969- author.

TITLE: Ancient Christians and the power of curses : magic, aesthetics, and justice / Laura
Salah Nasrallah, Yale University.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press,
2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2023014404 (print) | LCCN 2023014405 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781009405737 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009405744 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781009405782 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Blessing and cursing–Rome. | Aesthetics–Religious aspects–Christianity. |
Matter–Religious aspects–Christianity. | Rome–Religion.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BL815.B54 N37 2024 (print) | LCC BL815.B54 (ebook) | DDC 203/
.32093763–dc23/eng20230722

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023014404>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023014405>

ISBN 978-1-009-40573-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate
or appropriate.

Ancient Christians and the Power of Curses

Ancient Christians and their non-Christian contemporaries lived in a world of ritual practices which were often labelled magic. Sometimes, they used curses as ritual objects to seek justice from gods and other beings; sometimes, they argued against the use of curses. Curses, and the writings of those who polemicized against them, reveal the complexity of ancient Mediterranean religions, in which materiality, poetics, song, incantation, and glossolalia were used as technologies of power. Laura Nasrallah's study reframes the field of religion, the study of the Roman imperial period, and the investigation of the New Testament and ancient Christianity. Her approach eschews disciplinary aesthetics that privilege the literature and archaeological remains of elites, and that define curses as magical materials, separable from religious ritual. Moreover, Nasrallah's use of art and "research creations" of contemporary Black painters, sculptors, and poets offers insights for understanding ancient rituals of cursing as aesthetic practices that marshal historical fragments to critique injustice.

LAURA SALAH NASRALLAH, the Buckingham Professor of New Testament Criticism and Interpretation at Yale University, is author of *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (2003), *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (2010), and *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (2019).

Ancient Christians and the Power of Curses

Magic, Aesthetics, and Justice

LAURA SALAH NASRALLAH

Yale University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education,
learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009405737

DOI: [10.1017/9781009405782](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009405782)

© Laura Salah Nasrallah 2024

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of
relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2024

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Nasrallah, Laura Salah, 1969- author.

TITLE: Ancient Christians and the power of curses : magic, aesthetics, and justice / Laura
Salah Nasrallah, Yale University.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press,
2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2023014404 (print) | LCCN 2023014405 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781009405737 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009405744 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781009405782 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Blessing and cursing–Rome. | Aesthetics–Religious aspects–Christianity. |
Matter–Religious aspects–Christianity. | Rome–Religion.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BL815.B54 N37 2024 (print) | LCC BL815.B54 (ebook) | DDC 203/
.32093763–dc23/eng20230722

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023014404>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023014405>

ISBN 978-1-009-40573-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate
or appropriate.

Ancient Christians and the Power of Curses

Ancient Christians and their non-Christian contemporaries lived in a world of ritual practices which were often labelled magic. Sometimes, they used curses as ritual objects to seek justice from gods and other beings; sometimes, they argued against the use of curses. Curses, and the writings of those who polemicized against them, reveal the complexity of ancient Mediterranean religions, in which materiality, poetics, song, incantation, and glossolalia were used as technologies of power. Laura Nasrallah's study reframes the field of religion, the study of the Roman imperial period, and the investigation of the New Testament and ancient Christianity. Her approach eschews disciplinary aesthetics that privilege the literature and archaeological remains of elites, and that define curses as magical materials, separable from religious ritual. Moreover, Nasrallah's use of art and "research creations" of contemporary Black painters, sculptors, and poets offers insights for understanding ancient rituals of cursing as aesthetic practices that marshal historical fragments to critique injustice.

LAURA SALAH NASRALLAH, the Buckingham Professor of New Testament Criticism and Interpretation at Yale University, is author of *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (2003), *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (2010), and *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (2019).

Ancient Christians and the Power of Curses

Magic, Aesthetics, and Justice

LAURA SALAH NASRALLAH

Yale University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education,
learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009405737

DOI: [10.1017/9781009405782](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009405782)

© Laura Salah Nasrallah 2024

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of
relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2024

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Nasrallah, Laura Salah, 1969- author.

TITLE: Ancient Christians and the power of curses : magic, aesthetics, and justice / Laura
Salah Nasrallah, Yale University.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press,
2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2023014404 (print) | LCCN 2023014405 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781009405737 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009405744 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781009405782 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Blessing and cursing–Rome. | Aesthetics–Religious aspects–Christianity. |
Matter–Religious aspects–Christianity. | Rome–Religion.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BL815.B54 N37 2024 (print) | LCC BL815.B54 (ebook) | DDC 203/
.32093763–dc23/eng20230722

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023014404>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023014405>

ISBN 978-1-009-40573-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate
or appropriate.

to my Anna Adma
with love and respect for all the wonders of your mind
and in memory of your namesake,
my Teta, Adma Khoury Nasrallah

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page viii
<i>List of Plates</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xvii
<i>Note on the Cover</i>	xx
Introduction: Curses, Religion, Aesthetics	I
1 Making Justice: Curses, Justin Martyr, and the Nailing of Documents	43
2 Substance and Story: A Greengrocer and the Pharaoh at Antioch	90
Interlude	128
3 Tongues, Breath, Stutter: 1 Corinthians and a Corinthian Curse	147
4 Incantation: Sound and Song as Curse, Cure, and Gospel	203
Conclusions	261
<i>Ancient Sources</i>	268
<i>Bibliography</i>	273
<i>Index of Ancient Sources</i>	300
<i>Index</i>	308

Colour plates can be found between pages 146 and 147.

Figures

0.1	Double curse tablet against Karpime Babbia, as found.	<i>page</i> 2
2.1	Glenn Ligon. Untitled (I am an invisible man).	98
2.2	Glenn Ligon. <i>Untitled (Four Etchings)</i> .	100
2.3	House of the Calendar. Plan of first level of excavations including House of the Triumph of Dionysus.	105
I.1	Chart of archangels inscription from Miletos.	131
I.2	Tyehimba Jess, “Presenting: The Dunbar-Booker Double Shovel.” <i>Olio</i> , pp. 213–14.	144
3.1	M. NourbeSe Philip, “Discourse on the Logic of Language,” third page of the poem.	152
3.2	M. NourbeSe Philip, “Discourse on the Logic of Language,” fourth page of the poem.	154
4.1	Tyehimba Jess, <i>Olio</i> , p. 107.	255
4.2	Tyehimba Jess, “Jubilee: Ben Holmes (1846–1875).” <i>Olio</i> , p. 61.	257

Plates

- 1 Emma Amos, *Measuring, Measuring*, 1995.
- 2 Titus Kaphar, American, born 1976, *To Be Sold*, 2018.
- 3 Power Figure (Nkisi N'kondi), nineteenth–early twentieth century.
- 4 Side view of Renée Stout, *Fetish #1*, 1987.
- 5 Renée Stout, *Fetish #2*, 1988.
- 6 Valerie Maynard, *Mourning for Maurice*, c. 1970.
- 7 Selenite (gypsum) tablet inscribed with a curse in alphabetic Greek characters.
- 8 *Defixio* against Babylas the Greengrocer, recto
- 9 Red-jasper amuletic gem with Herakles and Hekate.
- 10 Archangel Inscription, Miletos Theater.
- 11 Cameo on a medallion of glass paste. Budapest History Museum, Aquincum Museum.
- 12 British Library Papyrus 124.
- 13 Berlin papyrus 9909, recto.

Preface

Ancient Christians and the Power of Curses: Magic, Aesthetics, and Justice is a bit of an odd book, triangulating between under-studied curses and well-known literary texts from antiquity, and contemporary poetry and visual art as research creations. Bringing together the two apices of curses – usually studied under the rubric of “magic” – and early Christian literary materials allows me to offer a social history that focuses on aesthetics and religion in the first- to fourth-century Mediterranean world. Those who produced and used ancient curse tablets employed multiple aesthetics of sound, language, and materiality and often engaged in poetics to offer “prayers for justice,” to borrow Henk Versnel’s phrase. Curses are ritual objects whose complex work cannot be understood apart from contemporaneous discussions of philosophy-theology and aesthetics.

Then the third apex: contemporary art, which forms the theoretical framework for my interpretation of Mediterranean antiquity. While the material turn in the study of antiquity has engaged many resources in critical theory, such as the work of Karen Barad, it has not attended to the research creation of artists whose work both in visual manifestations and poetry demonstrates deep theorizations of aesthetics, historical materials, and ethics. The book models how we might use art and poetry as a theoretical framework in the study of religion, particularly these artists’ engagement with justice, on the one hand, and with historical fragments, on the other.

Chapters highlight ancient practices of justice and legal archival display (Chapter 1, focusing on Justin’s *Apologies*, a Cypriot judicial curse, and Titus Kaphar’s art), deployments of narrative and materiality

(Chapter 2, focusing on an Antiochene curse, John Chrysostom's homilies, and Glenn Ligon's engagement with Ralph Ellison), glossolalia (Chapter 3, focusing on 1 Corinthians and a Corinthian curse that uses *voces magicae*, elucidated by M. NourbeSe Philip's poetry), and song and incantation (Chapter 4, focusing on Clement's *Protreptikos* and Homeric incantations, with Tyehimba Jess's *Olio* and Braxton Shelley's analysis of the vamp). For those who study early Christian literature, this book reads these texts anew in light of the popular, everyday practices of cursing. It models a practice of treating these curses with the same exegetical tenderness usually reserved for scripture or philosophical-theological texts, and argues that such philosophical or theological treatises are themselves among the many practices and technologies of antiquity. For those who study ancient "magic," this book insists upon the relevance of texts and practices we call ancient Christian, showing overlapping aesthetic strategies and philosophical-theological ideas. For scholars of religion, the book demonstrates, I hope, how contemporary art and poetry materialize theory and criticism, and it provides resources for thinking about the use of historical fragments in the work of seeking justice.

Acknowledgments

There are too many people to thank, and too many whom I'll likely forget, so please forgive. The writing of this book was a refuge and a pleasure, and it also felt like a stretch in places, an overreaching of my knowledge and comfort zones. I am the only one responsible for its mistakes.

This book would not have been possible without the support of Beyond Canon at the University of Regensburg. Tobias Nicklas, Andreas Merkt, and Harald Buchinger were the consummate hosts, and I am especially grateful to Tobias and Evi for hospitality at their table and happy memories of beautiful places in Bavaria. Dr. Stephanie Hallinger as coordinator and supporter extraordinaire exemplifies scholarly intelligence and deep human care. Tobias and Stephi model the creation of a supportive, intellectually expansive, and kind community. I am very grateful to various fellows, Lily Vuong and Janet Spittler among them, for their support.

Parts of the book were tested not only at Beyond Canon, but also elsewhere due to kind invitations: at the Shifting Frontiers conference (2019), Books Known Only by Title, Huron at Western, the Societas Novi Testamenti Studiorum in Marburg, CRASIS at the University of Gronigen (via Zoom), a conference titled Divided Worlds, the Danforth Lecture at Princeton University, the Society of Christian Scholars, and the conference Apologists and Empire. Thank you to all those who invited and encouraged, including Liv Lied and Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, Barry Hartog, Daniel Smith, Caroline Johnson Hodge, Benny Liew, Timothy Joseph, Princeton's Department of Religion, Trevor Thompson, Benjamin Kolbeck, and James Corke-Webster. Those

audiences all improved my work. The SNTS invitation led to the publication of “Judgment, Justice, and Destruction: *Defixiones* and 1 Corinthians,” *JBL* 140.2 (2021): 347–67; the Princeton invitation led to the publication of “The Work of Nails: Religion, Mediterranean Antiquity, and Contemporary Black Art,” *JAAR* 90.2 (2022): 1–21. Both were early experiments with the ideas in this book.

Chapter 1 would have been impossible without conversations with my doctoral student colleagues, now professors, Sarah F. Porter and Jeremy Williams. Jeremy Williams’s *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles: Race, Rhetoric, and the Prosecution of an Early Christian Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023) and our conversations about critical race theory and his assessments of “criminalization” in the Acts of the Apostles have informed my consideration of issues of crime, punishment, and justice. Sarah Porter’s *Early Christian Deathscapes* (Ph. D. diss., Harvard University, 2022) and conversations with her about Sara Ahmed have informed my discussion of emotions. I am deeply grateful to Ari Bryen, who commented on an earlier version of this chapter and allowed me to read part of his book manuscript. Some of these ideas in this chapter were worked out in “The Formation of a Christian Archive? The Case of Justin Martyr and an Imperial Rescript,” in Alice König, Rebecca Langlands, and James Uden, eds., *Literature and Culture in the Roman Empire*, 96–235: *Cross-Cultural Interactions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 179–202. I am grateful to the editors for the invitation to the conference at the University of Exeter which produced these ideas and this volume, not the least their kindness to my son, who joined me.

Chapter 2 was aided by discussions with the now-Dr. Chance Bonar regarding his paper on health and *defixiones* in the Antioch course. Conversations with Sarah F. Porter, and her insights on Antioch and the language of “love spells” in her dissertation have been invaluable. Participants in Beyond Canon, University of Regensburg, particularly Tobias Nicklas and Jos Verheyden, offered helpful responses to this chapter at a later stage. I am very grateful to research assistants Rikki Liu and Joseph Lee for their help on this chapter. Ms. Julia Gearhart in the Visual Resources program of Princeton’s Department of the History of Art and Dr. Michael Padgett, emeritus, of the Princeton University Art Museum were kind enough to make accessible finds and daybooks and other archival material from the excavators, many unpublished.

Other chapters, the bibliography, and the proofs were improved by Hannah Garza, Lizzy Hane, Federico Maviglia, and Dr. Elizabeth Searcy.

Thank you. Chapter 4 would be quite different without a push from Jennifer Quigley to consider song and economic exploitation, no surprise given her excellent scholarship on theo-economics.

I am grateful to those who read portions of the book in draft, some even before I knew it was a book: Ari Z. Bryen, Denise Kimber Buell, Ashon Crawley, Christopher Faraone, David Frankfurter, Andrew Jacobs (whose new book I anticipate with joy), Anthony Pinn, Sally Promey, Braxton Shelley, and Tim Whitmarsh. I am grateful for the support of Yale deans Katie Lofton and Greg Sterling, and for the Hilles Prize to facilitate publication. A weekend at Easton's Nook under the care of Dr. Jacque Matthis and Ms. Nadine Matthis was balm for the soul and an instantiation of otherwise possibility.

Permissions, early on, from Tyehimba Jess, Glenn Ligon, and M. Nourbese Philip, as well as the agents and executors of other artists, gave me the freedom and privilege to think with their work. JJJJJerome Ellis and Anne Carson answered cold call emails and allowed me to use their poetry. I cannot thank these artists enough. Various agents, museums, archives, and kind strangers answered my requests for permissions, and I am grateful.

Those who coached and edited and encouraged, especially during COVID writing, sustained my work: Anne Amienne and especially Rona Johnson Gordon. I am grateful to Dean Tamar Szabó Gendler and her office for the Scholars as Learners program at Yale.

Dr. Beatrice Rehl at Cambridge University Press has been unfailingly helpful in moving the book forward; I am also grateful to Kaye Barbaro, Pavithra Mouittou Kichenin, and Ian Pickett, and Flora Emmanuel Kenson for conducting my work through the Cambridge University Press process. Beatrice has been a valued conversation partner about the workings of scholarly presses and a trusted colleague. Thank you.

Many others walked alongside me during this process and fill my heart with gratitude and joy and make everything easier and better. The book would not have developed without the support of my step-mother Nancy Nasrallah; Zoom co-writing sessions with Katherine Shaner; emails and support from Jessica Lamont and the chance to read her exquisite articles which teach me so much; friends from graduate school without whose scholarship and love I'd flounder, especially Denise Kimber Buell, Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, AnneMarie Luijendijk, and Shelly Matthews. I was and am sustained intellectually and personally by Braxton Shelley, Todne Thomas, and Lindsay Wright, often in the presence of children at a dinner table. The number of packages and texts from

my best friend and great encourager, Mother Pelagia, may exceed this book's word count. My children were usually patient as I wrote and always beloved: Marc (what *is* the category of magic, he asked), Beata, and Anna, who have added so much magic to my world. Thank you, thank you.

The book is for my Anna Adma, who with quiet generosity remembers to hide an Easter basket for me or to put something in the Christmas stocking, whose mind works perpetually, and whom I love dearly.

Abbreviations

AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
ANF ²	<i>Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)</i> , ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 2, <i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325</i> . Boston: Christian Literature Company, 1885
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
Audollent	A. Audollent, <i>Defixionum Tabellae</i> . Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1904
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
Barker	Andrew Barker, <i>Greek Musical Writings</i> , vol. 1: <i>The Musician and His Art</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, and <i>Greek Musical Writings</i> , vol. 2: <i>Harmonic and Acoustic Theory</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989
BASP	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
Betz	Hans Dieter Betz, <i>The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CIG	<i>Corpus inscriptionum graecarum</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>

CT	John Gager, <i>Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992
Dillon and Hershbell	Iamblichus, <i>On the Pythagorean Way of Life</i> , trans. John M. Dillon and Jackson Hershbell. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991
GCS	Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte
GEMF	Christopher A. Faraone and Sofia Torallas Tovar, eds., <i>Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies: Text and Translation</i> . Berkeley: California Classical Studies, 2022
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
GSAM	David Frankfurter, ed., <i>Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic</i> . RGRW. Leiden: Brill, 2019
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
IGPannonia	Péter Kovács, <i>Corpus inscriptionum Graecarum Pannonicarum</i> . Hungarian Polis Studies, 2001
IKourion	T. B. Mitford, <i>Inscriptions of Kourion</i> . Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1971
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JFSR	<i>Journal of the Feminist Study of Religion</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
Migne PG	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus (series Graeca)</i> (MPG) 48. Paris: Migne, 1857–66
Minns and Parvis	<i>Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, Apologies</i> . Edited with a commentary on the text by Denis Minns and Paul Parvis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009
NA28	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , constituted by Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, eds. Barbara and Kurt Aland, 28th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.
NovTest	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PGM	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i>
Preisendanz	K. Preisendanz, <i>Papyri Graecae Magicae Die griechischen Zauberpapyri</i> , 2 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1928, 1931. 2nd ed., A. Henrichs, ed. Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1973–74
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RRE	<i>Religion in the Roman Empire</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SC	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i>
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1874–
SLA	<i>Studies in Late Antiquity</i>
<i>Supp. Mag.</i>	R. W. Daniel and F. Maltomini, eds., <i>Supplementum magicum</i> , 2 vols., Papyrologica Coloniensia XVI, 1–2. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990–92.
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TLG	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WGRW ^{sup}	Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement
YCS	Yale Classical Studies
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

Note on the Cover

Cover: Valerie Maynard. *Mourning for Maurice*. ca. 1970. Wood and nails. 28 x 20 x 24 in. (71.1 x 50.8 x 61 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art. Purchased with exchange funds from the Pearlstone Family Fund and partial gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., BMA 2020.57. Photo: Mitro Hood.

The cover of this book is graced by Valerie Maynard's sculpture, *Mourning for Maurice*. Deep, large, oval eyes closed; the face retains its rhythmic chisel marks against wood. A pattern of shallow canals radiates under and out from the lower lip, and the forehead is smoothed downward with vertical ridges. The face, tilting right, is surrounded by darker wood that is the bed for dark, thick, hammered nails that form the hair and beard. The object and the title together telegraph sadness and tenderness.

I am grateful to have *Mourning for Maurice* as the cover for my book. It exemplifies one key theme within these pages: the intersection of aesthetic and ritual labor. In *Mourning for Maurice*, the procedure of nailing is reminiscent of Kongolese power figures. The sculpture no longer takes part in that precise ritual, but the affordance of nails and the aesthetic of their bristling power brings a long-standing and general ritual practice or *technē* together with the individual and unique: a quiet, serene face, particular in features and in balding pattern, and, it seems, deeply beloved in loss.

In the pages that follow, I, a scholar who has benefited from white privilege in predominantly white universities, am indebted to the aesthetic and academic labor of Black scholars and artists. I acknowledge that the

ancestor who graces the cover of my book is not my own. During the writing of this book, Valerie Maynard also joined the ancestors. It is my deep hope that I do not appropriate but rather honor her work and the work of the other Black scholars and artists whose research and research-creations have taught me so much.

Introduction: Curses, Religion, Aesthetics

I entrust and consign Karpimē Babbia, weaver of garlands, to the Fates who exact justice, so that they may punish her acts of insolence. . . . I adjure you and I implore you and I pray to you, Hermes of the Underworld, that the mighty names of Anankē, Nebezapadaieisen[.].geibebeohera, make me fertile; that the mighty name, the one carrying compulsion, which is not named recklessly unless in dire necessity, Eupher, mighty name, make me fertile and destroy Karpimē Babbia, weaver of garlands, from her head to her footprints with monthly destruction.¹

Someone had it out for a garland weaver named Karpimē Babbia, a low-status woman who lived in Corinth in the late first or early second century CE. Chthonic Hermes, the goddess Anankē or Necessity, and the justice-exacting Fates are called upon to bring monthly destruction to her entire body, head to toe. Someone – a ritual practitioner with a client, most likely – made this curse by inscribing letters onto a thin lead tablet (Figure 0.1). What they wrote included rhythmic Greek, but also bubbled into a continuous stream of letters and sounds, the meaning of which is still unclear, which scholars call *voces magicae*: magical utterances. The curse-makers then rolled up the lead and pierced it with a nail, depositing it on or near a pedestal at the sanctuary of the goddesses Demeter and Kore, midway up the Acrocorinth, facing the busy city below and the blue of the Gulf of Corinth beyond.

¹ Text and translation: Ronald S. Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions* (Corinth XVIII.6; Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Corinth, 2013), 105 (nos. 125/126). For the Greek, see p. 193 n. 147.



Figure 0.1 Double curse tablet against Karpimē Babbia, as found. Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, fig. 80 (inscription 125/126). Photo: Ino Ioannidou and Lenio Bartzioti, American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Corinth Excavations.

The curse or *defixio* against Karpimē Babbia presumes, theologically, that divinities will work on your behalf. It pleads for justice from the justice-wielding Fates. It uses rhythms and poetics to get the work done. It targets a garland weaver, a worker in leaves and flowers, whose wreaths, donned for celebratory worship, would later wilt. Such garland-weaving women are elsewhere described as both too much and empty – *to polu kai kenon*, dismissed as people who “cull flower-clusters and the fragrance of leaves, stringing and plaiting them pleasantly enough – but a short-lived and fruitless work,” in contrast to learned men’s work of oratory or piety.²

What would happen if we made curses like the one we have just read central to a social history of ancient Christianity? What histories might we write if such objects were central to the stories of those who followed Christ even before the term Christian had been invented, those who

² Plutarch *De aud.* = *Mor.* 41F (= *On Listening to Lectures* 8) in Plutarch, *Moralia*, Volume I (trans. Frank Cole Babbitt; LCL 197; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 224–25, my translation. Plutarch, a roughly contemporaneous writer to Paul’s letters, writing about the proper rhetorical style, uses this image of female garland weavers as a metaphor for bad rhetoric and elsewhere uses the image of the *stephanēplokos* to critique fruitless or ephemeral work: *Quaest. conviv.* 3 = *Mor.* 645F, *Praec. gr. reip.* = *Mor.* 802E.

sometimes called themselves Jews, sometimes aligned with a particular philosophy, and understood themselves at the same time as Christ-followers? Christians lived among people – they *were* people – who knew well local and trans-local practices to draw the attention of divinity or divinities. If we make curses central to a social history of ancient Christianity, we find Christ-followers in contexts in which ritual cursing was common. We find them cursing and talking about cursing. And the themes we have just seen – of theological-philosophical chutzpah, justice, poetics, and aesthetics – are part of the practices and concerns of ancient Christians, who of course included women and those of low status.³

A focus on curses may seem marginal to the study of ancient Christianity – a minority report, a curiosity. But these were important rituals; these were common acts of religion. They only seem marginal to the study of Mediterranean antiquity and ancient Christianity because of scholarly tendencies to compartmentalize so-called magic from so-called religion. A more accurate history of ancient Christianity would enfold as much data from antiquity as possible, scouring not only the writings of Paul but also the writings found in the dirt at the Acrocorinth that shadowed the Corinthian Christ-followers in the city below. It would consider not only the sermons of John Chrysostom but also a curse deposited into an Antiochene well, which invokes the story of the drowning of the Pharaoh's chariot. A more ethical history would seek to reconstruct the wide material and sonic world of ancient Christians, using curses as well as the crafted prose of Clement of Alexandria. What you hold in your hands or see on the screen is my attempt to write that history, that book: one that focuses on a few ancient curses and discloses the ways in which they help us to understand ritual, justice-seeking, and aesthetics in the early Christian period.

Curses and amulets have often been labeled as magic and shunted to one side in the scholarly world. They are barely recognized by a larger public interested in early Christianity. Yet they are ritual objects of the ancient world and key materials that fall under the disciplinary purview of religion.⁴ Those whom we call early Christians were fully engaged in

³ Origen *Contra Celsum* 2.49 indicates that Celsus mocked Christians for attracting only those of low status, women, the enslaved, and children to their communities.

⁴ Yet see Christopher Faraone's *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 136, who argues that the distinction between prayer, hymn, incantation, and spells is unhelpful; see also *Hexametrical Genres from Homer to Theocritus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 3, on hexameter and ritual context.

this world of ritual. Some of them produced curses or protective amulets; some of them critiqued others for doing the same. I argue that magic is not a useful term to apply to these objects, to the ritual practices that produced them and in which they were used, and to the religious experts who produced and shepherded them. Yet the terminology of magic, whether represented by a range of vocabulary in antiquity or in scholarly analyses, does point to something important. That is, those in antiquity sometimes used terms that indicated that while curses were ubiquitous, they were also often thought to be deviant, dangerous, even feminized as witchy. They were not perceived to be mainstream ritual practices. David Frankfurter uses the term “alterity”; for him, the use of the terminology of magic in antiquity was part of a larger set of “indigenous strategies to evaluate, censure, render exotic.”⁵ Radcliffe Edmonds describes this as a “non-normative religious activity.”⁶ Frankfurter explains further: “‘magic’ or ‘magical’ can serve as a quality of certain practices and materials that highlights for our scholarly scrutiny features of materiality, potency, or verbal or ritual performance we might not otherwise appreciate as part of a culture’s religious world, or aspects of the social location of ritual practices we might not otherwise appreciate.”⁷

In this analysis, I “get hung up on the language of ritual texts” and am interested in their “theological perspective,” despite Frankfurter’s warning:

We must be extraordinarily careful not to get hung up on the language of ritual texts, whether in the original languages or how it sounds in translation. Where we think there is awe, humility, and a sense of ethics – or, conversely, amoral and mechanistic assumptions about selfish manipulation and command – there may simply be scribal idioms, local conventions, and a fundamental, overarching concern with efficacy on the part of a scribe. . . . To extrapolate an intentionality and a theological perspective on the part of the ancient client or ritual specialist, whether for prayer or magical incantation, comes down in the end to one’s own imagination (and, frankly, for the world of biblical and New Testament studies, the projection of normative values).⁸

In the face of this warning, how can I justify my lavish attention on a few curses, and a few ancient Christian writings, which is what you will find

⁵ David Frankfurter, “Preface” and “Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions,” in *GSAM*, esp. xi; on alterity, see 6 and 11.

⁶ Radcliffe G. Edmonds, III, *Drawing Down the Moon: Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 5.

⁷ Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key,” 13–14. Thus, for Frankfurter, “magic” becomes less a second order category and more a heuristic for analysis.

⁸ Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key,” 13.

in the chapters ahead? How do I defend my exegetical focus on the language of ritual texts and their idioms and my interest in what they reveal about philosophy and theology? Let me clarify that I have no interest in intention in this book, and a great deal of interest in theology. That is, I do not see the ritual objects of curses as the psychologically fraught rumblings of an individual heart, the fervent and authentic intentions of a troubled mind. They do not provide a window onto some sense of self. Yet the details of their language and their larger ritual functions do teach us something about aesthetics and ethics and theology. I am fascinated with the formal aspects of curses: the very material stuff they are made of, how their inscribed writing appears, what this writing says about their materiality, and how the curses were part of a larger world of incantation, of intonations in community. I investigate how these “actually work on the world” and contribute to “more precision in the study of ritual, ritual power, categories of ritual, and perceptions of ritual in antiquity,” a call that Frankfurter has made for the study of ancient magic.⁹

These curses, these ritual objects, had their own technologies.¹⁰ They operated by multiple combined parts, including the fragments of ancient poetry or narrative embedded within their texts, the power of their materiality (such as lead) and language (including unknown languages), the sound of incantation and song, and the place of their deposit. The curses were small assemblages operating together to effect the *technē* or art of the whole. Such objects were also driven by and contributed to the philosophy-theology of antiquity. In the modern academy, theology and philosophy are usually separate disciplines. I hyphenate them together because, in Mediterranean antiquity, they were often linked: we are made in the image of god, says Epictetus (*Diss.* 2.8), whom we usually label a philosopher. Curses are philosophical-theological objects; they are crystallizations of a variety of ways of thinking about the world and a variety of strategies to gain the attention of god(s) and *daimones*, even how to draw down the moon.¹¹ The aesthetics of such ancient objects – in Greek writings, aesthetics are often described as “varied,” “detailed,” or multi-colored (*poikilia*) or “variations” or “modulations” (*metabolai*)¹² – illumine in turn ancient

⁹ Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key,” 13–14.

¹⁰ On questions of technology, particularly as used by Alexander Weheliye, see pp. 216–19.

¹¹ Virgil *Ecl.* 8.69; see also Edmonds, *Drawing Down the Moon*.

¹² See Adeline Grand-Clément, “Poikilia,” in *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*, eds. Pierre Destrée and Penelope Murray (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 406–21.

philosophical, theological, and even musicological literatures that reflect upon and debate such themes as the efficacy and beauty of voice, the engagement of divinities, attempts to effect justice, and the structure of the cosmos. Kandice Chuh's *The Difference Aesthetics Makes: On the Humanities 'After Man'* defines aesthetics as both "sensibility as a crucial domain of knowledge and politics" and "the beautiful and the sublime" as constructed by "Western modernity."¹³ In this introduction and throughout this book, my references to the aesthetics of curses and incantations recalls both beauty (however contested) and epistemology (how to know through *aesthēseis* or sense perception). I also seek to be sensitive to the ways in which the aesthetics of "Western modernity" has occluded our ability to see a range of aesthetics in antiquity.

Curses are essential parts of everyday theologies in the cities of the ancient world. While personal, they are simultaneously political: they are concerned with power, and embedded in the hierarchical economic, social, and educational frameworks of antiquity. They are even communal: evidence indicates that they are sometimes produced when a petitioning client approaches a ritual expert to commission a curse, and that the expert often uses a template, indicating a larger system of production.¹⁴ Through curses, we glimpse the machinations of religious practice that are rich with signs (*charaktēres*), letter streams that spell nothing we can make sense of (*voces magicae*); these are objects that play with shape and form. From them we see a theorization of language, sound, form, and ugliness and beauty. Curses show that such theorizations happen not only among elites but also among those of lower status, not only in practices of philosophical conversation in the villa garden or the enslaved scribe penning a sophisticated treatise dictated by his master, but also in the ordinary acts of the making of ritual objects.¹⁵ That is, theorization and

¹³ Kandice Chuh, *The Difference Aesthetics Makes: On the Humanities "After Man"* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 3, 18.

¹⁴ See e.g., Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 5.

¹⁵ Of course, curses could also occur among those of high status: Ovid's more than 600-line *Ibis*, is a poem of curses, written while in exile. Nicola Denzey Lewis ("Ordinary Religion in the Late Roman Empire: Principles of a New Approach," *SLA* 5.1 [2021]: 108) prefers the term "ordinary religion," but explains: "There have been terminological difficulties as we work to parse the different nuances we mean between 'lived religion,' 'private religion,' 'domestic religion,' 'popular religion,' 'individual religion,' and 'vernacular religion,' each of which may draw on a slightly different theoretical foundation and/or a different core data set." Emma Jayne-Graham (*Reassembling Religion in Roman Italy* [New York: Routledge, 2021], here 3, also esp. 6–7) "argue[s] that ancient lived religion was in fact produced by active engagements between real people (bodies and minds) and

practice are inextricable. While we generally realize that, say, an ancient treatise on love or fate offers a set of theorizations, we often forget that it simultaneously reveals theorization as a set of practices. The philosophical debate inscribed into a treatise is itself a practice, built from practices: practices of education and inscription, the act of discussion between elite men is a practice, the scribe – likely enslaved – who penned the text engages in a practice. So too, the act of cursing presupposes a set of theorizations about divine participation in the world, about the power of emotion, about a pursuit of (in)justice. The practice of cursing materializes theories and theologies.

My book brings attention to curse tablets and the recipes to produce them, showing how such objects were produced in such a way that they (were thought to have) worked like little machines, to effect (what was perceived as) justice. Components of that machinery included poetics and aesthetics, which operated the curse's technology – the mechanisms of its *technē*, its art or craft. The book brings an archaeological eye to such curses, not only studying them as words on a printed page of an edition, but also considering what materials they were made of, how they sometimes used drawings or reversed script, and when possible, their find sites. Because of how *we* receive these materials, as flattened words on the printed page of an edition, we sometimes forget to consider the fulness of ancient rituals. These rituals involved air pushed through the trachea, the scratching of letters onto a surface, lead or papyrus that is folded or rolled, the sound – whatever that sound was – of tongues, and the movement – whatever the movement emerged from – of the hammering of a nail. These rituals involved the plenitude and limitations of the human body, human engagement with other kinds of beings, and interactions between things and humans: a full and resonating ontology.

My own book echoes these themes of aesthetics, variation, and technology, with each chapter triangulating between a curse, a literary text, and a contemporary work of art, whether visual or poetic, thus creating a new space for the interpretation of ancient ritual practices. I attempt an ethical historiography which highlights strivings for justice; which respects understudied ritual objects as manifesting complex philosophical and theological work and as marshalling complex aesthetics; and which attends to objects and practices usually considered marginal and also to

other real things (objects, materials, spatio-temporal locations, and the divine)” and her book highlights “the limitations of traditional approaches to Roman religion which disregard the significance of material things.”

people whose names we only know in passing – a Corinthian garland weaver called Karpimē Babbia, an Antiochene vegetable grocer named Babylas, a very angry Jerusalemite woman named Kyrilla, a legally beleaguered Cypriot named Sotērianos.

These ritual objects help us to better understand texts we label as ancient Christian literature. As we'll see in the pages to come, 1 Corinthians, a first-century letter included within the Christian Testament, includes at least one curse and emerged in a city in which curses intertwined with cult practice. Justin's second-century *Apology*, which claims to be a defense sent to the emperors on the occasion of abuses of Christ-followers, appealed to documentation for justice in a cultural context of sophisticated governance and alternative judicial systems, including the use of curse tablets. Clement of Alexandria's second-century *Protreptikos* argued that the New Song which is the Logos is better than the songs of the Greek gods, doing so via Homeric incantation. John Chrysostom, in fourth-century Antioch on the Orontes, sermonizes not only against Jews but also against the use of Jewish scripture to curse, in the very city in which a curse mentioning the drowning of the Pharaoh's chariot was found.

In the first to fourth centuries CE, the phenomena that historians gather under the term "ancient Christianity" were produced by those who did not always name themselves Christian. Many Christ-followers mixed freely with their neighbors of many cultic affinities, even if we know this primarily from other Christ-followers who critique them for doing so. Followers of Christ, like others in antiquity, improvisationally used ritual words and objects at hand to act and think their way to more intimate connection with the divine. Some forms of Christianity came to gather clout – acclaimed as philosophically sophisticated, for example, or associated with religious leaders who would come to be recognized for their civic *leitourgiai* or duties, and for their power. Yet, from the historical and critical vantage of post 1492, historians who rightly consider the principally violent effects and colonial legacies of Christianity might forget that earliest Christianities, if we can even call them that, emerged in diverse ways in the busy, bright, bustling, and sometimes violent streetscapes of cities under the Roman Empire. I say this not to imply that the forms of Christianity that existed before it became a religion of empires glowed pure or unproblematic. Rather, I emphasize the *ad hoc* and experimental qualities of ancient Christian practices, which this book explores.

Ancient religion in the Mediterranean world effervesced with play with voice and signs. It resonated with sounds that, our texts claim, vibrated

between earth and heaven; it clattered with objects humble in their leaden or nailed form, whose very substance was essential to their purpose. Through study of these objects and texts, I seek to sketch different ways of being in the world. These ways of being bound humans to other creatures and things – whether divinities or *daimones* – it’s hard to know how to translate this: spirits, demons, divine powers¹⁶ – or objects. These ways of being expressed the assumption that divinities cared or could be made to care about the quotidian; these ways of being assumed that the cosmos was filled with meaning and that there were mechanisms for humans and things to be agents in the world, to transform their circumstances. One might not ethically agree with all the content and strategies of the texts and objects that I discuss in the chapters that follow. I do not. I do not find commendable their sometime use of violent language or imagery to condemn what they perceive to be injustice. Yet, I want to analyze these ritual objects and phenomena in light of Ashon Crawley’s idea of the “otherwise” or “otherwise possibilities.”¹⁷ Crawley formulates this idea of the otherwise as resistance against the force of white supremacy. I cannot say that the curses in the pages to come rise to the moral urgency and resistive hope with which Crawley intervenes. Some of the curses are hardly utopian: they seek to harm and to limit others, all in the name of justice and because of a perceived injustice.¹⁸ Yet I cautiously take up Crawley’s principle of otherwise possibility because, as we have seen, sometimes phenomena classified as “magic” did represent an alterity in antiquity. They were seen as politically deviant, as dangerous in their

¹⁶ I leave the term in the transliterated Greek to help us to recall that a *daimōn* in antiquity could also be a powerfully good force, an inspiring spirit. See p. 55 n. 46.

¹⁷ Ashon Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 2. Keri Day, engaging with the problems of neoliberalism, writes theologically, pointing to “radical hope” that “offers the conditions that give rise to alternative social worlds out of which beloved communities can emerge and flourish.” Keri Day, *Religious Resistance to Neoliberalism: Womanist and Black Feminist Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 161. See also Tina Campt, *Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021), 24, on the work of Black artists and on her analysis of this work: “It is not a provisional tense, but one premised on the realization of a different future. It is the tense of ‘as if.’ It is an intentional deployment of aspiration that strives toward a multitude of possibilities.”

¹⁸ On ethical historiography, see e.g. Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007) and her *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019).

ability to rout the normal order of things. Curses were forged in a meaning-filled world, sometimes promising in its hopes and expectations that the divine will manifest to enact justice, sometimes terrifying in its expectation that divinities could be harnessed to punish what the practitioner sees as crimes. It was a world in which ritual practitioners experimented with materiality and with language, toying with the beauty and ugliness of poetry, song, and substance, to link their ritual objects and themselves to the power of spirits and divinities. It was a world, I'm convinced, in which everything, every *thing*, mattered.

AESTHETICS AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE

Curses or *defixiones* aid those of us who wish to understand aesthetics and religion in antiquity, as well as the worlds of ancient Christians. Close study of curses calls our attention to materiality¹⁹ – the rolled lead, the scratched letters, its placement, often in a shaft – and to a larger world of sound – an incantation and the breath that sustains it, the open float of vowels or the clash of *voces magicae*. To understand better these aesthetics and how they are essential to the operation of ancient religion, the book turns to contemporary art and poetry, particularly works of Black artists whose works theorize materiality and sound. Some readers will be uncomfortable with this move to the contemporary. Yet I need to show my intellectual debts and respectfully to acknowledge how I got here. These recent paintings, multi-media works, and poems began as a source of pleasure and interest separate from my academic work, and then became central to my thinking about history and injustice. Each artist grapples in their own way with the past and present racism that renders Black stories and people marginal. Thus I engage their art not to say that ancient curses or early Christians are the same as these works of art. That is, I do not argue in some simplistic way we should see ancient ritual practitioners whose work was labelled magic, whether Christ-followers or not, in some analogical relationship to these contemporary artists.

¹⁹ Gregory Shaw argues that both hermetic and theurgic mystagogy takes place within the material world ("Taking the Shape of the Gods: A Theurgic Reading of Hermetic Rebirth," *Aries – Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 15 [2015]: 136–69); so too Birger Pearson emphasizes Iamblichus's materialism (Birger A. Pearson, "Theurgic Tendencies in Gnosticism and Iamblichus's Conception of Theurgy," in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, eds. Rich T. Wallis and Jay Bregman [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992], 253–75).

Rather, these contemporary artists employ historical fragments and the power of matter and the complexity of language and song in such a way that they helped me to recognize the aesthetic formulations and complex combinations of matter and sound in ancient ritual objects.

Scholars of religion, including religions of antiquity, have often used theorists like Michel Foucault or Judith Butler to make sense of power or speech and performance in antiquity. Some have relied on feminist materialist theorists such as Jane Bennett or Karen Barad to think about matter's power and agency. Yet, despite scholarly interest in and commitment to the material turn, we have largely not yet engaged art itself as a theoretical framework. One exception is Anthony Pinn, who uses art as a way to theorize religion as a hermeneutic or technology, "to discuss various modalities of the arts so as to highlight the things exposed through religion as a technology." He "is concerned with the application of religion as a technology to art so as to expose what art says about the nature of 'things' and their interaction," with "things" understood as "vital and vibrant – impactful."²⁰ Tina Campt helps us to understand that some Black artists "refuse to create spectators, as it is neither easy nor indeed possible to passively consume their art. Their work requires labor – the labor of discomfort, feeling, positioning, and repositioning – and solicits visceral responses to the visualization of Black precarity."²¹ Natalie Loveless, among others, also insists that artists are engaged research-creation, a "generative recrafting" that encapsulates "the ways that artistic practices come to be understood as research methods and outputs in university contexts" and encourages "the insertion of voices and practices into the academic everyday that work to trouble disciplinary relays of knowledge/power."²² Artworks and poetry, as research-

²⁰ Anthony Pinn, *Interplay of Things: Religion, Art, and Presence Together* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 10, 11; see also 8. As he begins his book, Pinn explains (1–2, italics in original): "I am arguing that *religion is a technology; it is a method of interrogation and exposure. And this interrogation takes a variety of forms – e.g., exploration of places, presentation of the performance of activities, noting of the positioning and workings of bodies.* Religion is the *exploration.*" In this, his definition is provocatively broader than my own. See also Sarah Derbew's engagement with poetry in *Untangling Blackness in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), e.g., 189–91.

²¹ Campt, *Black Gaze*, 17.

²² Natalie Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 2–3. Ashon Crawley's work has been fundamental to my thinking on racialized aesthetics. For example, in a chapter on noise, Crawley analyzes Edmund Burke's writings on sound and blackness: "It is this Mr. Burke

creations, demand the labor of our attention and open new possibilities for viewing and hearing.

I put into conversation ancient curses which are ritual objects with recent research-creations. Each – whether poem, painting, sculpture, or mixed-media work of Black artists – uses historical fragments. Titus Kaphar’s paintings shred and nail history. The poetry of M. NourbeSe Philip demonstrates the power of the mother tongue and the violence of language as an outcome of historical colonialism; and Tyehimba Jess’s poems play with shape – with reading across a line or two poems as split – even as they recall and revive historical African American song traditions. The canvases of Glenn Ligon offer story – such as Ralph Ellison’s words – and obscure that story; they suggest identification with the narrative of the Invisible Man within a larger stream of conversation in critical theory, conversations about history and power: who gets categorized as Man in the first place, and how these definitions are linked with race, gender, and ability. These art works offer historiographical interventions, sometimes combining documentary evidence to expose abuse of power in the present, sometimes harnessing the detritus of history or the power of language as apotropaic devices.

These artists and their work challenge me as a historian to think about what I am doing in the deployment of my historical materials, with the fragments of quotations, the attempts at smooth prose, the studding of authoritative footnotes, the thrumming ethical questions that drive my project: Who is occluded in the historical record? Is my writing of history sufficient to the injustices of antiquity? Does my historiography at least approach a reparative attempt to foreground the many possible stories of the lives of women, the enslaved, those of low status in antiquity, the

that Immanuel Kant references regarding the blacks of Africa. Blackness is an ongoing, anoriginal assault on desire for normative beauty, normative form. It is both a color and exceeds the colorful. It resonates sonically and bothers the mental faculties. Blackness terrifies because it is ungovernable, it is anarchic in its deformation, is not given to control” (*Blackpentecostal Breath*, 141); see also Derbew, *Untangling Blackness*, 2–6. For examples of scholars of religion engaged with art as research practice, see also Julia Watts Belser, “Improv and the Angel: Disability Dance, Embodied Ethics, and Jewish Biblical Narrative,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 47.3 (2019): 443–69; Christopher Rasheem McMillan, whose work involves dance and biblical studies, e.g. “Biblical Performance Criticism: The Almost, but Not Quite, Transubstantiation of Performance Studies into Religious Studies,” *Liminalities* 13.1 (2017): 1–23; Ashon Crawley, *The Lonely Letters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 32–33 on the Hammond organist as theorist (and note Crawley’s own artistic practices!); Josef Sorett, *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3–4.

circulations of political power and judicial force that curses sometimes sought to disrupt? Or does my scholarship participate in a “crime of non-assistance,” to borrow a phrase from Christina Sharpe’s analysis?²³ Moreover, the contemporary artists’ aesthetics and methods help me (help us, I hope) to divine curse tablets as something more than ugly hunks of lead that aggressively attack – think of poor Karpimē Babbia, condemned to monthly destruction – or objects used in solitary and private ritual to undermine another individual. These present-day artists remind us that materiality and sound – the rhythm and force and shape of a poem or incantation – are not epiphenomenal to what an object or a poem *does*. They give us sharper perception of curses as ancient ritual objects which use, to borrow terms from ancient historian Henk Versnel, “poetics of magical charms” in their work as “prayers for justice.”²⁴

My book participates in a larger rethinking of aesthetics in the “illiberal” humanities, to borrow a term from Kandice Chuh. Chuh begins her *The Difference Aesthetics Makes* with a quotation from Black critical theorist Sylvia Wynter about “accelerat[ing] the conceptual ‘erasing’ of the figure of Man.”²⁵ That is, Wynter’s project and Chuh’s inheritance is to expose how concepts of whiteness, masculinity, and colonizing power define the category of Man over and against other humans. The liberal humanities are straitened by a narrow definition of the human, limited by colonialist and racist ideologies. I bring the category of aesthetics to the study of objects and writing that have often been seen as ugly, disruptive, or embarrassing.

²³ Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 59. On philological approaches as “wake work,” inspired by Sharpe, see my “Christemporos: Christ and the Market in Early Christian Texts,” *Biblical Interpretation* 30.4 (2021): 27–29.

²⁴ Henk S. Versnel, “Prayers for Justice, East and West: New Finds and Publications since 1990,” in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*, eds. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 275–354; Henk S. Versnel, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words,” in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, eds. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 105–58.

²⁵ Chuh, *The Difference Aesthetics Makes*, 1, citing Sylvia Wynter, “On Disenchanting Discourse: ‘Minority’ Literary Criticism and Beyond,” *Cultural Critique* 7 (1987): 207–44. Sianne Ngai exposes the aesthetic tendencies of late capitalism and their imbrication with affect and emotion, language and communication, and intimacy and care (*Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012], 13).

The study of late antique religion has begun to enter a conversation that challenges unspoken assumptions regarding aesthetics, a term that evokes both sense perception (often thought in ancient philosophical-theological writings to be dangerously invasive and tempting, an uncertain epistemological source) and beauty (often defined in gendered and raced ways). I engage with the theme of aesthetics to expose and to critique “a white aesthetic regime that circulated and still circulates ideas of the true, the good, the beautiful, the noble . . . the transcendent,” in the words of Willie Jennings.²⁶ The covert aesthetics of one’s academic field – what is considered beautiful, good to study, and the behaviors and practices that govern this attention, from seminar formats to tenure and review processes – often conceal an ugliness: assumptions about what is beautiful that are driven by prejudicial racial and gendered logics. Calls for the beautiful or for completeness or perfection (*teleion*), both ancient and recent, often do not disclose and indeed actively obfuscate their unjust underpinnings.

(RE)DEFINING AESTHETICS

Artist Emma Amos’s *Measuring, Measuring* (Plate 1) is a research-creation that materializes a critique of aesthetic assumptions. It offers a critical and theoretical rejoinder to aesthetics grounded in whiteness.²⁷

The background of *Measuring, Measuring* is explosive in color, primarily using strong blacks, yellows, oranges, and contrasting blues, and embedding Kente cloth. A laser transfer photograph on the left side of Amos’s work depicts a nude bronze female body which seems to be appropriated from Aristide Maillot; at the same time, this armless sculpture reminds us of the Venus de Milo,²⁸ puzzlingly held or propped up by an invisible figure with a hat. The middle figure is a colonial era photo of an African woman. She is criss-crossed with seamstress-style measuring tape in the yellows of yardsticks: literal measuring rods or canons. These

²⁶ Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 63; see Derbew, *Untangling Blackness*, 1–28.

²⁷ See also Pinn, *Interplay of Things*, 134: “art is something of an aesthetically sophisticated ‘picket sign.’ What sermons, lectures, and political protest of a physical kind could not accomplish – it has been argued by many advocates of racial equality – could be captured through the symbols and poetics of art in all its forms.”

²⁸ Lisa Farrington, *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African American Women Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 161.

measuring tapes sever her at her neck, pudenda, and knees. The curve of her right hip is echoed by a medallion cut from batik cloth.

Of the three figures, the African woman alone is affixed atop a printed essay about Greek art which includes words both clear and obscured. At the outlined point of her severed legs, we can read “male body in action at gymnasiums . . . experience, and sculptors had . . . observe its proportions.” Amos collages over an art historical text about what was considered perfect and worth replicating in sculpture: the nude male form, trained as ephebe in the gymnasia of the ancient world. The rightmost image presents one of the canonical objects of art history: the fifth-century BCE Greek “Kritios Boy,” nearly haloed by one of the four hand-in-circle images that Amos places toward the internal corners of the piece. The entire artwork is framed by Kente cloth and allusions to Kente cloth in the form of modern legs, abstracted and stacked into what look like parallel lines, an excess and remainder of the severed or missing limbs of the three central images. Amos engages the Classics and its aesthetics. *Measuring, Measuring* calls into question what is being measured, how it is assessed as beautiful, and how race, gender, and representation – whether in photograph or statuary – are part of an aesthetic regime.

Aesthetics – sometimes defined in relation to “good or beautiful things” – are a key if covert basis for ongoing tensions within the study of the ancient Mediterranean world. Scholars committed to a strongly philological-“aesthetic”-literary approach (say, the beauty of a Homeric phrase or the theological sublimity of an idea of *charis*, usually translated grace or gift), stand to one side. On the other side stand those who embrace social, economic, and political approaches that analyze literary texts, sculptures, frescoes, and other remains as evidence of wealth and poverty, enslavement and freedom, gender norms and their queering. Moreover, some scholars of antiquity regularly reflect on how the history of the study of the Classics, Roman history, and ancient Christianity is intertwined with race, imperialisms, and power.²⁹ Others

²⁹ See Derbew, *Untangling Blackness*, 188; Shelley Haley, “Be Not Afraid of the Dark: Critical Race Theory and Classical Studies,” in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christianity*, eds. Laura Nasrallah and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2009), 27–50; Sarah Bond, “Blog: Addressing the Divide between Biblical Studies and Classics,” 2019, <https://classicalstudies.org/scs-blog/sarah-bond/blog-addressing-divide-between-biblical-studies-and-classics>; Dan-el Padilla Peralta, “Barbarians Inside the Gate, Part 1,” <https://eidolon.pub/barbarians-inside-the-gate-part-i-c175057b340f>; and “The Future of Classics” (conference panel, Society for Classical Studies Annual Meeting, January 5,

do not.³⁰ (For me, there is no love for Cicero's prose that does not also benefit from an understanding of the janky politics of his time. There is no honoring of Seneca or the apostle Paul or the idea of *charis* that cannot also to speak to white supremacist uses of such figures and terms. There is no attention to Homer that would not benefit from the bright collages of Harlem Renaissance artist Romare Bearden's *Black Odyssey*.) These divides depend upon which intellectual-racial inheritances a scholar claims. A scholar's approach depends upon their (mal)formations from the disciplines of the discipline. A scholar's approach depends upon whom they consider as ancestor or *paterfamilias*.³¹ What was and is considered good or beautiful in our fields or disciplines is often implicitly defined within ethnic-racial hierarchies, not to mention the able, masculine body: the speech or body of the barbarous barbarian as counterpoint to the beauty of the marble white Greek or Roman.³² Earlier, I referred to Ashon Crawley's idea of "otherwise possibilities": there are otherwise possibilities available for our conceptualizations of what is central and what is marginal to our traditionally defined fields of study.

The history of aesthetics is generally traced from Aristotle's work, which defined aesthetics less in terms of beauty and more in relation to *aesthēseis*, that is, to sense perceptions and their epistemic trustworthiness

2019). For an ongoing documentation of white supremacist appropriations of the Classics, see "Documenting Appropriations," Pharos, <https://pharos.vassarspaces.net/category/documenting-appropriations/>. See also Joshua Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity: The Roman Past in Fascist Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Aristotle Kallis, *Third Rome, 1922–43: The Making of the Fascist Capital* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Maia Kotrosits, *The Lives of Objects: Material Culture, Experience, and the Real in the History of Early Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 146–54.

³⁰ Consider the *Black Athena* struggle of the 1990s. For the larger principles from which I draw, see Jennings, *After Whiteness*, and Roderick Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

³¹ For racial "inheritances" and disciplinary formations, see Jennings, *After Whiteness*, 103: "We cannot simply think our way into discerning the racial *paterfamilias* and its seductive cultivating power. We must feel and think it . . . The racial *paterfamilias*, however, wove itself into the institutional unconscious of educational institutions, and especially theological institutions, inviting us to sense through the cultivation logics of the plantation and whiteness the way the world actually is and to imagine how we could function efficiently and effectively in it." On Homer as ancestor and rethinking genealogical ties in the Classics, see Emily Greenwood and Barbara Gratioti, eds., "Introduction," *Homer in the Twentieth Century: Between World Literature and the Western Canon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–24.

³² See Gay Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

and utility. As Birgit Meyer and Jojada Verrips put it, “*Aisthesis* then refers to our total sensorial experience of the world and to our sensitive knowledge of it.”³³ Modern conversations about aesthetics are informed by this Aristotelian definition, but also by a definition of aesthetics in terms of beauty. Jacques Rancière states at the start of his *Aisthesis*, “For two centuries in the West, ‘aesthetics’ has been the name for the category designating the sensible fabric and intelligible form of what we call ‘Art.’” What interests Rancière is how a particular idea of aesthetics forms a “[regime] of the identification of art” built from the “sensible fabric of experience” and “material conditions – performance and exhibition spaces, forms of circulation and reproduction.”³⁴ That is, valuations of “Art” are produced by an often unarticulated notion of aesthetics within political, economic, and social conditions of power.

Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten’s *Aesthetica* (1750–58) is often cited as the foundational text for the current academic genealogy of aesthetics, a book that bridged ancient Greek philosophical discussions of sense perception (often via commentaries on Aristotle’s *De anima*) and later discussion of aesthetics.³⁵ Baumgarten wrote: “[a]esthetics is taken very literally as a defense of the relevance of sensual perception.” This idea of aesthetics contrasts with Descartes’s “rationalization of cognition” and a worldview that understood aesthetic judgments as connected with the emotions and as a “by-product of flawed human cognition.”³⁶ This connection of aesthetics with emotion is not surprising.³⁷ It is part of the larger Romantic philosophical landscape, and it is linked to the

³³ Birgit Meyer and Jojada Verrips, eds., “Aesthetics,” in *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2008), 21; and Alexandra Grieser and Jay Johnston, eds., “What Is an Aesthetics of Religion? From the Senses to Meaning – and Back Again,” in *Aesthetics of Religion: A Connective Concept* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 8–11.

³⁴ Jacques Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art* (trans. Zakir Paul; London: Verso, 2013), ix, x–xi.

³⁵ Grieser and Johnston, “What Is an Aesthetics of Religion,” 9–13.

³⁶ Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4. Baumgarten writes in Latin, his ideas popularized by his student G. F. Meier’s *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften*; Baumgarten’s own *Aesthetica* offers the definition: “Aesthetics (as the theory of the liberal arts, as interior cognition, as the art of beautiful thinking and as the art of thinking analogous to reason) is the science of sensual cognition” (cited in Hammermeister, p. 1). See also classicist David Konstan’s engagement with Baumgarten in his chapter “Beauty,” in *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*, eds. Pierre Destree and Penelope Murray (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 366.

³⁷ “[Baumgarten’s] notion of ‘aesthetic enthusiasm’ reunites artistic emotionality and cognitive achievements that had been opposed to each other since Plato’s criticism of artistic interpretation (*mania*) as interference with rationality” (Hammermeister, *The*

ancient philosophical debate about how sense perception (*aisthēseis*) are conduits for emotions, what one experiences, or what one suffers (*pathein*).

These discussions of aesthetics were not only tied to ancient philosophical conversations about the *aisthēseis*, but also to ancient Greek objects, in the second primary definition of aesthetics: beauty. For example, Hölderlin (or perhaps Schelling) wrote: “The idea that unites everyone [is] the idea of *beauty*. . . I am now convinced that the highest act of reason, by encompassing all ideas, is an aesthetic act, and that *truth and goodness* are siblings only in *beauty*.”³⁸ John Keats manifests this theory in his poem “Ode on a Grecian Urn.”³⁹ It is not incidental that Keats’s beautiful urn that speaks truth, that *is* truth, is Greek: the neo-classicizing aesthetics of the Romantic period led to an identification with (a particular understanding of) Greece. Keats’s contemporary, the Romantic poet Lord Byron, would even lead forces for Greek independence. Ideas of what is the good, the true, and the beautiful are grounded in ethnic-racial identification⁴⁰ and have political and social effects.

Even as Baumgarten famously presented a theory of aesthetics, even as Keats opined on an ancient Greek object, eighteenth-century German scholar Johann Joachim Winckelmann offered a theory of aesthetics based in a taxonomy of ancient art which haunts the disciplines of the Classics, New Testament Studies, and Art History.⁴¹ Rancière points to

German Aesthetic Tradition, 12). See the discussion of emotion and Moses Mendelssohn in the same chapter, and Crawley, *The Lonely Letters*, 22.

³⁸ Hölderlin cited in J. M. Bernstein, ed., *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 186, *apud* Keren Gorodeisky, “19th Century Romantic Aesthetics,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, June 14, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetics-19th-romantic/>.

³⁹ John Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* ([1820] lines 49–50) as cited in Gorodeisky, “19th Century Romantic Aesthetics.” On Keats, the Classics, and aesthetics, see e.g., Sean Alexander Gurd, *Dissonance: Auditory Aesthetics in Ancient Greece* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 5; and Shane Butler, *The Ancient Phonograph* (Boston: Zone Books, 2015), 89.

⁴⁰ Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1–34.

⁴¹ Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, 15. See also John J. Winkler on the ambivalent inheritances from Winckelmann: “What first attracted me – and many others I am sure – to the study of ancient Greece was the glamorous combination of exciting myths and beautiful bodies. But on closer inspection the Greece that was presented to me in grade school and high school turns out to have been in part a modern cultural fantasy developed mainly by German scholars such as Winckelmann from the eighteenth century on and in part a fantasy projected by the ancient Greeks themselves.” (*The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* [New York: Routledge,

“the historical moment, in Winckelmann’s Germany, when Art begins to be named as such.”⁴² Winckelmann’s 1764 *History of Ancient Art* set forth four stages of art, with Greekness as the height of aesthetics.⁴³ In his third or “beautiful” phase, commenced by Praxiteles, the remaining angularity of the high style came to flow; “grace” was its main characteristic.⁴⁴ Winckelmann linked this grace to Ionian artists (Parrhasios and Apelles) and thus ethnically situates this style in the Greek East and in colonies of Athens. The fourth phase is characterized by imitation; with the rise of the Romans, the genius of the past “cramp[ed] the spirit” and led to a mechanistic and derivative art; this imitation was characterized not only by timidity and diligence, but also by a “[decline] into the effeminate.”⁴⁵ Roman copies of earlier sculptures were seen as inferior, mechanical, not embodying the “Greek” spirit.⁴⁶ Ethnicity and aesthetics are intertwined.⁴⁷ Roman art historians have rejected Winckelmann’s interpretation of Roman art as mere copying.⁴⁸ Scholars use terms like “emulation” or “repetition” to avoid the derogatory implications of “copying” or “imitation,” evaluative terms which arose from Winckelmann’s hierarchical temporal and ethnic periodization of ancient art.

Yet Winckelmann’s work continues to haunt.⁴⁹ The fault was not Winckelmann’s alone; he voiced a larger discourse of his age, found also in the work of painters and sculptors who selected certain ancient art as worthy of replication and imaginative engagement. And Winckelmann

1990], 1). Winkler also discusses the “racist image of Greece” and allergy of classicists to anthropological modes of analysis (p. 9).

⁴² Rancière, *Aisthesis*, xiii.

⁴³ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 232–38.

⁴⁴ Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 234; Laura Salah Nasrallah, “The Knidian Aphrodite in the Roman Empire and Hiram Powers’s *Greek Slave*: On Ethnicity, Gender, and Desire,” in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings*, eds., eadem and Schüssler Fiorenza, 51–78.

⁴⁵ Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 238.

⁴⁶ Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 232.

⁴⁷ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 1–34.

⁴⁸ E.g., Elaine Gadza, ed., *The Ancient Art of Emulation: Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); see also Nasrallah, “The Knidian Aphrodite.”

⁴⁹ One can visit the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptotek in Munich to see Winckelmann’s theory still in action. See also Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5–6.

himself was perhaps misunderstood: he had a complex understanding of Greek art, as found in his interpretation of the Apollo Belvedere or the Laocoön; he admits that works such as these combine disdain and beauty, agony and gorgeousness.⁵⁰ Still, Friedrich Nietzsche criticized Winckelmann and classicism more broadly because “its idealism is a product of modern German idealism and its yearnings.”⁵¹ In James I. Porter’s analysis, these “[a]dvocates of the classical ideal knew full well that they were misreading antiquity.” So too Porter states that Friedrich Schlegel, who wrote *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, “could repeat, rather than divulge, the open secret that ‘everyone has found in the ancients what he needed or wished to find: chiefly, himself.’”⁵²

For scholars of the New Testament, the phrase “everyone has found in the ancient what he needed or wished to find: *chiefly, himself*” may startle. It is an echo of the familiar statement that scholarly quests for the historical Jesus are similar to looking into a well: the face of Jesus reflected back looks startlingly like the face of the historian-authors of those quests.⁵³ That is, this “reflection” of Jesus is marked by the gender, race, geography, and status of the interpreter. The fact that this quest for the historical Jesus has been a bourgeois, masculinist, usually white European project has been well discussed – if not yet fully comprehended – in New Testament Studies.⁵⁴ In the field of the Classics, Shelley Haley exposed how translators of ancient Greek and Latin texts have erased the beauty of brown and black skin; Sarah Derbew has shown how scholars have ignored or been confused by blackness in ancient texts.⁵⁵ James

⁵⁰ James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 227–28, 258–59. Winckelmann may have been misunderstood, for example, by someone like Nietzsche, whose own difficult-to-understand arguments include notebook entries with lecture content of “Weeks 7 and 8. *Classical antiquity* (against Wolf, Winckelmann, Goethe)” (p. 184); see also David Konstan, *Beauty: The Fortunes of an Ancient Greek Ideal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 182–86.

⁵¹ Porter, *Nietzsche*, 185. ⁵² Porter, *Nietzsche*, 193.

⁵³ Usually attributed to Albert Schweitzer’s *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, this image is from George Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 44.

⁵⁴ Shawn Kelley, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (London: Routledge, 2002); Dieter Georgi, “The Interest in Life of Jesus Theology as a Paradigm for the Social History of Biblical Criticism,” *HTR* 85.1 (1992): 51–83; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2000); Kotrosits, *Lives of Objects*, 156–57; see also Edward Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

⁵⁵ Derbew, *Untangling Blackness; inter alia*, Haley, “Be Not Afraid of the Dark,” 27–50. On debates over race and translating Song of Songs 1:51 “black and beautiful” or “black,

I. Porter describes debates over the classicizing or aestheticizing of the ancient Greeks in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and the subsequent influences of these ideas upon our more recent perceptions of beauty and the Classics.⁵⁶

Conversations about aesthetics among classicists are generally driven by a genealogy of and conversation about “Western” thought.⁵⁷ Questions about aesthetics and the texts of the ancient Mediterranean world are interpreted through European philosophical discussions and artistic practices involving aesthetics that trace their own genealogies to Greece and cannibalize from and popularize an African “primitivist” aesthetic (e.g., Matisse and Picasso). A normative debate funded by a Western notion of beauty often masquerades as a historical analysis. I write this not to critique the tremendous scholarly work of past decades, the intricate knowledge of the Greek sources and the compelling readings they offer, which are well worth the reader’s time. Rather, I attempt to probe the ecology of our studies: to name the landscape; to question who and what kinds of work can thrive in it; to say that the paths could have been and could be different and should be different. We benefit from naming the fathers, the genealogy of this way of thinking, and wondering what other kinships could yet be produced.⁵⁸

but comely,” and for a new interpretation of this verse, see Alice Ogden Bellis, “I Am Burnt but Beautiful: Translating Song 1:5a,” *JBL* 140.1 (2021): 91–111.

⁵⁶ Porter, *Nietzsche*, 181–91, 257–59.

⁵⁷ Konstan’s 2015 “Beauty” starts with “western thought” and beauty in its incipit, and Konstan goes on to frame his discussion of beauty carefully in light of Greek philosophy, but also with reference to questions Immanuel Kant raised in his *Critique of Pure Judgment* and the aesthetic evaluations of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso (Konstan, “Beauty,” 379). His incipit is from Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Beauty and Art 1750–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10: “There might be an argument for taking a longer or wider view of the question of beauty, which has been under debate in western thought at least since the ancient Greek philosophers.” James I. Porter’s clarion cry not to divorce Longinus from studies of rhetoric and from larger conversations in antiquity is bolstered by the Romantic and poststructuralist conversations, from M. H. Abrams to Jean- François Lyotard (*The Sublime in Antiquity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016], 10). Stephen Halliwell’s preface to *Between Ecstasy and Truth: Interpretations of Greek Poetics from Homer to Longinus* begins with W. C. Auden and Nietzsche and the “Western tradition,” binding the particulars of ancient poetics from the area we now call Greece to a longer view of a genealogy of conversation which is then baptized as Western (*Between Ecstasy and Truth: Interpretations of Greek Poetics from Homer to Longinus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], v).

⁵⁸ Yii-Jan Lin, *The Erotic Life of Manuscripts: A History of New Testament Textual Criticism and the Biological Sciences* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); eadem, “Of Escoffier, Gastronomie, Craft, and Canon,” in *Reading in These Times: The Critical Task*, eds. Fernando J. Segovia and Tat-siong Benny Liew (Atlanta: SBL

The study of the ancient Mediterranean has been haunted by a racialized aesthetic which both constructs and elevates the (putative whiteness of the) Greek as translated through German neo-classical valuations and the putative whiteness of Jesus and his first followers, the “author and the perfector” of *pistis*.⁵⁹ This racialized and racist aesthetic has done and does all sorts of deep damage, constraining our definitions of our fields in ways that have excluded the insights and very bodies of persons of color.⁶⁰ Scholars of the New Testament, the Classics, Roman History, and ancient Mediterranean religions benefit by investigating again, together, these aesthetic prejudices and conceptual underpinnings, rather than taking them as common sense or natural.

How, then, might we consider aesthetics differently? The production of art can be understood as a set of practices which are themselves also research/theorizing or “research-creation.” Emma Amos’s *Measuring, Measuring* crystallizes such a critical inquiry, probing the questions: What bodies are (considered) beautiful? What is the art historical conversation about humanness and beauty, over time, and how is this discourse undergirded by gendered and racialized ideas of beauty, as well as assumptions regarding wholeness and ability? *Measuring, Measuring* calls into question a racialized aesthetic that has defined as quintessentially beautiful some of the once-painted, now-white marble male sculptures of the classical Greek period. I take Amos’s artwork as an orienting theoretical framework for the themes of my book as a whole: that is, her work *does* something, laying bare ideas of beauty and raising questions of how we know what we (think we) know.

Press, 2022); on kinship, see Todne Thomas, *Kincraft: The Making of Black Evangelical Sociality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

⁵⁹ Haley, “Be Not Afraid of the Dark,” 27–50; Buell, *Why This New Race*, 159–90; Kelley, *Racializing Jesus*; and Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), *inter alia*; see also Gwendolyn Brooks, “The *Chicago Defender* Sends a Man to Little Rock,” in *The Bean Eaters* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 32–34.

⁶⁰ These aesthetic prejudices undergird scholarly preferences regarding both visual art and prose. For example, Marco Formisano has argued that “aestheticization processes exercise a marked impact on historiographical perspective”; in conversation with Averil Cameron and Henri Marrou, he argues for a more expansive, “polyphonic” definition of the literature of late antiquity, taking a cue from art historians who have engaged spoliation and adaptation of a “classical” past as aesthetic moves. Marco Formisano, “Toward an Aesthetic Paradigm of Late Antiquity,” *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007): 278, 281–82; for different approaches to late antique/Byzantine aesthetics, see also Glenn Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

MAGIC, GENDER, AND POLITICAL DANGER

The aesthetic of the study of Mediterranean antiquity has preferred white marble, alongside elite philosophical or literary writings, and the texts of what we call the New Testament, understood as theologically significant texts and even masterpieces of a sort. This aesthetic subordinates that which is judged less than beautiful, with the knock-on effect that the study of so-called magical texts has not sufficiently been integrated into an understanding of religion, ritual, and cult in antiquity, including ancient Christianity. Moreover, this (theological) aesthetic means that Christian texts have largely been firewalled from the complex and intense world of curses, and, simultaneously, that scholars generally have not plumbed curses as ritual objects that are materializations of theological and philosophical thought and practice.⁶¹ It has meant as well that Greekness and poetry have been valued over Romanness and prose, and that the integration of poetics with prose – the improvisational and complex aesthetics of antiquity – has been insufficiently recognized.⁶²

Curses have also been seen as private and minor, compared to temple cults or emerging “universal” religions. John Winkler, discussing what he terms “erotic spells,” speaks of “the petulant bravado of these private rites.”⁶³ John Gager’s 1992 *Curse Tablets* begins by calling *defixiones* “a dark little secret of ancient Mediterranean culture” due in part to the “harmful character of these small metal tablets – not so much the real harm suffered by their ancient targets but the potential harm to the entrenched reputation of classical Greece and Rome, not to mention Judaism and Christianity, as bastions of pure philosophy and true

⁶¹ At the same time, the category of religion, and which terms in Greek and Latin should be translated as religion, is debated. Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Carlin Barton et al., *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016). For a critique of the overuse of elite texts to reconstruct Roman religion, see Graham, *Reassembling Religion in Roman Italy*, e.g., at 9.

⁶² Tim Whitmarsh, *Beyond the Second Sophistic: Adventures in Greek Postclassicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), esp. 186–208, and esp. 189 on ancient and modern discussions of Asiatic vs. Attic forms of Greek and the gendered as well as ethnic/racial valences of these categories.

⁶³ Winkler, *Constraints of Desire*, 96. To be fair, Winkler’s focus here is on “erotic” spells. He goes on to write “*Agôgai* are a kind of sneak attack waged in the normal warfare of Mediterranean social life” (p. 97). Winkler’s vivid writing and brilliant conceptualizations nonetheless overemphasize the private, individual nature of these curses, replicating the prejudices of the novelistic and literary materials from antiquity that he also adduces.

religion.”⁶⁴ While Gager himself does not subscribe to this view, and while Winkler’s *Constraints of Desire* was a tour de force of innovation in its day, the characterizations they replicate – that magic and curses are private, harmful – help us to understand why curses have been marginal to the study of religion and ritual, as well as to the study of ancient Christianity.

Sometimes religion has been characterized as communal and magic as “secret” or private. Even if we have seen that what is categorized as magic often does hold some element of alterity, this dichotomy between the communal and the private, much less the secretive, does not adequately hold. The objects and scripts of so-called magical practices usually indicate, by their very materiality, at least a ritual expert and a commissioner. The fact that many formulae and technologies of so-called magical objects repeat over time and space, as well as the phenomenon of recipes which instruct on how to make such objects, points not so much to individuals as to networks of ritual experts and ritual practitioners.⁶⁵ Moreover, their efficacy may be enhanced by gossip or discussion of these rites.⁶⁶ The rituals which are sometimes labelled “magic” may often be conducted by the same ritual experts who participated in the nearby temple cult.⁶⁷ They

⁶⁴ John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3; his characterization of legal *defixiones* as threatening “jealous guardians of power emanating from the center of ... society”: “Here was power beyond their control, power in the hands of freely negotiating individuals” (p. 24).

⁶⁵ See e.g., Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, “Jewish Legal Formulae in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls,” *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015): 69–81, who points to legal formulae from divorce and ketubah documents which are also used in Aramaic incantation bowls, including to “divorce” the demon and allow it a future spouse. She concludes, “The length of the divorce formulae enables us to see clearly that the scribes of the Aramaic bowls consciously employed specific legal terminology in their writing. A similar phenomenon is found in the case of pronouncements of excommunication, vows and oaths, especially with respect to technical terms, formulations, and aims. Siam Bhayro and Dan Levene have suggested that the bowl scribes were also scribes of legal documents (*soferim*)” (p. 80).

⁶⁶ Lydia Matthews and Irene Salvo, “Cursing-Prayers and Female Vengeance in the Ancient Greek World,” in *Revenge and Gender in Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, eds. Lesel Dawson and Fiona McHardy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 146–50; further example in Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 108.

⁶⁷ David Frankfurter argues this with specificity from examples in Roman Egypt (*Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998]); on ritual experts and magic, see also Shaily Shashikant Patel, “Notes on Rehabilitating ‘Magic’ in the Study of Early Christian Literature,” *Religion Compass*

were still engaging in ritual, but in a different venue and with a different set of practitioners and worshippers, not mainstream but deliberately different and deliberately marginal. Ritual practitioners who might be associated with both the agora and the temple, both the house and the church, might also be practitioners of what we would call medicine, just as the relation between magic and miracle (*thauma*) seems to have been mainly a matter of who was evaluating the efficacy of the practice.⁶⁸ The term *pharmakon* can mean medicine or potion or poison; the term *sōteria* can mean healing or salvation. The priest and the *magos* could be one and the same, just conducting a different sort of ritual in a different setting – or, in the case of the *defixio* against Karpimē Babbia with which I started, among many other examples, the curse could also be laid within the sanctuary of a god.

The 1990s brought a revival of scholarly interest in so-called magic and work that saw these materials as relevant to the larger study of religion and ritual. Henk S. Versnel, Richard Gordon, and others explored the possibility that these ancient ritual objects were not merely the products of angry individuals – harmful, cursing their rivals – but were attempts to effect justice and right abuses of power. More recently, David Frankfurter and Esther Eidinow, among others, have emphasized that *defixiones*, amulets, incantations, and the like should be understood as part of the varied rituals of the ancient Mediterranean world.⁶⁹ So, too, scholars have long debated the problems of sequestering magic from religion. What are the criteria by which those culturally or temporally distant from us determine the one from the other? Or do they – that is, are *we* the ones who introduce the term magic when we find some practice which we think problematic or intellectually underdetermined? How might we be seduced by their polemics into thinking that magic has hard boundaries and peculiar qualities? Do we do better or worse by deploying a range of terms in our own language (e.g., execration, ritual) or by transcribing the terms we find in ancient texts (e.g., *mageia*, *goētia*, *magia*, *superstitio*)? Some of these cognate terms, although they land on our ear

15.10 (October 2021): 6; on ritual expertise more generally, see Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁶⁸ See p. 54 for discussion of ritual experts who serve in multiple venues [search at Laodicea].

⁶⁹ E.g., in Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key,” and Eidinow, “Binding Spells on Tablets and Papyri,” in *GSAM*, 3–20, 351–87, respectively.

as similar to English terms, cannot be fully indexed to each other: *mageia* is not magic.⁷⁰ Some scholars have moved away from the use of “magic” as a term, preferring more specific terminology such as “binding spells” or “ritual objects,” thus paying attention to details of philology and historical practices.⁷¹ As John Gager puts it, “The only justifiable (answerable) historical question about magic is not ‘What are the characteristics of, for example, Greek magic?’ but rather ‘Under what conditions, by whom, and of whom does the term “magic” come to be used?’”⁷²

Texts from Mediterranean antiquity that deploy terms associated with magic engage in ancient polemics and invective.⁷³ At the end of the first century CE, Pliny, for example, writes:

1 In the previous part of my work I have often indeed refuted the fraudulent lies of the Magi (*magicas vanitates*), whenever the subject and the occasion required it, and I shall continue to expose them. In a few respects, however, the theme deserves to be enlarged upon, were it only because the most fraudulent of arts has held complete sway throughout the world for many ages. . . . Nobody will doubt that it first arose from medicine, and that professing to promote health it insidiously advanced under the disguise of a higher and holier system; that to the most seductive and welcome promises it added the powers of religion (*natam primum e medicina nemo dubitabit ac specie salutari inrepsisse velut altiore sanctioremque medicinam, ita blandissimis desideratissimisque promissis addidisse vires religionis*). . . . 2 There is yet another branch of magic, derived from

⁷⁰ For history of discussions of magic versus religion (or other terms) from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, see Kimberly Stratton, *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 4–18; Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key,” GSAM, 4–6. For magic and religion as second order categories, see Jonathan Z. Smith, “Trading Places,” in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, eds. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 11–27. For Greek, Latin, and Hebrew terminology associated with magic, see Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 26–37.

⁷¹ See citations in Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 8–9.

⁷² Gager, CT, 25. He puts it more strongly: “But it is our conviction that magic, as a definable and consistent category of human experience, simply does not exist” (p. 24), yet scholars like David Frankfurter defend the continued use of “magic” because of its tweaking of established cults and its “coefficient of the weird” (drawing on the famous phrase of Bronislaw Malinowski).

⁷³ To give only two examples: Winkler writes (*Constraints of Desire*, 72): “‘Magic’ is a relative term: we only call something ‘magic’ if we do not (or no longer) accept the premises of its meaning operation.” Crystal Addey, writing about Eusebius’s *Praeparatio Evangelica*, states: “he conflates theurgic and religious practices with ‘magical’ practices (those comprising antagonistic or harmful ‘magic’ commonly described under the rubric γοητεία), by claiming that the former are no different from the latter because both attempt to ‘constrain’ and ‘compel’ the gods” (*Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods* [Burlington: Ashgate, 2014], 286).

Moses, Jannes, Lotapes, and the Jews, but living many thousand years after Zoroaster. So much more recent is the branch in Cyprus. . . . 4 But why should I speak of these things when the craft has even crossed the Ocean and reached the empty voids of Nature? Even today Britain practises magic in awe, with such grand ritual that it might seem that she gave it to the Persians. So universal is the cult of magic throughout the world, although its nations disagree or are unknown to each other. 5 As Osthanes said, there are several forms of magic; . . . his [Nero's] greatest wish was to issue commands to the gods. . . . 6 Therefore let us be convinced by this that magic is detestable, vain, and idle; and though it has what I might call shadows of truth, their power comes from the art of the poisoner, not of the Magi. (*Nat. hist.* 30.1–2, 4–6)⁷⁴

Pliny expresses alarm regarding place and space – the international nature of magic, with its reach to Britannia and its sometimes derivation from Moses, among others – and about philosophy-theology – the idea of commanding the gods. In the sweep of magic from Persia in the East to Britannia in the northwest, Roman ethnicity shines as pious: “It is beyond calculation how great is the debt owed to the Romans, who swept away the monstrous rites, in which to kill a man was the highest religious duty (*qui sustulere monstra, in quibus hominem occidere religiosissimum erat*) and for him to be eaten a passport to health” (*Nat. hist.* 30.4).⁷⁵

Pliny characterizes magic as the work of far-flung ethnicities and he conflates the magician with the poisoner; both, after all, use *pharmaka*. With this, Pliny does not describe but constructs the world of ancient rituals.⁷⁶ When we in turn reproduce his language – or that of other ancient writings – as descriptive, and when we add in modernity's ideas

⁷⁴ Pliny, *Natural History, Volume VIII: Books 28–32* (trans. W. H. S. Jones; LCL 418; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 278–91. See also *Nat. hist.* 28.3, 5–6 on the use of erotic spells and repetitive prayers, the latter even by Caesar; on the convergence of demons, recitation of names, incantation, magic, and binding, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 211, 215.

⁷⁵ As found in LCL 418, pp. 286–87.

⁷⁶ Patricia Cox Miller, “In Praise of Nonsense,” in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 492: “When juxtaposed with the magical papyri, the *Cratylus* reads like the manual of instructions out of which the authors of those texts worked, patiently dividing language into letters, letters into vowels, and so on, often invoking the authority of Hermes as they worked. Yet, for the authors of the papyri, Hermes as inventor of the alphabet was not only trickster but also spellbinder. Along with the alphabet, he invented the philter, a charm or spell. This close association of language and the charm through Hermes takes us back to the *Phaedrus*, where Thoth (Hermes in Egyptian disguise) called his invention, the alphabet, a ‘recipe for wisdom.’ The word for ‘recipe’ here is *pharmakon*, also a philter, but one which truly captures the double-edged quality of language, for it is a drug that can both poison and heal.”

of rationality, progress, and religion and secularism, we often reinforce the prejudices and struggles of Mediterranean antiquity, sometimes wittingly (my orthodoxy versus your magic; my clean Protestantism versus your magical pagan-ish Roman Catholicism), sometimes unwittingly.⁷⁷ The line between magic and miracle, as many have argued, is a matter of where you stand and what you see; it's a matter of how you want to construct an opponent.⁷⁸ Someone's magic is someone else's religion: that is, the term magic is often used as an invective to critique or to disenfranchise. This categorization of another's ritual as magic is often inflected with gendered or racial overtones: the magic is from an esoteric land, but might also be conceived of as barbaric, including the use of barbaric words; and it is women who are often characterized as magicians or witches, or the *magos* is feminized in his attempts to draw power.⁷⁹

Curses display some of the technologies of ritual. With the word technologies I may seem to veer too close to an earlier fight over religion and magic. Sir James Fraser distinguished magic from religion and offered a theory of an increasingly rationalistic religion-as-belief, depicting those who engaged in ritual practice as part of a lingering primitive magic.⁸⁰ At the same time, other scholars emphasized, as Kimberly Stratton puts it, how "magic resembles scientific techniques in its practical aspects and in the 'automatic nature' of its actions."⁸¹ Bronislaw Malinowski and E. E. Evans-Pritchard examined magic in the context of the social world in which it was deployed; the latter termed it a "natural philosophy."⁸² Decades later, this emphasis on the social would bear fruit in John Winkler's *Constraints of Desire*, which uses an anthropological framework and emphasizes the construction and maintenance of gender in an investigation of so-called erotic or love spells.⁸³ Studying curses and their

⁷⁷ See David Frankfurter, "Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken Word," in *GSAM*, 608–25; eadem, "Ancient Magic in a New Key," 8–9, in the same volume; and Patel, "Notes on Rehabilitating 'Magic.'"

⁷⁸ Patel, "Notes on Rehabilitating 'Magic,'" esp. 6.

⁷⁹ Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 3–4, 24–25.

⁸⁰ James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49–59, in a passage replete with racist and colonial logics; the earliest version of this book was published in 1890.

⁸¹ Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 6, citing Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 86.

⁸² Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 6.

⁸³ So-called love charms needs are rituals that tap into structural violence associated with gender and sexual practices to secure the sexual availability of a partner, usually a woman; on this taxonomic issue see Laura Nasrallah, "What's Love Got to Do with It?: Violence, 'Love Charms,' and 'Erotic Spells.'"

recipes, and specifically the compendia of so-called Greek magical papyri, Sofía Torallas Tovar and Christopher Faraone emphasize that early German and English translations of these texts assume that “‘magic’ was an emic category for the Greeks” and sometimes mistranslate terms, for example rendering *energeia* as “magical power.” Torallas Tovar and Faraone instead deploy the term “magic” to mark “private speech-acts and rituals designed for protection, cursing, erotic conquest and divination. As recent scholarship has shown, in the ancient world, at least, all four of these goals could just as easily be accomplished by traditional rituals in the home that we could just as well call ‘religious.’”⁸⁴ Torallas Tovar and Faraone’s reflection exposes philological complexities – what word do we use in modern translations? – and ideological complexities – what categories of religion, magic, cult, and practice do we think were operative in antiquity? These are hand in glove: the translation a scholar offers will depend upon whether they think religion is separable from magic.

Ancient invective did from time-to-time associate “magic” with political upheaval or danger; indeed, magic is sometimes characterized as an engine for political resistance, and thus was placed under legal sanction in the early Roman Empire. The *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis* of 81 BCE, passed under L. Cornelius Sulla, probably merely augmented pre-existing laws against so-called magic.⁸⁵ Yet the dangers of magic to political power were known in the social imaginary.⁸⁶ The death of Germanicus in the early first century CE in Antioch, of mysterious circumstances amid a feud with the province’s governor Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso and his wife Plancina,⁸⁷ is linked to curses and magical practices:

⁸⁴ GEMF, xx.

⁸⁵ This law was aimed particularly at homicides that were connected to those who “prepared, sold, bought, possessed, or administered a dangerous drug (*venenum malum*) (James B. Rives, “Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime,” *Classical Antiquity* 22.2 [2003]: 77). Yet, as Andrew Wilburn explains (*Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012], 211): “Magic directed at the state, particularly aggressive magic aimed at harming members of the provincial administration, clearly would have been viewed as an illegal activity, endangering both parties, the practitioners and those who employed them. These proscriptions may suggest that the use of magical acts constituted resistance against Rome in the minds of the authorities.”

⁸⁶ See Ari Z. Bryn, “Law in Many Pieces,” *Classical Philology* 109.4 (October 2014): 346–65, regarding the study of legal materials for social history, and the use of materials that are not technically law to reconstruct issues of justice and power.

⁸⁷ Andrew T. Wilburn, “Building Ritual Agency: Foundations, Floors, Doors, and Walls,” in GSAM, 555; see also Florent Heintz, “Magic Tablets and the Games at Antioch,” in

... explorations in the floor and walls brought to light the remains of human bodies, spells, curses, leaden tablets engraved with the name Germanicus (*carmina et devotiones et nomen Germanici plumbeis tabulis insculptum*), charred and blood-smeared ashes, and others of the implements of witchcraft by which it is believed the living soul can be devoted to the powers of the grave. (Tacitus *Ann.* 2.69)⁸⁸

Suetonius (a gossip writer, but still) notes that Augustus burned more than two thousand “prophetic writings (*fatidicorum*) of Greek or Latin origin [which] were in circulation anonymously or under the names of authors of little repute,” sparing only some of the Sibylline oracles.⁸⁹ It is not clear if these were considered “magical” books, but tales of the destruction of magical materials, as well as the risk of holding them, continue to late antiquity. In the fourth century, John Chrysostom tells of a book that lacked even title or binding: it was a sheaf thrown in the Orontes when soldiers scanned the city for magical texts. Chrysostom and a friend happened to grab it from the river and flipped it open to see its contents; they were terrified to find it was a book of magic but were divinely delivered from the situation (*Hom. Act.* 38).⁹⁰

CURSES

This ancient idea of magic as dangerous, even politically seditious, is often launched in polemical contexts: You say *to-may-toe*, I say *to-mah-toe*; I’m pious, you’re dangerous or degraded or impious in your use of magic. Yet, as we look more closely at the texts and objects often labelled as magic, we can begin to see that some of these rituals might indicate ways of thinking otherwise. That is, they may demonstrate ideas of harnessing divinities and powers that tap into the electric grid of more established forms of cult, *and* resist some of these official channels.⁹¹ These ritual

Antioch: The Lost City, ed. Christine Kondoleon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 163.

⁸⁸ Tacitus, *Histories: Books 4–5. Annals: Books 1–3* (trans. Clifford H. Moore and John Jackson, LCL 249; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 492–95. Wilburn, “Building Ritual Agency,” 555; this is an oft-quoted passage; see also Bailliot on the *Lex Cornelia* (Magali Bailliot, “Rome and the Roman Empire,” in *GSAM*, 189–90). See further discussion of this passage at pp. 68–69.

⁸⁹ Suet. *Aug.* 31.1; Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 1.6.

⁹⁰ Heintz, “Magic Tablets and the Games at Antioch,” 163.

⁹¹ Patel, “Notes on Rehabilitating ‘Magic,’” 7: “Magic’s very alterity gives it power to challenge and disrupt what we think of as ‘religion.’ The real question for me, is whether or not we can capture this resistive potential for the purpose of disrupting dominant

objects are incomprehensible outside of larger instantiations of religion, of *eusebeia* and *thrēskeia*, of *pietas* and *religio*, but they also differ from aspects of public, civic cult, and this difference is in part what fuels their power.⁹²

One ritual object used in so-called magic was the curse tablet – recall the “leaden tablets” deployed against Germanicus, according to Tacitus, or the one against Karpimē Babbia, with which this chapter began. Curse tablets are usually called *defixiones* – coming from the Latin root “to fix, to fasten” or to make motionless (*defigere*); the term used in Greek is *katadesmoi*, which refers to binding. This fastening or binding often has a double sense. The spell is intended to bind someone; and the spell itself is often fixed or fastened, nailed through and/or nailed up. The term *defigere* is also related, according to Magali Bailliot, to “*fixum, fixere*: to embed, sink into, pierce.” She emphasizes not only the semantics but also the gesture and symbol, associated with the affordance of the nail: the act of force and piercing that is often typical of these rituals and ritual texts, and the use in *defixiones* of “a *similia similibus* formula: that is, expressions that analogized the fate of the victim to that of a sacrificial animal, a nailed tablet, or the deceased person occupying the grave in which the curse was buried.”⁹³ One example, found in a second-century CE Gallo-Roman grave, was aimed against lawyers. The two curse tablets were pierced with a nail and the ritual involved seems also to require piercing a puppy with a nail (!). Written in Latin, they read in part: “just as this puppy is (turned) on its back and is unable to rise, so neither (may) they.”⁹⁴ Such *similia similibus* formulae provide “persuasive analogies” which call upon the literary aesthetics of simile and sometimes deploy a fragment of a pre-existing poetic text.⁹⁵

historiographical narratives in the study of early Christian texts.” Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key,” 3–20.

⁹² Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key,” 6: “The notion of an illegitimate or ambivalent sphere of ritual embraces cultures’ conceptualization of alterity itself: where is danger to be located socially, materially?”

⁹³ Bailliot, “Rome and the Roman Empire,” 194: “The use of a nail might correspond both to the immobilization of the victims and to the irrevocability of the ritual.”

⁹⁴ Gager, CT, 143–44.

⁹⁵ Jurja Franek and Daniela Urbanová, “‘May Their Limbs Melt, Just as This Lead Shall Melt...’: Sympathetic Magic and *Similia Similibus* Formulae in Greek and Latin Curse Tablets (Part 1),” *Philologia Classica* 14.1 (2019): 27–55, esp. 29–30, and Jurja Franek and Daniela Urbanová, “‘As Isis Loved Osiris, So Let Matrona Love Theodoros...’: Sympathetic Magic and *Similia Similibus* Formulae in Greek and Latin Curse Tablets (Part 2),” *Philologia Classica* 14.2 (2019): 177–207.

Approximately 1,700 binding spells or curse tablets have been found across the ancient Mediterranean world, dating from the fifth century BCE and in use for roughly a millennium.⁹⁶ These thin, lead tablets usually contain writing and sometimes contain drawings, and often call upon divine beings to effect something specific. Such tablets are hard to find; on an archaeological dig, they can look like a lump of encrusted dirt. Therefore, we can presume that many more existed. While there are variations and changes in *defixiones* over the centuries of their use, some indexed to their different languages or locations of deposit, they share remarkably persistent features. They also have an “international and interdenominational” flavor – often borrowing, for instance, from Jewish texts.⁹⁷ *Defixiones* and instructions for producing curses and spells have primarily been investigated by specialized scholars of ancient magic. But these texts-objects are significant evidence for ancient religious practices.⁹⁸

In addition to learning from the objects themselves, we can investigate *defixiones* through “recipes” which detail how to produce such spells.⁹⁹ The recipes indicate a broad use of stuff (the lead, herbs, hair, a ring, etc.) that might be needed to produce a curse. They also contain instructions regarding writing these ritual texts. Some recipes and *defixiones* include *voces magicae* (known alphabetic letters that do not spell what we would consider human language), *charaktēres* (symbols which seem to be letters but do not correspond to any known alphabet), text written backwards or

⁹⁶ Franek and Urbanová, “May Their Limbs Melt,” 28; Derek Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 65.

⁹⁷ Pieter W. van der Horst, “‘The God Who Drowned the King of Egypt’: A Short Note on Exorcistic Formula,” in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Jewish, Early Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honor of Gerard P. Luttikhuisen*, eds. Anthony Hilhorst and George H. van Kooten (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 137–38. See also Wilfred Lawrence Knox, “Jewish Liturgical Exorcism,” *HTR* 31. 3 (1938): 191–203, which adduces more uses of phrases that draw from Jewish scripture/narratives. Some curses can be found in other media; Jessica Laura Lamont for example discusses a ca. 300-BCE chytra or pot pierced by a nail and inscribed with names (of individuals to be bound or cursed): “The Curious Case of the Cursed Chicken: A New Binding Ritual from the Athenian Agora,” *Hesperia* 90 (2021): 79–113.

⁹⁸ Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key,” 3–20; Daniela Urbanová, *Latin Curse Tablets of the Roman Empire* (Innsbruck: Innsbruck Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, 2018); also, Joseph E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 1–14.

⁹⁹ The collection most easily found in English translation is Betz, based upon and expanding Preisendanz’s *PGM*; for an explanation regarding corpora, see Jacco Dieleman, “The Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri,” in *GSAM*, 287–89.

in non-normal configurations, or simple drawings.¹⁰⁰ *Defixiones* are often discussed in light of J. L. Austin's idea of the speech act: how to "do things with words."¹⁰¹ Curses also do things with their own materiality, reflecting upon the coldness, deadness, or heaviness of their own lead, or the wetness or chthonic nature of their site of deposit.¹⁰² They sometimes do things with stories, employing authoritative literary flotsam and jetsam, using a *historiola* or condensed mythological narrative to make a point, or deploying poetic and rhetorical strategies – rhythm, assonance, alliteration, even embedding within themselves a phrase from Aristophanes or verses from Homer, for example, for incantatory power. *Defixiones* are engaged in an aesthetics of recombination that stretches over time and place, doing things with words, stories, poetry, and matter. They shore these aesthetic fragments against the ruins of the commissioner, and for ruins of the accursed, using these historical bits to attract the gods' attention and to enact what is perceived as justice for the curse-caster.

This is the approach I take: to understand these curses as aesthetic assemblages that help us to understand ancient religion, including ancient Christianity. I can only engage in this sort of social history because of the tremendous work that has been done and is being done on the study of ancient magic. Much of this work is contained in specialized editions or digital archives that focus on one language or medium, or that present an edited text but only unevenly discuss the archaeological context or the materiality of the object on which the curse or amulet is inscribed. Collections like Audollent's *Defixionum Tabellae* to Preisendanz's *Papyri Graecae Magicae* around the turn of the twentieth century gave way to a 1980s–1990s profusion of collections and studies: Hans Dieter Betz's indispensable *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, John Gager's *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, Roy Kotansky's *Greek Magical Amulets*, Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith's *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*, the many

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Richard Gordon, "Queering Their Pitch: The Curse-Tablets from Mainz, with Some Thoughts on Practising 'Magic,'" *JRA* 27 (2014): 253–300; Gabriella Bevilacqua, "Chiodi Magici," *Archeologia Classica* 52 (2001): 129–50.

¹⁰¹ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words: The Williams James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962); David Frankfurter, "Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken World," in *GSAM*, 608–25.

¹⁰² See also David Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key," in *GSAM*, 17: "This approach to religion stresses the agency of images and crafts, the efficacy of objects, the active presence in images, the vitality of repurposed things."

essential articles of David Jordan, among other (Anglophone) scholarship.¹⁰³ Recently, scholars have issued a call to investigate amulets in the reconstruction of the history of the texts of the New Testament, including Joseph Sanzo's *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt*, Brice Jones's *New Testament Manuscripts Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity*, and Theodor De Bruyn's *Making Amulets Christian*.¹⁰⁴

These essential studies also demonstrate a challenge of the field: ritual objects are often divided for study into different books, based upon their medium (lead, papyrus, gemstone), or divided by language, by cultic affiliation, or presented separately in archaeological site publications. At the same time, collaborative projects and online repositories have proliferated, some of which reasonably replicate these divisions, such as a database of "magical" gems, Coptic Magical Papyri, a site on the Transmission of Magical Knowledge in Antiquity, a re-launched database of curse tablets, and a website and print publications based upon the work of Christopher A. Faraone and Sofia Torralas Tovar's *The Greco-Egyptian Magical Formularies: Libraries, Books and Individual Recipes (GEMF)*.¹⁰⁵ Important integrative studies of so-called magical materials and religion in antiquity sketch the social world that produces rituals which are then labelled as magic. These include Gideon Bohak's *Ancient Jewish Magic*, Andrew Wilburn's *Magica Materia*, Derek Collins's *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, Christopher Faraone's *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times*, and the work of Jessica Lamont and David Frankfurter, among many others.¹⁰⁶

Crucial for my study has been the scholarship of Henk S. Versnel; having myself concluded that curse tablets should be considered in light of

¹⁰³ See also discussion in Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key," in *GSAM*, 3–4.

¹⁰⁴ Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*; Brice C. Jones, *New Testament Manuscripts Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity* (Library of New Testament Studies 554; London: T & T Clark, 2016); Theodor De Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁰⁵ *GEMF*; website can be found at <https://voices.uchicago.edu/magicalpapyri/>.

¹⁰⁶ Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Wilburn, *Materia Magica*; Derek Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008); Christopher Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); see the many articles by Jessica Lamont cited throughout this book, and also her *In Blood and Ashes: Curse Tablets and Binding Spells in Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023); and David Frankfurter's chapters within his edited volume *GSAM*. Also relevant is scholarship that treats the topic of ritual experts, e.g., Wendt, *At the Temple*; Jennifer Eyl, *Signs, Wonders, and Gifts: Divination in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

poetics and as demands for justice, I was both stymied and thrilled to discover his important insights into both. My book builds upon the work of Versnel and others in two important ways. First, it does not duplicate the pattern of “bad” magic versus prayers for justice, suggested by Versnel and adopted by the many who follow him. Second, I attend to literary materials usually labelled as early Christian, as well as to curses.

Morton Smith’s *Jesus the Magician* long ago engaged the controversial idea that miracle stories associated with the Christ movement should be understood in light of the world of “magical” ritual practices in antiquity;¹⁰⁷ individual article-length studies have investigated how literature of the New Testament also uses the terminology of curses. The letter to the Galatians, for example, speaks of “bewitching” (*baskeinō*: Gal. 3:1 “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?”).¹⁰⁸ It also contains a curse, articulated twice:

8 But even if we or a messenger from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed! (Gal. 1:8–9)¹⁰⁹

There are also, famously, “magical” scenes in the late first- or early second-century canonical Acts of the Apostles.¹¹⁰ The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles are chock-full of (miraculous) magic.¹¹¹

Nonetheless, scholarship in the fields of New Testament and ancient Christianity sometimes thinks of objects like *defixiones* as “far from the realm of ancient philosophy.”¹¹² Yet so-called magical objects such as

¹⁰⁷ Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978).

¹⁰⁸ Ὁ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται, τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν. . .; ed. NA28; trans. NRSV throughout, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰⁹ 8 ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐὰν ἡμεῖς ἢ ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ εὐαγγελίζηται [ὑμῖν] παρ’ ὃ εὐηγγελισάμεθα ὑμῖν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω. 9 ὡς προειρήκαμεν καὶ ᾄρτι πάλιν λέγω· εἴ τις ὑμᾶς εὐαγγελίζεται παρ’ ὃ παρελάβετε, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.

¹¹⁰ Paul (as invented by Acts) blinds a man named Bar-Jesus or Elymas. As Wilburn puts it (*Materia Magica*, 176), “Appropriating powers often attributed to magicians, Paul caused the man to go blind for a year for perverting the order established by God.”

¹¹¹ E.g., Susan R. Garrett, *Magic and Miracles in Luke-Acts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Shaily Patel, *Magical Practices and Discourses of Magic in Early Christian Traditions: Jesus, Peter, and Paul* (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 2017), 151–200 and discussion of the dissertation in “Magical Practices and Discourses of Magic in Early Christian Traditions: Jesus, Peter, and Paul,” *Dissertation Spotlight in Ancient Jew Review*, January 29, 2019. Available online: www.ancientjewreview.com/read/2018/8/27/dissertation-spotlight-magical-practices-and-discourses-of-magic-in-early-christian-traditions-jesus-peter-and-paul.

¹¹² David Raymond Smith, *Hand this Man over to Satan* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008), 1.

defixiones and amulets are small and precise distillations into lead, stone, papyrus, etc., of larger ideas and debates about fate, justice, and the gods' activity.¹¹³ *Defixiones* are an underutilized source for the investigation of ideas of the agency, the will, and the efficacy of human and non-human subjects, whether gods or the materiality of the lead on which a *defixio* is incised.¹¹⁴ We should attend as seriously to a *defixio* as we would a treatise by Plutarch or a letter of Paul. We should investigate the content of literary and archaeological materials without trying to taxonomize them into right religious versus malicious magic.¹¹⁵

So-called magical materials provide evidence of religious practices which are improvisational and ecumenical. They cross what we think of as cultic boundaries, as well as transgressing our categories of curse, prayer, vow, and legal action. Richard Gordon, discussing *defixiones*, puts it this way: "the principals merrily combine all the rhetorical means – that is, the ideas, claims, images, metaphors – at their disposal in order to get the message across the boundary to the Other World."¹¹⁶ Naomi

¹¹³ Laura Salah Nasrallah, "Judgment, Justice, and Destruction: *Defixiones* and 1 Corinthians," *JBL* 140.2 (2021): 347–67; eadem, "Lot Oracles and Fate: On Early Christianity among Others in the Second Century," in *Christianity in the Second Century*, eds. James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 213–42.

¹¹⁴ Stanley Stowers's model of a "religion of everyday exchange" expands our perspective on gods, spirits, etc., by using the frame of "non-evident beings" (although I think these beings were evident and visible to those in antiquity); see, e.g., Stanley Stowers, "Why 'Common Judaism' Does Not Look Like Mediterranean Religion," in *Strength to Strength: Essays in Appreciation of Shaye J. D. Cohen*, ed. Michael E. Satlow (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 235–55: "The religion of everyday exchange features approachable deities and similar nonevident beings (NEBs) such as 'local' gods, the beloved dead, the familiar heavenly bodies, angels, demons, ghosts, divinized humans, and spirits" (p. 243).

¹¹⁵ This approach takes part in at least two larger moves in the study of religion. First, scholars of religious studies have shifted from definitions of religion that are based largely in ideologies influenced by Protestantism and the idea of the religious experience of the individual in modernity: thus, we have moved *away* from thinking about religion as constituted primarily or solely by propositional content and internal belief or faith. See Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Manuel A. Vásquez, *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Second, influenced in part by ritual and practice theory (e.g., Catherine Bell, Pierre Bourdieu) and by performance theory (e.g., Judith Butler), scholars of religion are increasingly attending to ritual and practice. For questions about the very category of religion, see Jörg Rüpke, *On Roman Religion: Lived Religion and the Individual in Ancient Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), among other works of his; see also n. 61 above.

¹¹⁶ Gordon, "Queering Their Pitch," 784.

Janowitz rejects the language of magic and mysticism in relation to spells or ascent practices; she insists instead that we think of them as rituals which were considered efficacious in late antiquity.¹¹⁷ Avigail Manekin-Bamberger reminds us that amid the complex semantics of *herem*, *qorban*, and *anathema* in biblical, rabbinic, Pauline, and other late antique texts, including Aramaic incantation bowls, the distinguishing line between vow and curse was sometimes non-existent, and that such practices of vows engaged in acts of power that blurred the line between legal and extra-legal harm.¹¹⁸ *Defixiones* often are practices that address the power of Fate or other gods and beings in order to correct a present situation and/or to address a past wrong.¹¹⁹

Curses and amulets as ritual objects escape our neat scholarly categories of magic, religion, vow, legal action. They also inhabit spaces between our limiting categories of “pagan,” Christian and Jew, which we often wrongly treat like hermetically sealed categories in antiquity. Curses commingle Isis and Iāō: that is, the Egyptian goddess so popular across the Mediterranean world and vowels usually associated with the Jewish name for God. Curses which were likely written by non-Jews draw on stories from the Jewish Bible. Curses help us to dissolve the boundaries of what we often label “Christian” or “Jewish” and to question ancient rhetoric of orthodoxy and heresy, or right religion and wrongful magic.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), esp. xix, 1–6; see also discussions in Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres, eds., *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹¹⁸ Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, “The Vow-Curse in Ancient Jewish Texts,” *HTR* 112. 3 (2019): 340–57, esp. 349, 356.

¹¹⁹ Sortition allows people to address the power of Fate or other gods in order to glean data that is relevant for their futures; *defixiones* can be seen as another aspect of such practices. Esther Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Esther Eidinow, “Binding Spells on Tablets and Papyri,” in *GSAM*, 351–87; David M. Ratzan, “Freakonomika: Oracle as Economic Indicator in Roman Egypt,” in *My Lots Are in Thy Hands: Sortilege and Its Practitioners in Late Antiquity*, eds. AnneMarie Luijendijk and William E. Klingshirn (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 248–89; Laura Salah Nasrallah, “‘I Do Not Wish to Be Rich’: The ‘Barbarian’ Christian Tatian Responds to *Sortes*,” in *My Lots Are in Thy Hands*, 290–308.

¹²⁰ See *inter alia* Karen L. King, “Which Early Christianity?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66–81; Maia Kotrosits, *Rethinking Early Christian Identity: Affect, Violence, and Belonging* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015); Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and*

Curses are valuable data amid the better known elite philosophical-theological debates about how language and beauty and matter operated in the world to link humans and non-humans and to effect wishes and even pleas for justice. They help in historical reconstruction of those of low status, insofar as we can know them from humble curses and from early Christian texts, who materialize and engage their own aesthetic theory through these objects and through these writings. These curses are small, diverse material instantiations,¹²¹ replete with their own aesthetics and evidencing their own theories of how to make contact with divine and daemonic realms – and to seek justice from and against fellow humans.

LOOKING FORWARD

Seeking to balance these ideas about the racialized aesthetic of scholars and the complex aesthetics of ancient ritual, my book falls into two parts. The first two chapters of the book treat materiality. They focus on substance and story, and how these are deployed to effect justice and to effect change. Chapter 1, “Making Justice: Curses, Justin Martyr, and the Nailing of Documents,” probes Justin’s second-century CE *Apology* and its appended document(s) in relation to other contemporaneous strategies and materializations of justice-seeking: appeals and imperial rescripts, which were often nailed up in public spaces or published in stone inscriptions. Justin’s call to the Roman emperors to become “guardians of justice” (1 *Apol.* 2.2) is launched amid contemporaneous discourses and practices of legal argument and documentation. These include a cache of curses from Amathous, Cyprus, some nailed or affixed within a shaft, which call upon *daimones* and divinities to right legal wrongs. A framework for understanding history and justice can be found in

Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

¹²¹ I admit that a literary curse like Ovid’s *Ibis* is neither small nor humble; see Gareth D. Williams, *The Curse of Exile: A Study of Ovid’s Ibis* (Cambridge: The Cambridge Philological Society, 1996). I write with my own obsession with small things, recognizing the danger; as Sianne Ngai discusses, Hannah Arendt critiques such an interest as part of a bourgeois tendency to fondle small objects; for Arendt, the “modern enchantment with ‘small things’ . . . preached by early twentieth-century poetry in almost all European tongues,” which she also acerbically refers to as the ‘art of being happy. . . between dog and cat and flowerpot,’” Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*, 3, referring to Arendt’s *The Human Condition*, 52; see also n. 25 above.

Titus Kaphar's *To Be Sold*, which takes a painting of a document of sale of enslaved persons belonging to Princeton's President Finley, rips it into ribbons, and affixes this document of sale with nails to the mouth of a duplicated portrait of the president. Nailing and affixing, publishing documentary evidence, and exposing injustice: these are the themes of Chapter 1.

Chapter 2, "Substance and Story: A Greengrocer and the Pharoah at Antioch," focuses on fourth-century Antioch. There, someone scratched words on both sides of a sheet of lead and tucked it in a well, cursing a greengrocer named Babylas. They did so by embedding a narrative into the curse: a *historiola* or crystallized story of the Pharoah's chariot drowning in the sea. Just as the Pharoah's chariot drowned, so too the curse should be drowned in the well, so too Babylas should be destroyed. The accursed person is assimilated to the curse tablet and to the well and to the Pharoah. This chapter explores the ethics and the emotions – two related concepts in ancient philosophy-theology – that are evident in this fragment of evidence, and how these fit with the use of the story of the Pharaoh and the sea in the writings of fourth-century John Chrysostom, much of whose life centered on Antioch. Justice is again a theme here: the perceived injustice of Babylas, the ethical injustices of curses, according to Chrysostom. The chapter also explores what it means to use historical-literary fragments and a condensed narrative, opening this investigation by observing the procedure, layout, and content of artist Glenn Ligon's engagement with the first lines of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*.

An Interlude bridges the two parts of the book. Amulets and curse tablets from antiquity, including the recipe books that were used as guides to producing such ritual objects, contain what are to us puzzling materializations of letters, language, and sound which are more visual and sonic than denotational. Sometimes we find *charaktēres*, symbols that look like letters, but are no known alphabet. Sometimes we find streams of vowels on their own or arranged into shapes. Sometimes we find a word that reduces by two letters per line, minimizing itself into the shape of an inverted triangle until the word disappears. These appear on papyrus, gems, and a stone wall. Language's denotational function erodes and its semiotic function blossoms, abstractly. The material and the poetic converge.

The final two chapters of the book focus on sound, song, and language. Linguistic communication can manifest in glossolalia, or speaking in tongues; song or incantation can ensure the efficacy of a ritual or an idea. Chapter 3, "Tongues, Breath, Stutter: 1 Corinthians and a Corinthian

Curse,” treats the famous verse: “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a bronze resonance or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1). These words were read aloud to an assembly of Christ-followers in Roman Corinth in the 50s CE, likely as they stood below a rocky Acrocorinth that would come to shelter *defixiones* or curse tablets. At least one of the eighteen *defixiones* that has been found there includes sequences of known Greek letters that nonetheless make no sense to us. This chapter takes up the topic of speaking in tongues in the context of such curses, and in the context of ancient thinkers like Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Aristides Quintilianus who were theorizing beauty and ugliness and their connection to the human trachea, mouth, teeth, and breath in rhetoric, composition, and music. M. NourbeSe Philip’s poem “Discourse on the Logic of Language” helps us to understand how the mother(’s) tongue can be supplanted by a master and colonial tongue that is both legal and violent, how language can stutter and break apart, how the tongue can also comfort and nurture. Glossolalia might be a justice-seeking endeavor.

Chapter 4, “Incantation: Sound and Song as Curse, Cure, and Gospel,” begins with a late third- or early fourth-century CE curse found in Jerusalem which contains a half line of dactylic hexameter: “bring to perfection this perfect incantation.” This poetic, incantatory phrase, among others, rang out from the fourth century BCE to the fourth century CE. Why? To answer this question, I turn to Braxton Shelley’s analysis of the vamp in Black Church sermon and song, a “repetitive musical cycle” which, “[t]hrough its combination of reiteration and intensification, . . . turns song lyrics into something. . . potent” and “generates emotive and physical intensity.”¹²² Clement of Alexandria’s late third-century *Protreptikos*, alongside Julius Africanus’s *Kestoi* and discussions of music from Aristides Quintilianus to Iamblichus’s *On the Life of the Pythagoreans*, reveal song and sound not as background tunes in antiquity, but as powerful sites for philosophical, theological, and medical intervention. The chapter simultaneously asks what music is justly or unjustly redeployed. Chapter 4 uses the vamp, on the one hand, and ideas of song and the exploitation of singers in Tyehimba Jess’s *Olio*, on the other, to explore how song and incantation suffused Greco-Roman antiquity and shaped the experiences of everyday religion, including the use of repetitive poetic incantatory phrases.

¹²² Braxton D. Shelley, *Healing for the Soul: Richard Smallwood, the Vamp, and the Gospel Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), vii–viii.

Even as I write on ritual objects which contain within themselves assemblages and which originally were likely part of assemblages, even as I write on some art works which are assemblages, so too I am aware of my chapters as assemblages. I risk sounding pretentious, but the chapters are self-consciously concatenations. I don't always start in the same places: sometimes a curse foregrounds the story, sometimes a poem, sometimes a work of art. But I gather these items together in each chapter because, for me, they together constitute something powerful. I do not intend merely to juxtapose or to compare modern art or poetry with an ancient object and then a literary text or two from Mediterranean antiquity. Instead, in the triangulation of these materials chapter by chapter, insights about aesthetics, power, and justice emerge.

With these chapters, with this book, I hope to show that we cannot understand early Christ-followers without also understanding what has been called "magic" – the common, everyday religious practices of curses and incantations. For those who study ancient Christian literature, this book insists upon reading these texts anew in light of curses and incantations, and models a practice of treating these objects with the same exegetical tenderness we usually reserve for scripture or philosophical-theological texts. For those who study ancient "magic," this book insists upon the relevance of ancient Christian materials, showing overlapping aesthetic strategies and theological ideas. The book's theoretical framework demonstrates how art and poetry provide more than mere illustrations or comparisons. These artworks are materializations of research practices and provide resources for thinking about the use of historical fragments in the work of seeking justice. Throughout, I am guided and informed by feminist and womanist hermeneutics that seek to reconstruct the lives of women, those of low status, and to reroute the aesthetics of mainstream scholarship.¹²³

Poet and Classicist Anne Carson writes:

*You could whisper down a well. You could write a letter and keep it in a drawer. You could inscribe a curse on a ribbon of lead and bury it in the ground to lie unread for thousands of years. The point is not to find a reader, the point is the telling itself.*¹²⁴

¹²³ See nn. 17–18 above; I am immensely indebted to the classic works of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (e.g., *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* [Boston: Beacon, 1992]) and Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993).

¹²⁴ Anne Carson, "Candor: Could 1," <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/candor/>. With thanks to Sarah Porter and with gratitude to Anne Carson for permission.

My book takes the whisper of the curse on the ribbon of lead and tries to retell its story – not only the words, but also the aesthetic experimentation that produced it, not only the aesthetic experimentation, but also the gesture and the intimacy of acts of religion which are simultaneously acts of power within human community, acts of calling upon divine beings, acts that name and critique perceived injustice, acts that use the material world – stone, chisel, papyrus, pen, lead, stylus, well, nail – to effect change. Can you sing your way to healing? Can you get justice by dropping a lead tablet into a well? Can you speak with the tongues of angels? Some people in antiquity thought you could, and this book brings the reader into the promises and problems of these practices.

Making Justice

*Curses, Justin Martyr, and the Nailing of Documents*¹

Titus Kaphar's painting *To Be Sold* depicts Princeton University's president Finley (1761–66), partially obscured by shredded, hanging canvas strips affixed with nails (Plate 2).²

To Be Sold as a research-creation is both art object and historiographical critique. It aesthetically and ethically intervenes in a chain of historical objects: an eighteenth-century oil portrait of president Finley, attributed to John Hesselius (1728–78), hung in the Princeton University Faculty Room. In 1870, Charles Walker Lind used this portrait as the basis of his own oil portrait of Finley. Kaphar's *To Be Sold* triples this painterly genealogy by imitating Lind's painting.

The painting's title, *To Be Sold*, engages documentary historical evidence. It refers to a 1766 newspaper headline announcing the sale of six enslaved persons of African descent at Princeton's Maclean House, as part of the dispersing of president Finley's estate. Kaphar painted the advertisement in eighteenth-century looping, rust-colored script on

¹ Jeremy Williams and Sarah F. Porter have been influential conversation partners in my writing of this chapter. See Jeremy Williams, *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles: Race, Rhetoric, and the Prosecution of an Early Christian Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), and Sarah F. Porter, *Early Christian Deathscapes* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2022); Sarah F. Porter, "A Church and Its Charms: Space, Affect, and Affiliation in Late Fourth-Century Antioch," *SLA* 5.4 (2021): 651, 656–57.

² This work was commissioned by the Princeton & Slavery Project, a project by Princeton University that takes part in a larger movement of universities considering how their founding and finances are intertwined with the history of enslavement in the Americas. See "Samuel Finley," Princeton University, <https://slavery.princeton.edu/stories/samuel-finley>; Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), esp. 60–61.

canvas, tore it, and nailed strips to his portrait of Finley.³ Tucked safely into an arched space, Kaphar's Finley reacts with his right eyebrow skeptically tugging upwards at a muscle in his forehead. The word "SOLD" ripples downward from the center of Finley's face. Kaphar often uses the technique of shredding and nailing "documents." He affixes one piece of documentary evidence – a reproduction of a historical text – to another – a canvas that references a historical painting. He explains his use of nailing by referring to *minkisi minkondi*: "the gesture of nailing pieces of canvas into the image is inspired by the Congolese tradition of Nkisi power objects, and it is symbolic of both faith and power in the object itself."⁴

Kaphar's *To Be Sold* draws on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century aesthetics of Anglo-European portraiture and advertisements of the enslaved.⁵ It also draws on the aesthetics and gestures of Kongolese

³ Curatorial notes displayed with Titus Kaphar, *To Be Sold*, at the Princeton Art Museum, December 2018. Jennifer Glancy pointed out to me the double meaning of the work's title, which can refer not only to the eighteenth-century advertisement but also to Kaphar's artwork. What is the reception of the artwork as an object "to be sold" in the cycle of recognition of the injustice of American slavery that nonetheless does not lead to reparations? Kaphar also uses the technique of shredding and nailing one canvas to another in his 2016 *Shadows of Liberty*, a work that portrays and effaces the first American president, George Washington, with bristling nails that affix "a sculptural cascade of shredded strips of canvas, each featuring a painted name that appears to be written in Washington's own hand." Together, these strips make up "a single page from his personal ledger, titled: 'Negroes, Belonging to George Washington in His Own Right and by Marriage'" (Titus Kaphar, *Language of the Forgotten* [New Haven: Titus Kaphar, 2019], 88). In *Shadows of Liberty*, historical, documentary evidence is twisted and nailed to Kaphar's distant echo of John Trumbull's 1792 painting *General George Washington at Trenton* and the work of John Faed, who popularly reinterpreted Trumbull's image in the nineteenth century.

⁴ Kaphar, *Language of the Forgotten*, 88: "The gesture of nailing pieces of canvas is inspired by the ancient tradition of African fetish objects. They are not inserted as a kind of violence and critique, but as symbols of faith in both the object and the object's power." Elsewhere, Kaphar explicitly discusses the idea of amending history ("Can Art Amend History?" TED talk, 12:44, www.ted.com/talks/titus_kaphar_can_art_amend_history). Regarding the language of fetish, see Sylvester Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500–2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 58; Greg Tate's 2013 essay, "To Bid a Poet Black and Abstract," in *Fly Boy 2: The Greg Tate Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 212; Anthony Pinn, *Interplay of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021). I am grateful to Dr. Elizabeth Searcy for a conversation in which she alerted me to the resonance of Kaphar's paintings with *minkisi* traditions. For a discussion of *minkisi* in relation to ancient ritual objects, see Andrew T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 80–82.

⁵ See also Glenn Ligon's 1993 series *Runaways*, which imitates the aesthetics and text of advertisements regarding enslaved persons who had escaped slavery.

power figures and their ritual contexts.⁶ In the gesture of nailing, Kaphar participates in the bristling power of ritual gesture associated with *minkisi minkondi*. Kongolese *minkisi minkondi* (sing. *nkisi n'kondi*) are repositories of power (Plate 3).⁷ Whatever the form of the *n'kondi*, it is activated by a small amount of “medicine” within, usually tucked behind an orifice in the belly, capped by a mirror. Some *minkondi* are also ritually impaled with blades called *mbau*, each representing “an appeal to the force represented in the figure, arousing it to action.”⁸ That action was often one of healing or oath-making.⁹ Each object nailed or tied upon the power figure was evidence of a miniature story of a desire to act or make an oath, empowered by *minkisi*, or spirits. As Wyatt MacGaffey puts it: “People depend on *minkisi* to do things for them, even to make life itself possible.”¹⁰

⁶ Robert Farris Thompson and Joseph-Aurélien Cornet (in *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds* [Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1981], 27) explain: “Kongo, spelled with a K, refers to the ‘unitary civilization by which BaKongo (the Kongo people) themselves refer to their traditional territory and way of life.’” On ritual and artistic traditions of the Kongo and the African diaspora, see Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 103–58, and Wyatt MacGaffey et al., eds., *Astonishment and Power* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Museum of African Art, 1993).

⁷ Alisa LaGamma, ed., “Kongo: Power and Majesty,” *Kongo: Power and Majesty* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 17–46, especially 37–38. LaGamma defines *minkisi* as “spirit personalities that empower fabricated objects or charms” (p. 30) and sees *minkisi* as a sub-phenomenon of *minkondi*. Many use the terms *minkisi* and *minkondi* fluidly.

⁸ MacGaffey, “The Eyes of Understanding: Kongo Minkisi,” in *Astonishment and Power*, 43–44.

⁹ On healing, see MacGaffey, “The Eyes of Understanding: Kongo Minkisi,” in *Astonishment and Power*, 61; and on oath-making, see LaGamma, “Kongo: Power and Majesty,” 37–38.

¹⁰ Sylvia M. Williams, “Fragments of History,” in *Astonishment and Power*, 13. LaGamma (“Kongo: Majesty and Power,” 34) defines *nkisi*: “the complex of physical matter, rules, songs, and ritual actions associated with his [the *n'ganga* or ritual specialist’s] activation of a specific spiritual force. It is deployed to identify and punish those responsible for afflicting others with any number of problems, among them misfortune, sickness, or death. The animating force is incorporated by the *n'ganga* through the addition of *bilongo*, or medicines, which consist of animal, vegetable, and mineral matter with metaphorical significance that link Mpemba, the client, and the empowering spirit.” On the understanding of *minkisi* in relation to medicines, see also Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 118. LaGamma (“Kongo: Power and Majesty,” 34) notes that, at the end of the fifteenth century, Kongolese *minkondi* began to incorporate Christian elements, and Christian “references to the ‘holy,’ ‘sacred,’ and ‘divine’ were translated as *nkisi*.”

Minkondi are also power-figures in a political sense: they are produced because of legal and social concerns, and they are agents in conflicts. *Minkondi* can pursue a culprit. They are “regulatory instruments” that can heal, mend violence, or produce death and “adjudicators with the capacity to attack foes or foster peace.”¹¹ A seventeenth-century document indicates that a Belgian officer on campaign in the Kongo determined that one *n’kondi* had a “very great reputation” and considered it an important hostage. After its capture, the officer stored it in a metal warehouse, metal’s materiality disrupting the power of *n’kondi*.¹²

Kaphar stands in a tradition of contemporary artists of African descent who engage the nails and gesture of the *minkisi minkondi*, working a diasporic ritual aesthetics into pieces displayed in museums. Decades before *To Be Sold*, Renée Stout created her *Fetish 1* and *Fetish 2* (Plates 4 and 5), which pierce with nails and hang bundles on the form of an infant and on the artist’s own sculpted body, transforming both into power-figures.¹³ Valerie Maynard’s *Mourning for Maurice* (Plate 6) used nails to form the hair on a sculpted wooden face, eyes closed, serene and sad.¹⁴

Kaphar’s work and that of Stout and Maynard form assemblages. Assemblages in archaeology refer to mixed deposits – for example, a broken bowl, an earring, a hair pin, and a gold leaf to cover the mouth of the deceased, found together in a grave. Assemblages in art history usually refer to sculptural mixed-media compositions that juxtapose objects. “Assemblages” in critical theory is a term sometimes used to

¹¹ LaGamma, “Kongo: Power and Majesty,” 39.

¹² He was “confident that the taking of this famous god would have a considerable effect on the events that were unfolding at that moment.” Alexandre Delcommune, *Vingt années de vie africaine: Récits de voyages, d’aventures et d’exploration au Congo Belge, 1874–1893* (2 vols.; Brussels: Larcier, 1922), 95, as cited and translated by LaGamma, “Kongo: Power and Majesty,” 39; see also pp. 221–65. Thompson (*Flash of the Spirit*, 123) argues that Afro-Cuban *pendas* are a diasporic continuing of *minkondi* traditions. These could be used “to mystically attack slaveholders and other enemies, and for spiritual reconnaissance” (p. 125).

¹³ Stout’s work was displayed alongside *minkisi minkondi* in the “Astonishment and Power” exhibit at the Sackler Museum in DC and discussed in Michael D. Harris, “Resonance, Transformation, and Rhyme: The Art of Renée Stout,” in *Astonishment and Power*, 107–56. But see also critiques of contemporary artists who use this form and gesture without fully engaging in or understanding the ritual and religious context in Bárbaro Martínez-Ruiz, “Kongo Ins-(ex)piration in Contemporary Art,” *Art Bulletin* 98.3 (2016): 291–96. See also Laura Salah Nasrallah, “The Work of Nails: Religion, Mediterranean Antiquity, and Contemporary Black Art,” *JAAR* 20 (2022): 1–21.

¹⁴ Asma Naeem and Leslie Cozzi, eds., *Valerie Maynard: Lost and Found* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 2020), 67; see also Maynard’s *Barbara with Blanket*.

explain the dynamic and shifting intersectional human.¹⁵ Feminist and queer theorist Jasbir Puar argues that assemblages even have a political effect of relativizing the human in relation to other circuits of power: “assemblages ... de-privilege the human body as a discrete organic thing ... We are enmeshed in forces, affects, energies, we are composites of information.”¹⁶ Puar’s work moves away from the human or human language as the sole sites of meaning-making and as primary sites from which political activity can emerge.¹⁷

Ancient curses or *defixiones* also are part of assemblages, although this data – what objects they were found near, the original state of deposit – is often lost to the archaeological record. In a famous example now at the Louvre, a small, unbaked mud figurine pierced with thirteen iron pins, a lead *defixio* that seeks to compel Ptolemais to love Sarapammon, and a clay vessel were found together.¹⁸ The assemblage was also thought to include (invisible to us) “forces, affects, energies” (to borrow from Puar) of *daimones* (spirits); sometimes portions of the assemblage were pinned together with the nail.

¹⁵ Porter, *Early Christian Deathscapes*, discusses how the semi-accident of translation of Deleuze and Guattari’s *agencement* as assemblage has formed scholarly conversation, including connections between archaeological assemblages and theories of assemblage.

¹⁶ Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 213, here influenced by Donna Haraway, explains the origins of the term “assemblage” (in French, *agencement*) in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 49–66, esp. p. 57). Puar’s theory of assemblage decenters the subject and language, developing the idea of intersectionality from its legal and political framework in Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work. Puar cites feminist physicist Karen Barad: “Language has been granted too much power” (Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 58). Puar draws on Barad’s “theory of performative metaphysics,” in which “matter is not a ‘thing’ but a doing.” See Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs* 28 (2003): 801–31. Puar also draws on affect theorist Brian Massumi’s interest in multiple actors (human and nonhuman) in a space in which emotions emerge (*Parables for the Virtual: Affect, Movement, Sensation* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2002]). On assemblage, see also Alexander Weheliye, *Habes Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), discussed in @@ [chapter 2 n. 34 currently]].

¹⁷ For important uses of these posthumanist ideas in early Christian studies, see Denise Kimber Buell, “The Microbes and Pneuma That Therefore I Am,” in *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 63–87.

¹⁸ Musée du Louvre E27145a, E27145b, E27145c; for discussion of this assemblage, see Andrew T. Wilburn, “Figurines, Images, and Representations Used in Ritual Practices,” in GSAM, 465; John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 93–98.

Assemblages such as those of Kaphar, Stout, and Maynard share with archaeological, theoretical, and ancient assemblages (the *defixio* as itself combining elements) the use of nails and the ability to destabilize and lodge critiques of injustice. For that matter, my own book forms an assemblage, seeking to reconfigure the aesthetics of my own field by looking to traditionally marginal aspects of it – curses, and those of low status – and by centering on art as a theoretical frame and conversation partner.

Ancient Mediterranean curses often function within assemblages to insist that an injustice be reversed or a judgment be meted out. We do not know the larger contexts of this sometimes literally underground attempt to gain justice (or what they perceived as justice). Yet, we can think analogously about history and justice in our own times, and how attempts to effect justice or reparations are often foiled by injustice meted out by official judicial systems or by an unwillingness to be responsible to – not guilty for, but responsible to – historical injustices and their ongoing effects. Titus Kaphar’s art, in *To Be Sold* and elsewhere, engages historical materials in order to respond to state-sponsored (in)justice.¹⁹ This conversation about restorative or reparative justice occurs as well in legal circles and political philosophy. Adriaan Lanni writes about the possibility that restorative justice could be instantiated to reduce mass incarceration and as an alternative, sometimes, to a criminal legal system that, at least in the United States, is recognized “as racially discriminatory, overly punitive, and ineffective.”²⁰ Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* argues that the U.S. criminal justice system is a new “racial caste system,” which perpetuates racial exclusion.²¹ Alexander contrasts the criminal justice system with ideas of social justice. Legal experiments with alternative systems of justice administering can also be found in the work of restorative justice leader Howard Zehr, who argues that the American

¹⁹ See also Williams, *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles*, Angela Parker, *If God Still Breathes, Why Can’t I? Black Lives Matter and Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021). Titus Kaphar’s art and exhibit with Reginald Dwayne Betts, “Pleading Justice,” addresses similar topics and displays Betts’s redacted legal transcripts, which become found poems; see also Kaphar’s *The Jerome Project*.

²⁰ Adriaan Lanni, “Taking Restorative Justice Seriously,” *Buffalo Law Review* 69.3 (2021): 637; see also 639.

²¹ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010), 2. Alexander redefines (social) justice: “This book argues that mass incarceration is, metaphorically, the New Jim Crow and that all those who care about social justice should fully commit themselves to dismantling this new racial caste system” (p. 11).

justice system confuses punishment and justice, using a framework of “adversarial justice”²² in which crime is defined as an offense against the state, not against an individual.²³ Alexander, Lanni, and Zehr adduce multiple and more and less institutionalized forms of justice in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century United States: retributive justice and criminal legal system, social justice, reconciliation, restorative justice.

So too we can think of multiple sites of justice in antiquity. The larger discourse of justice is found not only in elite authors who have time or leisure (*scholē* in Greek, *schola* in Latin, from which we derive our words school and scholar) to talk about justice, but also in modes and places like novels or imperial responses on papyrus nailed to walls, or ancient Christian *apologiai* or defences or other literary texts that depict concerns over justice²⁴ – or in curse tablets that engage in contemporaneous legal work, broadly understood. This larger discourse of justice could be found, for example, in the classroom where the curriculum included student debate of imaginary laws, as if before a judge.²⁵ To emphasize: The ancient courtroom should not be the only or primary site for our historical search for evidence of justice-making.

Practices of formal written petitions to the imperial family, of speeches addressed to the imperial family like Justin’s *Apologies*, which we shall address later, and of cursing are usually set in separate scholarly bins. Written petitions are a topic of expertise by one person interested in archaeology and epigraphy and papyrological evidence and Roman legal history; *apologiai* or defences are claimed as the scholarly territory of ancient Christianity; curses are the purview of experts studying ancient

²² Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times* (Harrisonburg: Herald Press, 2015), 75–79, quotation at p. 81. Zehr uses theological resources, including a (misguided) discussion of Romans 7 (pp. 69–75, esp. pp. 74–75). For an overview of recent discussions of restorative justice, see Brenda Morrison and Eliza Ahmed, “Restorative Justice and Civil Society,” *Journal of Social Issues* 62.2 (2006): 209–15; see also Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>.

²³ Zehr, *Changing Lenses*, 84–85; Danielle Sered, *Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair* (New York: The New Press, 2019), 198. See also Laura Salah Nasrallah, “Judgment, Justice, and Destruction: *Defixiones* and 1 Corinthians,” *JBL* 140.2 (2021): 347–67.

²⁴ Ari Z. Bryen, “Law in Many Pieces,” *Classical Philology* 109.4 (2014): 346–65, as well as his new book in progress; Williams, *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles*.

²⁵ “[S]tudents in their progymnasmata would debate the implications of imaginary laws.” Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Preservation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 12.

magic. Yet these practices engage in similar operations of rhetoric of persuasion, proceeding from common sets of assumptions about the nature of the gods, the operation of power, and the right to justice. Various concurrent mechanisms of justice-making, whether sanctioned by the Roman Empire, the local civic authorities, or grassroots, existed and sometimes conflicted.²⁶ They deploy different aesthetics – the beauty of a speech, the force of collated documents, the ritual sinking of a curse down a shaft – to do so. Sometimes they envision a divine judge.

The curse is not an atavistic or desperate attempt, compared to a clean and straightforward legal petition or a lofty elite(ish) treatise. All are fuelled by concerns about justice. They produce their attempts to right (what they perceive are) unjust situations within an expanding Roman imperial power, for which, as Brent Shaw puts it, “the experience of witnessing and participating in a trial was arguably the quintessential civic experience of the state.”²⁷ This fearsome experience was not confined to the courtroom, or limited to legal cases, or constrained to the imperial center of Rome; the law of the Roman Empire came to have a great and complex impact upon the provinces. The courts were a place for Roman provincial elites to advance their careers; for others, they could be sites of fear.²⁸ Provincial elites generally wanted to avoid legal procedures

²⁶ See e.g., Ari Z. Bryen, “Martyrdom, Rhetoric, and the Politics of Procedure,” *Classical Antiquity* 33.2 (2014): 243–80; Angelos Chaniotis, “Under the Watchful Eyes of the Gods: Divine Justice in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor,” in *The Greco-Roman East: Politics, Culture, Society*, ed. S. Colvin (YCS 31; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–43; Chaniotis is interested in part in attempts to pursue justice in regard to those who have broken oaths, using data from the so-called confession inscriptions. This epigraphic evidence from Asia Minor is found in Georg Petzl, *Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens* (Epigraphica Anatolica 22; Bonn: Habelt, 1994) with texts and translations in Hasan Malay and Georg Petzl, *New Religious Texts from Lydia* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017). Regarding provincial law, see Cédric Brélaz, “Local Understandings of Roman Criminal Law and Procedure in Asia Minor,” in *Law in the Roman Provinces*, eds. K. Czakowski and B. Eckhardt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), esp. 171. Brélaz also mentions that epigraphic evidence of penalties for grave violation evinces “a careful attention to legal matters and a deep knowledge of civil and criminal judicial procedures” (p. 168).

²⁷ Brent Shaw, “Judicial Nightmares and Christian Memory,” *JECS* 11.4 (Winter 2003): 535. Shaw continues: “It was the most intense and widespread public and ceremonial imperial presence found in a myriad local venues (*sic*) in the provinces of the empire.” See also Maria E. Doerfler, “Christianity and Roman Law,” *The Oxford Handbook on Christianity and Law*, eds. John Witte, Jr. and Rafael Domingo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

²⁸ A. Dolganov, “Reichsrecht und Volksrecht in Theory and Practice: Roman Justice in the Province of Egypt (P.Oxy. II 237, P.Oxy. IV 706, SB XII 10929),” *TYCHE* 34 (2019): 30. I do not mean to imply that, all of a sudden, especially after the *constitutio Antoniniana*,

that involved Roman imperial power; reaching out to Rome would give the impression that the longstanding mechanisms of power within the *polis* were inadequate and would possibly open the door to violence: provincial elites preferred negotiation among the injured parties.²⁹ As Shaw emphasizes, the “rituals and frightening apparatus of the court and public punishment” had their powerful effects, emerging even in dreams and nightmares, into a “social field of rule-driven behavior.” Among other strategies of seeking justice, this context “necessitated . . . curse tablets.”³⁰

A CURSE FROM CYPRUS

[1] *Demonēs*, those who are under the earth, and *demonēs* whoever you may be; fathers of fathers, and mothers who combat men; those who lie here, and those who sit here, who take grievous passion (*thumos*) from the heart:
[5] Take over the passion of Aristōn which he has toward me, Sotērianos, also called Limbaros, and his anger, and take away from him his power and defensive strength and make him cold and voiceless and breathless, cold toward me, Sotērianos also called Limbaros. . .³¹

everyone solely used Roman legal procedures; see Brélaz, “Local Understandings,” for the ongoing negotiations of local and Roman law and power.

²⁹ Ari Bryen, *The Judgment of the Provinces: Law, Culture, and Empire in Rome’s Eastern Provinces* (in progress), offers the example of Polemo in Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 532.

³⁰ Shaw, “Judicial Nightmares,” 535, 537. This overwhelming sense of judicial power even seeped its way into Christian references to Christ as *iudex* or judge and Christian epitaphs that mention “that fearful day of court” (p. 560).

³¹ Translation slightly emended from CT no. 45 (p. 132) and Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 171–72 (see more broadly 169–218). Originally published by L. MacDonald, “Inscriptions Relating to Sorcery in Cyprus,” *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 13 (1891): 160–90. Greek from *IKourion* 127 (pp. 246–83), accessed at <https://inscriptions.packhum.org>.

(1) [δέμονες] οἱ κατὰ γῆν κὲ δέμονες οἷτ[ινές]
[ἔσ]τε κὲ πατέρες πατέρων κὲ μητέρε[ς ἀντι]-[
ἐνί]ριοι οἷτινες ἐνθάδε κῖσθε κὲ οἷτινες ἐνθάδε]
[κ]άθεστε, θυμὸν ἀπὸ κραδῆς πολυκηδέα [π]ρὸ[σθε λα]-
(5) βόντες, παραλάβετε τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος τὸν θυμὸν τ[ὸν]
πρὸς ἐμέ ἔχι τὸν Σοτηριανὸν τὸν κὲ Λίμβαρρον κὲ τῆ<ν> ὀ[ρ]-
γῆν, κὲ ἀφέλεσθε αὐτοῦ τὴν δύναμιν κὲ τὴν ἀλκὴν κὲ [ποι]-
[ή]σετε αὐτὸν ψυχρὸν κὲ ἄφωνον κὲ ἀπνεύμοναν, ψυχ-
ρὸν εἰς ἐμέ τὸν Σοτηριανὸν τὸν κὲ Λίμβαρρον.

So begins a forceful and emotionally de-escalating (“take... passion from the heart”) sixty-line *defixio* from Amathous, Cyprus. I don’t know what this Aristōn had on Sotērianos a.k.a. Limbaros, but it was bad. The vocabulary of the curse, and the existence of other legal curses in the same archaeological context, reveal that Sotērianos seeks to silence Aristōn, his “opponent” (*antidikōn*), in court. He tries to re-route Aristōn’s emotions, so that Aristōn’s anger does not empower the case in court. Sotērianos invokes a panoply of divinities to effect this curse: among others, Pluto, Hekate, Hermes, Kore, the Erinyes, and Iaō (a name frequently associated with the Jewish God).

This lead tablet of ca. 14.7 × 25.9 cm was found rolled from top down, with the writing on the inside. It was nestled among over two hundred lead curse tablets and perhaps thirty selenite curse tablets (a thin, milky shard of gypsum) at the bottom of a shaft in Amathous (Plate 7).³² The majority, if not all, involved court disputes and were probably written soon before trial.³³ This is a cache of curses and ritual objects. It is also an archive of legal documents. Those who have carefully studied the handwriting (paleography), the formulae, the names (onomastics), the systems of carving letters into the lead (epigraphy) conclude that the tablets were

³² Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 174–75. Due to their attribution to Kourion in the *editio princeps* of Louise MacDonald in 1891, it was only later that Amathous as find site of the tablets was clarified in a paragraph-long note by Pierre Augert and David R. Jordan, “Magical Inscriptions on Talc Tablets from Amathous,” *AJA* 85.2 (1981): 184; idem, “Tablettes magiques d’Amathonte,” in *Art antique de Chypre du Bronze moyen à l’époque byzantine au Cabinet des médailles* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1994), 67–71. On the complex archaeological history, see Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 177–87.

³³ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 213. Only sixteen lead and six selenite tablets have been published (pp. 186–87). The count of how many have been published varies, with MacDonald (“Inscriptions Relating to Sorcery in Cyprus,” 160–90) publishing seventeen and Gager (*CT*, 132) replicating this number; the confusion is due to the fragmentary status of the tablets. As a comparison to the Amathous tablets, see *P. Yale* 1.61, which reports significant judicial activity at the governor’s assizes; on the topic of Egyptian cities (in rotation) as hosts of Roman imperial assizes (διαλογισμὸς καὶ δικαιοδοσίαι), see Guiliana F. Talamanca, *Ricerche sul processo nell’Egitto greco-romano*, vol. 1: *L’organizzazione del ‘Conventus’ del ‘Praefectus Aegypti’* (Milan: A. Guiffre, 1974). I am grateful to Ari Bryn for suggesting this comparison. Amathous experienced significant changes during the Roman period, including to its primary cult, the Temple of Aphrodite, Cypria, which came to house cult to the Roman imperial family. See Takashi Fujii, *Imperial Cult and Imperial Representation in Roman Cyprus* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2013); Ersin Hussein, *Revaluing Roman Cyprus: Local Identity on an Island in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 117.

written and deposited in a relatively short time frame, probably in the third-century CE.³⁴

These *defixiones* were not the products of individual worry and secret anger. While each curse was written for a precise occasion, these problems of justice resounded among multiple people and multiple cases. It seems the ritual practitioners likely used references material for model curses, which they could customize: among the selenite curses at Amathous, there were “at least three templates” and a single template for the lead tablets, which urges chthonic divinities to bind and punish someone.³⁵ These legal cases use similar language, inserting different plaintiffs and defendants. They nestle together at the bottom of a shaft, forming an archive that brims with concern, that hopes for the tamping down of wrath (*orgē*), and that begs for the chill and silence of legal opponents.

The clarity of the letter forms, a tendency to orthography and clear spacing, different handwriting, and the use of templates indicates that these *defixiones* were produced by multiple ritual specialists, not individual commissioners.³⁶ We do not know who these ritual experts were. They were likely temple affiliates, perhaps even priests, and their work was professional, ritual, and scribal.³⁷ Temple attendants and priests were ritual specialists who sometimes offered one-on-one moments to address the specific needs of worshippers, for example the priests who translated the utterances of the Pythian prophetess at Delphi, the priest-healers of the Sanctuary of Asklepios at Pergamon as recounted in Aelius Aristides’s *Sacred Tales*, or the ritual practitioner who thumbed a tiny

³⁴ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 172. The practice of using *defixiones* in Amathous persisted at least until the seventh century: see Pierre Aupert, “Amathonte hellénistique et romaine: l’apport des travaux récents,” *Cahiers du Centre d’Études Chypristes* 39 (2009): 43–44.

³⁵ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 187–88. These verbal overlaps allow for the reconstruction of Sotērianos’s fragmentary curse.

³⁶ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 169, 200–201. Wilburn overturns the earlier idea of Aupert and Jordan (“Magical Inscriptions on Talc Tablets,” 184) that “we now have more texts by this scribe than by any other ancient magician” (cited in Gager, *CT*, 134). The repetition of certain names in the *defixiones* at Amathous seems to indicate “an interlocking web of individuals employing magic against provincial authorities” (Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 210–11).

³⁷ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 206. Consider, for example, the placement of *defixiones* in the Sanctuary of Magna Mater and Isis at Mainz (Moguntiacum) or that of Sulis Minerva at Bath, which seem to have been part of a larger practice, perhaps sustained by the ritual expertise of priests there. So too, divinatory practices adhere to certain sanctuaries, such as the Temple of Apollo in Hierapolis (Phrygia) or Delphi, or the Shrine of St. Colluthus in Arsinoe (Egypt).

codex called the Gospel of the Lots of Mary to find some oracle for the inquirer.³⁸ By the time of the so-called Council of Laodikeia (363–64), Christian priests were banned from work as diviners, indicating the close relations between the tasks of ritual specialists and hinting that some ritual experts critiqued other ritual experts as problematically moonlighting for extra cash.³⁹ In the case of Christian divination or amuletic inscriptions, or in the case of Sotērianos's curse against Aristōn at Amathous, practitioners were acting theologically, which in this instance involved helping to send Aristōn and his son to the doorkeeper and the gatekeeper of Hades. These ritual specialists were interwoven into a larger network of simultaneously cultic and legal expertise.⁴⁰

Amathous provides an exceptionally rich cache of courtroom-oriented ritual objects/texts. Yet the phenomenon of legal curses is empire-wide and temporally broad. One of the earliest publications of *defixiones*, A. Audollent's *Defixionum Tabellae*, offers a taxonomy that includes *Iudicariae et in inimicos conscriptae*, "judicial and written against enemies."⁴¹ In his 1992 book, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, John Gager includes curses from the classical period in Athens in chapters titled "Tongue-Tied in Court: Legal and Political Disputes" and "Pleas for Justice and Revenge." Similarly, in the 1990s, Henk S. Versnel made the important argument that we should understand some curse tablets to be "prayers for justice," and this categorization has since been widely adopted.⁴² The pity is that the power of Versnel's insight has led to a rigid

³⁸ For the Pythia, see e.g., Pausanias *Descr.* 10.5.6–8 and Plutarch *De def. or.* (Mor. 412c); for the ancient Christian sortition manual, see AnneMarie Luijendijk, *Forbidden Oracles?: The Gospel of the Lots of Mary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

³⁹ Theodore De Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 89–138; see also Luijendijk, *Forbidden Oracles*.

⁴⁰ For example, one selenite tablet at Amathous "incorporates a spell text that is also known from PGM IV, a papyrus that has been provenanced to Egyptian Thebes" (Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 172).

⁴¹ A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1904), 471–72.

⁴² Gager states: "The bulk of this massive find consists of brief spells directed against opponents, the prosecutors, in legal proceedings"; the goal is to "render them incapable of speaking at the trial. The clients were thus prospective defendants" (Gager, *CT*, 133). Henk S. Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West: New Finds and Publications Since 1990," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*, eds. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 275–354; see also Esther Eidinow, "Binding Spells on Tablets and Papyri," in *GSAM*, 351. See also Henk S. Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, eds. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 105–58; and Fritz Graf, "Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual," in *Magika Hiera*:

scholarly categorization: Is this a prayer for justice, or is it a form of vicious and vengeful magic?⁴³ This problematic dualism subtly reinforces the good religion/bad magic binary of earlier scholarship, and occludes our understanding the fact that a variety of curses function as legal documents.

The Amathous curses, including Sotērianos's, are unusual in offering the names of petitioner and accursed. Curses usually mention only the latter, while the petitioner remains anonymous, perhaps seeking plausible deniability. The mentioning of both may enforce the legal quality of the curse, inscribing the defendant and the accused as one might find in a court document above ground.⁴⁴ Sotērianos's justice-seeking is laced with legal terms. For example, dry, bureaucratic terminology is evoked in the word "the aforementioned" or "previously written" (*progegrammenon*), which evokes epigraphic practices of setting forth of public notices or even someone's registration for judgment or condemnation.⁴⁵

Demonēs (a variant spelling of *daimonēs*) are invoked as the first word of the Amathous curse. The term *daimōn* is usually understood, as with the English demon, to be a negative force. In the texts we encounter in this chapter, *daimonēs* are involved in enacting torture and Justin sees them as continually deceptive and evil. Yet elsewhere they are understood as positive, animating forces.⁴⁶ In this Amathousian curse, *daimonēs* or

Ancient Greek Magic and Religion, eds. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 188–213. For an interpretation of curse tablets of the Northwestern provinces of the Roman Empire, in relation to the "failing of Roman law" and the challenge of access to state-sponsored adjudication, see Stuart McKie, *The Social Significance of Curse Tablets in the North-Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* (Ph.D. thesis, The Open University, 2017), 131–41. Christopher Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres from Homer to Theocritus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 120–21 argues that Aeschylus provided an etiology to curses involving court cases and justice. For curses and Christian Testament texts, see Nasrallah, "Judgment, Justice, and Destruction."

⁴³ Versnel uses the phrase "prayers for justice" with great effect but also creates a problematic binary between malicious curses and true prayers for justice (Versnel, "Prayers for Justice," 275–354); see also Blänsdorf's evident struggle with Versnel's taxonomy as applied to the curses in the Sanctuary of Isis Penthea and Magna Mater at Mainz: Jürgen Blänsdorf, "The *Defixiones* from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 141–89.

⁴⁴ Francisco Marco Simón, "Execrating the Roman Power: Three *Defixiones* from Emporiae (Ampurias)," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 413.

⁴⁵ LSJ s.v. προγράφω includes a reference to SEG. 4.263 (lines 13, 15) and mentions that this term translates the Latin *proscribere*; see also Jude 4.

⁴⁶ I leave the term in the transliterated Greek to help us to recall that a *daimōn* could also be a powerfully good force, an inspiring spirit. See e.g., Plutarch, *On the Genius*

spirits are addressed by location, ontology, and bodily orientation: under the earth; whoever they may be; they are lying and sitting. They are identified in kinship terms: fathers of fathers, and also “mothers who combat men,” an epithet of the Amazons used in the *Iliad*, raising the image of warrior mothers.⁴⁷ The phrase “grievous passion” (*thumon* . . . *polukēdea*) evokes Homeric terminology, and my translation cannot capture the richness of the word *thumos*, which in Homeric epic marks not simply emotion but a quasi-physical site of courage and anger within a person. The *defixio* sounded impressive and drew on prestigious, authoritative tradition. Its first four lines comprise an invocation, in (rough) dactylic hexameter with metrical and lexical allusions to Homer,⁴⁸ in the midst of the larger cultural turn of the so-called Second Sophistic, which revisited ancient poets for instrumental means and sought to recover the purer outlook on the world held by earlier humans.⁴⁹ The curse draws on pre-classical traditions that “curative

(*daimonion*) of Socrates; Maximus of Tyre’s speech about Socrates’ *daimonion* (his spirit or genius) argues that Homer refers to Athena as a *daimonion*. From here Maximus moves to ask: “But Homer’s daemonic power is not a single entity, nor one that associates with just one individual in only one set of circumstances for only trivial purposes. It takes many forms and intervenes on many occasions, under many names, in many shapes, and with many different voices. Do you accept this to some degree, and believe in the existence of Athena, Hera, Apollo, Strife, and all the other Homeric *daimones*?” Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 8.5–6; translation from M. B. Trapp, *The Philosophical Orations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73.

⁴⁷ E.g., *Iliad* 3.189, 6.186. *Antienirioi*, which is misspelled and fragmentary, can be reconstructed from similar *defixiones* on the site (Thomas Drew-Bear, “Imprecations from Kourion,” *BASP* 9.3/4 [1972]: 88 n. 11, 90–92). Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 201, notes similarities between the Amathous curses and other curses in dactylic hexameter, including with this phrase: “In the Cypriot curses the dead are described as ‘fathers of fathers’ (πατέρες πατέρων), a phrase that we can compare to ‘ancestors of our fathers’ (ἡμετέρων πρόγονοι πατέρων) in the Orphic text.”

⁴⁸ Drew-Bear, “Imprecations,” 87–88, who notes metrical mistakes; Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 186.

⁴⁹ George Boys-Stone, *L. Annaeus Cornutus: Greek Theology, Fragments, and Testimonia* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 25. Note that the *defixio* does not strictly cite Homer but is a poetic Hellenization, drawing from Homeric terminology and poetic form. See Drew-Bear, “Imprecations,” 89, which points to *Od.* 10.461, 23.15, 11.39. There are echoes of this dactylic hexameter in a selenite tablet at Amathous, as well as in other lead tablets there (which aid in the reconstruction of this *defixio*). Wilburn discusses a possible “common Hellenic ancestor. Indeed, in both the selenite tablet and the PGM text, the chthonic invocation functions as a poetic unit that has been adapted for use within a larger rite. We can identify a similar process at work in the lead tablets, where the metrical invocation that begins the tablet may have been adopted from another source” (Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 200); see also Chapter 4 below.

and protective incantations were performed primarily in dactylic hexameters and that they were deemed especially effective in curing anger and other forms of malaise.”⁵⁰ This poetics, found also in other *defixiones* at the same site, hints at the intoning aloud of ritual speech.⁵¹

The curse understands *daimones* to have the ability to regulate the passions or emotions, to take away grievous emotion or *thumos*. This role sets up the curse’s first imperative demand: “Take over the *thumos* of Aristōn which he has toward me, Sotērianos, also called Limbaros, and his anger.”⁵² The *daimones* are called upon to *chill* (*psychron*, used twice in rapid succession) the opponents or to make them cold. This language of coldness has aesthetic overtones, both in terms of sense perception and beauty. It signals the sensory experience of coldness and its attendant tamping down of emotion. (Without suggesting that this coldness of rhetoric is universal and transtemporal, I still think of the American colloquial: “Chill, man!”) “Chill” can also denote aesthetic failure in rhetoric or composition, an idea that can extend to failure in courtroom speech.⁵³

The curse continues, and despite the possible dangers of intoning ritual texts, I recommend that you read it out loud:

⁵⁰ Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 124.

⁵¹ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 206. Christopher Faraone points out that “[t]hese Cyprian curses are not entirely metrical: in general, each begins with a version of the four verses quoted here, which become prose at the point where the victim’s name is introduced. The language of these first four lines is, moreover, clearly poetic at certain points, especially toward the ends of the individual verses, where one usually finds traditional epithets.” Faraone suggests that the metrical portion is old, “originally focused on the archaic poetic meaning of *thumos* as a spirit or positive life force,” shifted in the Amathous curse to a negative meaning of “anger,” a meaning more common in the Roman imperial period, and befitting the site of a “mass burial” of those who had met “violent deaths.” Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 198.

⁵² I benefitted from Ari Bryen’s discussion of Aristides’s reframing legal problems as affective in *The Judgment of the Provinces*.

⁵³ Lamont, “Cold and Worthless,” 57, citing Aristotle *Rhet.* 1406a: “those who employ poetic language by their lack of taste make the style ridiculous and chilly (ψυχρόν), and such idle chatter produces obscurity.” Chill is also used for *defixiones* not aimed at legal cases or successful speech, such as the Roman-period curse tablets found in a well in the southwest corner of the Athenian agora, which demand chilliness upon athletes and others: David Jordan, “Defixiones from a Well Near the Southwest Corner of the Athenian Agora,” *Hesperia* 54.3 (1985): 205–55. On emotion and rhetoric in the court, see Bryen, *The Judgment of the Provinces*, and his recounting of a story from Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* I.47, which includes the accused, Niketes, defending himself not by legal argument as much as by producing emotion.

[9] ... I invoke you by the great gods MASŌMASIMABLABOI-
Ō MAMAXŌ EUMAZŌ ENDENEKOPTOURA MELOPHTHEMARAR
hear RASRŌEEKAMADŌR MACHTHOUDOURAS KITHŌRASA KĒPHOZŌ
N goddess ACHTHAMODOIRALAR hear RAENT hear RALAR hear,⁵⁴ AL-
AR OUECHEARMALAR KARAMEPTHĒ SISOCHŌR ADŌNEIA of the
earth

[15] CHOUCHMATHERPHES THERMŌMASMAR ASMACHOUCHIMANOU
PHILAESŌSI

gods of the underworld, take over from Ariston and his son
the passion and the anger they hold toward Soteri-
anos also known as Limbaros and hand him over to the doorkeeper in Hades
MATHUREUPHRAMENOS and to the one who is appointed over the gate to
Hades

[20] and the keeper of the door bolts of heaven, STERXERX ĒRĒXA,
bursting forth from the earth, ARDAMACTHOUR
PRISSGEU LAMPADEU. And, mournful,
bury the one who has been registered on this muzzling curse.⁵⁵

After the use of a standard phrase “I invoke,”⁵⁶ the *defixio* takes flight
into phrases in known Greek letters but with unknown meaning, an

⁵⁴ I take ακου as a singular present imperative active used thrice and followed by ἀκούεστε, a plural aorist subjunctive active used as an imperative. Alternatively, we could think about this as a kind of repetition and abbreviation (ἀκού[εστε] ἀκού[εστε]) crescendoing to the final iteration of the completed verb.

⁵⁵

(10) ὀρκίζω
[ύ]μᾱς κατὰ τῶν μεγάλων θεῶν Μασωμασιμαβλα[βοι]-
[ω] μαμαξω Ευμαζω ενδενεκοππουρα μελοφθημαραρ
[α]κου ρασρωεεκαμαδωρ μαχθουδουρας κιθωρασα κηφο[ζω]-
[ν] θεὰ αχθαμοδοιραλαρ ακου ραεντ ακου ραλαρ ἀκούεστε α[λ]-
[αρ] ουεχεαρμαλαρ καραμεφθη Σισοχωρ ἄδωνεία χθῶ[ν]
(15) [χ]ουχμαθερφες θερμωμασμαρ ασμαχουχιμανου φιλα[εσωσι]
[χθ]όνιοι θεοί, παραλάβετε τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος κέ τὸν υἱὸν αὐ[τοῦ]
[Ἀρ]ίστωναν τὸν θυμὸν κέ τὴν ὀργὴν τὴν εἰς ἐμὲ ἔχι τὸν Σο[τηρι]-
[ανὸ]ν τὸν κέ Λίμβαρρον, κέ παράδοτε τῷ κατ’ Ἄδη θυρουρῷ
[Μ]αθυρευφραμενος κέ τὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ πυλῶνος τοῦ Ἀ[δους]
(20) [κ]ὲ τῶν κλήθρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τεταγμένον Στερξερξ ηρη[ξα]
[ρ]ησίχθων αρδαμαχθουρ πρισσγευ λαμπαδευ στενα[κτα]
[θά]ψατε τὸν προγεγραμμένον ἐπὶ τοῦδε τοῦ φιωτι[κοῦ]
[κ]αταθέματος.

Gager and Wilburn take στενα[κτα] as “[in a] mournful grave”; I am not confident that we can understand much more beyond the fact that something mournful is going on. For καταθέμα, see also Rev. 22:3.

⁵⁶ Here and elsewhere in the tablet ὀρκίζω; see e.g., the *defixio* from Roman Corinth discussed elsewhere in this book on pp. 1–2, pp. 193–97 and published in Ronald S. Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions* (Corinth XVIII.6; Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Corinth, 2013), 105 (no. 126): ὀρκίζω σε.

effervescence of tongues. Within the to-us-meaningless phrasings we can hear poetic echoes: the repeated rolling-around-in-the-mouth sound of *alar... ralar... a[lar]... alar* (lines 13–14), the owl-in-the-night sound of *akou... akou... akou... akouesthe* (“hear, hear, hear, hear,” lines 12 and 13). The ritual object also uses unusual and technical words. *Rhēsichthōn*, “bursting forth from the earth,” is not everyday parlance, for example, but a term known from other curses and scripts for ritual objects.⁵⁷ The word *philaesōsi*, left untranslated or as a *vox magica* by editors, must have been experienced in the ear as a mix of the terms for love or friendship (*philos*, *philia*) and salvation or healing (*sōsō*).⁵⁸ The names of deities also buzz or elongate with vowels: Sisochōr and Adōneia (line 14).⁵⁹ The theological universe not only *sounds* broad but *is* geographically broad: among the *vores magicae* are the names of gods of the Egyptians and the god of the Hebrews.

The legal procedure of consigning someone to a justice system, including for testimony under torture, is evoked with the term *paradote*.⁶⁰ Aristōn and his son are handed over to the doorkeeper in Hades, the gatekeeper of Hades, and the keeper of the doorbolts or bars of heaven, who is then named (it seems) and given a chthonic epithet. The language of doors and bars may evoke imprisonment. Even the well-placed and well-educated – we shall soon see an example from Epictetus – directly and with emotion-filled vocabulary discuss law cases and hint at the threat of jailing.⁶¹ We can wonder whether Sotērianos is concerned

⁵⁷ LSJ s.v. ῥηγίχθων. Of the seventeen times this root appears in the *TLG*, only once does it appear in a context that is not associated with “magic” (a fragment of a comedy by Straton, from the fifth or fourth century BCE).

⁵⁸ Note that here φιλα[εσωσι] is reconstructed, but see line 9 of Mitford, *Inscriptions of Kourion*, 262, no. 134: “Eutyches curses Sozomenos” (BM inv. no. 91.4–18, 8).

⁵⁹ Regarding vowels, their relative value, and sound, see pp. 130–42, esp. 138–39 on Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

⁶⁰ LSJ s.v. παραδίδωμι. The term can also mean to hand down a tradition e.g., 1 Cor. 15:3 (sometimes translated incorrectly as “betray”). See Ari Z. Bryn, *Violence in Roman Egypt: A Study in Legal Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 132, which demonstrates with precision two-part requests and petitions for legal redress in light of physical and verbal assault, including that “the offender be brought before an official for punishment (*ekdikia*).” Other formats were possible (p. 132): “petitioners could simply ask for ‘punishment’ (ἐπέξοδος) – this punishment could be ‘fitting’ or ‘necessary’ (δέουσα) or ‘forthcoming’ (ἐσομένη) Petitioners similarly request *ekdikia* (punishment, revenge, or judgment). They similarly ask to be ‘free and free from violence’ (ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἀνύβριστον) or ‘free from abuse and threats’ (ἀνύβριστον καὶ ἀνεπηρέαστον).”

⁶¹ Note that κλείθρον is not included in Jaime Curbera, “Lexical Notes on Greek Prisons and Imprisonment,” *Revue de philologie* XCII (2018): 7–37, but the overtones of barring a

precisely because he is not elite and cannot buy or benefact or shoulder-rub his way out of the lawsuit.⁶²

After this crescendo of language and tumble of letters, the defendant once more seeks justice by means of daimonic regulation of emotion. The terms *thumos* and *orgē* are paired again: “chthonic gods, take over from Aristōn and his son the *thumos* and the anger they hold toward Sotērianos also known as Limbaros.” Ultimately, the curse names what it is: a muzzling spell, a *phimōtikōn*.⁶³

This muzzle is to be placed not only on Aristōn, but also on the *daimones* who are commanded to act but are unable to speak. The *defixio* continues:

I invoke you, the king of the mute *demonēs*.

[25] Hear the great name, for over you rules
the great SISOCHŌR, the one who leads out the gates of Hades. And bind
my opponent Aristōn, and put to sleep
the tongue, the *thumos*, the anger
that Aristōn holds toward me, Sotērianos, also called Limbaros, so that he is not able
[30] to oppose me in any matter. I invoke you, *demonēs* – in a mass grave⁶⁴
and violently dead and untimely dead and not properly buried, by her
who bursts forth from the earth and forces back to the grave the limbs of

MELIOUCHOS and MELIOUCHOS himself.

I invoke you by ACHALEMORPHŌPH, who is the one earthly god
OSOUS OISŌRNOPHRIS OUSRAPIO; do what is written herein.

[35] O much lamented tomb and chthonic gods and chthonic Hekate, chthonic
Hermes,

door may evoke imprisonment (LSJ s.v. κλειθρον). On imprisonment, see Bryen, *The Judgment of the Provinces* and his citation of Aelius Aristides *Or.* 50.107–8; see also the fifth-century CE petition of a jailed man in *Chr. Mitt.* 71 (translation in Bryen, *Violence in Roman Egypt*, 276–77); and Libanius *Or.* 45; Mark Letteney and Matthew Larsen, *Ancient Mediterranean Incarceration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming).

⁶² Bryen, *The Judgment of the Provinces*, on depictions of elite men in situations of trial who use affective language, trade on their abilities at rhetoric and their longstanding social connections, and thus manage to dodge lawsuits or legal consequences – sometimes to the fury of those of lower status.

⁶³ Discussing this spell, Gager (*CT*, 135) notes that *PGM* VII.396–404 and *PGM* XLVI.4 use the term *phimōtikōn* to refer to the spell they prescribe. A silencing spell from the fourth or fifth century CE uses different terminology to similar ends: Christopher A. Faraone, “Stopping Evil, Pain, Anger, and Blood: The Ancient Greek Tradition of Protective Iambic Incantations,” *GRBS* 49.2 (2009): 241.

⁶⁴ Riccardo Vecchiato, “Crucified and Beheaded: The Archaeological Context of the Amathous Curses (*DTAud* 22–37),” *RRE* 7 (2021): 34, discussed below.

and Plouton, the lower-than-chthonic Erinyes and you who lie here below, untimely dead and the unnamed of EUMAZŌN, take away the voice of Aristōn who opposes me, Sotērianos, also called Limbaros, MASOMA-

CHŌ. I lay before you this deposited muzzling charge toward Aristōn. [40] and (you) give over his name to the chthonic gods, but his strength [and AL] KŌLALA to death, by the three-named Kore.⁶⁵

In this portion of the ritual text, the *aistheseis* or sense perceptions of the *daimones* are front and center: they cannot speak but can hear. Not only the tongue but also the voice(s) (*phōnas*) or speech of Aristōn is to be muzzled by the theological forces of underworldly and lower than underworldly beings. The curse is additive: where before Aristōn's *thumos* and anger were named (line 17; see also lines 4, 7), here too his *glōssa* or tongue is "put to sleep" in any "matter" or *pragma*, a term that refers to business or legal transactions.

The last lines of the tablet crescendo with invocations (thrice "I invoke you") and commands (five times):

These shall always carry out (my wishes) for me and muzzle Aristōn the opponent of me, Sotērianos also called Limbaros. Awaken for me, you who hold for yourself the underground kingdom of all the Erinyes. I invoke you by the [45] gods in Hades OUCHITOU, the dispenser of tombs, AŌTHIŌMOS TIŌIE IŌEGOŌIEIOPHRI who in the heavens has rule of the upper kingdom, MIŌTHILAMPS, in heaven, IAO and under the earth SABLĒNIA IAO, SABLĒPHDAUBĒN THANATOPOUTŌĒR. I invoke you BATHUMIA CHTH-

⁶⁵

[ἐνο]ρκίζω ὑμῖν τὸν βασιλέα τῶν κωφῶν δεμόνων·

- (25) [ἀκο]ύσατε τοῦ μεγάλου ὀνόματος, ἐπιτάσσει γὰρ ὑμῖν ὁ μ-
[έγ]ας Σισοχωρ ὁ ἐξάγων τοῦ Ἄδους τὰς πύλας, κέ κατα-
[δ]ήσατε τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος κέ κατακο[ιμι]-
[σ]ατε τὴν γλῶσσαν τὸν θυμὸν τὴν ὀργὴν τὴν εἰς ἐμὲ ἔχει τὸν
Σοτηριανὸν τὸν κέ Λίμβαρρον ὁ Ἀρίστων, εἶνα μὴ δύνητέ μοι μη[δ]-
(30) [εν]ὶ πράγματι ἐναντιωθῇνε. ὀρκίζω ὑμᾶς<ς> δέμονες πολυάν-
δριοι κέ βιοθάνατοι κέ ἄωροι κέ ἄποροι ταφῆς κατὰ τῆς ῥῆ[σι]-
χθόνης κατενεγκάσης Μελιούχου τὰ μέλη κέ αὐτὸν Μελιούχον.
ὀρκίζω ὑμᾶς κατὰ τοῦ Αἰχλεμορφω ὅστις ἐστὶν ὁ μόνος ἐπιγί[ος] θε]-
ὸς ὅσους οἰσωνοφρις ουσραπτιω ποιήσατε τὰ ἐνγεγραμμέ[να].
(35) [τῷ]νβε πανδάκρυτε κέ χθόνιοι θεοὶ κέ Ἑκάτη χθονία κέ Ἑρμῆ χ[θόν]-
[ιε] [κέ] κέ Πλούτων κέ Ἑρινύες ὑποχθόνιοι κέ ὑμεῖς οἱ ὧδ<ε> κάτω κίμ[ενοι]
ἄωροι κέ ἀνώνυμοι Ευμαζων, παραλάβετε τὰς φωνὰς το<ῦ> Ἀρίσ[τω]-
νος τοῦ πρὸς ἐμὲ τὸν Σοτηριανὸν τὸν κέ Λίμβαρρον Μασω[μα]-
χω· τὴν παραθήκην ὑμῖν πατίθομε {παρατίθομεν} φιωτικὴν τοῦ Ἀρίστω[νος]
(40) κέ ἀνάδοτε αὐτοῦ τὸ ὄνομα τοῖς χθονίοις θεοῖς Ἀλλα αἰκῇ [κέ αλ]-
[κ]εω λαλαθανάτω τῷ τριωνύμῳ Κούρρα·

AORŌOKORBRA ADIANAKŌ KAKIANBALE THENNAKRA. I invoke you,
[50] gods who were exposed by Kronos ABLANAIANALBA
SISOPETRON. Take over Aristōn the opponent of me, Sotērianos
also called Limbaros, ŌĒANTICHERECHER BEBALLOSAL-
AKAMĒTHĒ, and you, bursting forth from the earth, who holds the keys of
Hades.

Carry out for me, you ... Provide for me also, ... ASMIATĒNE. ...

[55] GATHĒ MASŌMASŌSISO. ...

LIN. Provide ...

EISPITHTHUTHCHO. UĒ ...

... ŌTHOUERR (*charaktēres*)E ...

... AOTHOŌZUD (*charaktēres*) ...

... UDĒSE. TOIO (*charaktēres*) ...⁶⁶

The text ends with four lines which seem to be a hybrid between *voces magicae* and *charaktēres*. Presumably the literate gods and *daimones* can make sense of these forms of writing. I do not say this lightly; the literacy of divinities and *daimones* is significant to their accessing and effecting these legal documents. Human communication and even conviviality with other sorts of beings is assumed.⁶⁷

66

οὗτοί μοι πάντοτε [τελιώ]-

[σ]ουσιν κὲ φιμώσουσιν τὸν ἀντίδικον ἐμοῦ τοῦ Σοτηριανοῦ [τῷ]
κὲ Λιμβάρου τὸν Ἀρίστωναν ἔγιρον δὲ μοι κὲ σὺ ὁ ἔχων τὸ ὑ[πὸ]-
γιον βασιλίον σε πασῶν τῶν Ἑρινύων. ὀρκίζω ὑμᾶς κατὰ [τῶν]

(45) ἐν Ἀδὶ θεῶν Οὐχίτου τὴν τάβων δότιραν Αὐθιωμος [τιωει]-

[ι]ωεγωεοιφρι ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἔχων τὸ ἐθέριον βασιλ[ιον Μ]-

[ιω]θλαμψ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἰαω κὲ τὸν ὑπὸ γῆν Σαβληνια ἰα[ω]

Σαβληφδαυβην θανατοπουτωρη. ὀρκίζω σε Βαθ[υμια χθ]-

αορωοκορβρα αδιανακω κακιαβαλη θεννανκρα. ὀρκ[ίζω]

(50) [ύ]μᾶς τοὺς ἀ[πὸ] Κρόνου ἐκτεθέντα[ς θε]οὺς Αβλαναianaλβα

[σ]ισοπε[τρων] παραλάβετε τὸ[ν ἀντίδικ]ον [ἐμοῦ τοῦ Σοτηριανοῦ]

[το]ῦ κὲ Λιμβάρου τὸν Ἀ[ρίσ]τωναν Ω[ηαντιχереχερ βεβαλλοσαλ]-

[ακα]μῆθη κὲ σὺ ἡ τὰς [κ]λῖδας τοῦ Ἰ[σ]δοῦς κατέχουσα ῥησίχθων. συν]-

[επι]τέλι δὲ ἐμοὶ κὲ σὺ Ασμιατην[ε - - - - -]

(55) [. . .] γαθη Μασωμσασισο[- - - - -]

[. . .] λιν παρατέθεμε (vacat)

ΕΙΣΠΙΘΘΥΘΟΧΟ.ΥΗ[- - - - -]

[-] ΩΘΟΥΕΡΡ(magical symbols)E [- - - - -]

[-] ΑΟΘΟΩΖΥΔ (magical symbols)[- - - - -]

(60) [-] ΥΔΗCE.ΤΟΙΟ (magical symbols)[- - - - -]

⁶⁷ Christopher A. Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 186. See, e.g., discussion of P.Oxy. LXXVI 5073 in De Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian*, 147, which “consists of an instruction and the opening words of the Gospel of Mark” (Mark 1:1-2). As De Bruyn cites it: “Read the beginning of the gospel and see: | ‘The beginning of the gospel of Jesus the Christ.’ | As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, | ‘Behold, I shall send my angel | before

Not only the content of the curse, but also its archaeological context, gives data about documentary practices and searching for justice in antiquity. Our knowledge of the archaeological context is admittedly limited, derived from late nineteenth-century letters that describe what local villagers say about how they found the tablets. A letter from 1892 speaks of

the discovery, made by some villagers in clearing what seemed to be a large disused well. They first found a quantity of squared stones, and then rubble, under which was a great quantity of human bones, among which were some gold earrings. In the lower stratum of the bones, they first found pieces of the lead, and subsequently pieces of the inscribed talc, some pieces of which were attached to the side of the well imbedded in gypsum. Later on, they came to water, at about 40 ft. from the surface.⁶⁸

Perhaps the shaft at Amathous was a well.⁶⁹ As we shall find in the next chapter, four curses were sunk into a well in the House of the Calendar in Antioch, with that watery drop-site a key to the purpose of one of the curses.

Perhaps the shaft was a grave. The area where the curses were found is a necropolis.⁷⁰ Many curses are known to have been deposited at graves or associated with the dead, either from archaeological evidence of their find sites or from mention of a *nekudaimōn* or corpse *daimōn*.⁷¹ These

your face, who will prepare.” The amulet seems to direct the *daimōn* to read even as it expects the *daimōn* to then be confronted by an angel. See also Ashon Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 203, discussing an early nineteenth-century text by Bilali Muhammad, a West African enslaved in Georgia: “Bilali’s’ text, inclusive of the unreadable five pages, also importantly presupposes a deity that can understand incoherence. Perhaps not simply a deity but – because the text is a set of itineraries and protocols for worship – a community gathered by such incoherence as a mode of worship itself.”

⁶⁸ For the whole account of the letter, see Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 170; for stratigraphy, see pp. 180–81.

⁶⁹ The fact that the villagers who originally found and removed the tablets understood the shaft as a well indicates that it was likely a vertical shaft, not the kind of *dromos* or sloping runway known from some grave sites. Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 182–83. Regarding deposits in wells, see pp. 111–12 n. 66 below.

⁷⁰ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 182–84. On the use of grave dirt in rituals emerging from Ki-Kong tradition within the African diaspora, see Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 105; see also pp. 132–45 on grave decorations and apotropaic strategies.

⁷¹ An example of an archaeologically secure *defixio* that mentions a *nekudaimōn* that was not deposited at a grave but in a well is of Roman date. It was found in the well in the southwest corner of the Athenian Agora: Jordan, “Defixiones from a Well,” 205–55.

deposits in a well or grave may be fueled by an underlying logic of depositing one's curse at an entrance to the underworld.⁷²

And what about all those bones? Andrew Wilburn argues that they are a later deposit, perhaps associated with a plague or catastrophe after the deposition of the curses. Riccardo Vecchiato states, however, that the bones along with the content of the curses indicate a mass grave: the *poluandrion* mentioned in the curse. This mass grave would include those who have been beheaded and crucified, the latter the ultimate punishment for those of lower status deemed criminals or troublemakers to Roman imperial power.⁷³ Vecchiato bases his argument on a fragmentary curse tablet (Audollent 27, *IKourion* 132) from Amathous, which is directed against at least ten legal opponents (*antidikoi*), including Metrodoros a.k.a. Asbolios, a banker. This curse too seems to be a silencing spell (*phimōtikon*) as it asks that the “voice” of certain opponents be taken away.⁷⁴ Vecchiato reconstructs the curse as “demons of the mass grave (*poluandrioi*), beheaded and crucified” (line 17).⁷⁵ He convincingly argues that *poluandrioi* does not denote the state of being simply buried but should be translated “those in a mass grave.” In Josephus's *Jewish War* (*Bell. Iud.* 5.1.19), for example, the term arises in a discussion of mass killings during civil conflict in Jerusalem at the time of Titus; the temple had become “a grave for the bodies of household members,

⁷² Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 179–80.

⁷³ Vecchiato, “Crucified and Beheaded,” 31–42; Williams, *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles*; John Granger Cook, *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). Wilburn responds to Vecchiato's strong critique of Wilburn's own dismissal of the bones' significance, stating, “The new reconstruction is compelling, as it provides a plausible reading of the text for one of the tablets, which demonstrates some variation from the formulary text. However, as discussed above, mounting a large number of tablets after the bodies or bones had been deposited seems unlikely. Furthermore, the presence of gold earrings remains difficult to explain, as it seems likely that executed corpses would have been stripped of valuables.” Andrew T. Wilburn, “The Selenite and Lead Curse Tablets from Amathous, Cyprus and the Transmission of Magical Technology,” *RRE* 7.1 (2021): 48 n. 20.

⁷⁴ Vecchiato, “Crucified and Beheaded,” 34–35.

⁷⁵ (17) [δαίμονες π]ολυάνδριοι, πεπελεκισμένοι καὶ ἔστα[υρωμένοι],
(18) [ἄωροι καὶ ἄπο]ροι τῆς ἱερᾶς ταφῆς, ὀρκί[ζω] ὑμᾶς κ[ατὰ τῆς ῥῆ]χθo-]
(19) [νός τῆς συναν]ανκασαμένης τὰ Μελιρύχου μέλη [καὶ αὐτὸν Μελιοῦ-]
(20) [χον κτλ.

Vecchiato, “Crucified and Beheaded,” 35–36. Note that crucified and beheaded imply different statuses of the dead; the former is a humiliating method of execution for those of low status; decollation is reserved for those of higher status.

making the sanctuary into a mass grave (*poluandrion*) of civil war.”⁷⁶ Vecchiato’s reconstruction and translation of “crucified,” while possible, is admittedly a guess: only the first four letters of the word are visible.⁷⁷ The term *pepelekismenoi*, “those who have been cut by an axe,” appears in full; it is an expression usually denoting decapitation. It is used, for example, in the late first-century Apocalypse of John, which refers both to decapitation and to a witness in a court (*martyr*): the prophet John sees “the souls of those beheaded on account of the testimony regarding Jesus and on account of the word of God” (Rev. 20:4).⁷⁸

Of the legible and published curse tablets from Amathous, thirteen share formulae, among these the Sotērianos inscription of our focus. All thirteen mention their own location of deposit as a much-lamented tomb (*pandakrutos*). These curses refer to violent and untimely deaths (*biaiothanatoi* and *aōroi*), an element so frequent in curse tablets that scholars have often ignored how shocking it is. Thinking that “magic” would of course involve the weird, we have failed to explore the ancillary social and political conditions to these deaths.⁷⁹ Why violent and untimely? Are these violent and untimely deaths effected by private, random means or state-sponsored conditions? We are perhaps desensitized to untimely and violent deaths, and their gendered, economic, status, and racial drivers. With these curses, we can wonder: How are memories of those unjustly dead mobilized? Do their unjust deaths become the material from which justice can be activated? How are, or are, their energies thought to be still present? In the case of Amathous, it maybe that the unjustly and violently dead are again treated unjustly, manipulated by the cursers and the ritual practitioners there. Vecchiato argues that the shaft at Amathous was the site of the dumping of criminals’ bodies: a mass grave that included the decapitated and the crucified, their rattling bones and spirits activated as components of the justice-technology of the curse tablets deposited there.

⁷⁶ My translation. The passage begins: “Foreigners and priests, lying profaned, their scattered corpses chaotically disfigured, and blood of every kind of corpse formed pools in the divine precincts.” νεκροῖς δ’ ἐπιχωρίοις ἀλλόφυλοι καὶ ἱερεῖς βέβηλοι συνεφύροντο, καὶ παντοδαπῶν αἵμα πτωμάτων ἐν τοῖς θείοις περιβάλοις ἐλιμνάζετο. . . . τάφος οἰκείων γενομένη σωμάτων καὶ πολέμου τὸν ναὸν ἐμφυλίου ποιήσασα πολυάνδριον: Josephus, *The Jewish War, Volume III: Books 5–7* (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray; LCL 210; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 6–9.

⁷⁷ See apparatus at Vecchiato, “Crucified and Beheaded,” 35.

⁷⁸ καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἠησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ.

⁷⁹ Vecchiato, “Crucified and Beheaded,” 34.

Whether the bones laid within the shaft preserved traces that indicate crucifixion or beheading is uncertain. Whether the shaft was a well or a grave evades us. What does seem clear is that it was a place of some terror. Yet, this well or shaft was more than a symbolic gateway to the underworld or a materially effective location, its powers of drowning and chilling the curse tablet transferable to the accursed through the logic of similarity. It was also a site of display. Significantly, one remaining piece of selenite tablet has two small holes approximately 1 cm apart on its left upper corner, indicating display (British Museum 1891.0418.59). Handcock's comments from the late nineteenth century also indicate that some of the selenite tablets were pressed into the gypsum of the shaft wall, and images from the original publication seem to indicate suspension holes for display.⁸⁰ The lead tablets were likely rolled up, some possibly pierced by nails, and perhaps laid into the shaft or affixed to its walls by nails.⁸¹ This assemblage – the hammering and the nail-piercing – become a more evident act of exposing injustice, when interpreted in light of the practice of nailing and display in Kaphar's *To Be Sold* and the exposing of injustice that comes with a nailed proclamations.

We should think of the find site of the *defixiones* at Amathous as a legal archive. This archive was perhaps deliberately placed in a mass grave that included those violently killed by decollation and crucifixion.⁸² The repetitive aspect of the curses points not only to cultic ritual but also to legal ritual, overseen by a literate expert. The sheer number of *defixiones* found together recalls a bureaucratic archive.⁸³ The very act of

⁸⁰ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 182, 207. Wilburn writes: "The act of display has important repercussions for the interpretation of the selenite tablets from Amathous, as it both implies a desire that the tablets be seen and also requires a significant outlay of effort on the part of the ritual specialist" (p. 186).

⁸¹ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 186–87.

⁸² Andrew Wilburn uses the term "archive," although he does not develop this idea in relation to scribal/writing/archival practices associated with judicial proceedings, but rather mentions cult sites that are the location of redaction and collating of documents (*Materia Magica*, 200.) On definitions of archives (vs. dossiers), see Katelijn Vandorpe, "Archives and Dossiers," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 216–55; on practices of organizing archives, see Willy Clarysse, "Tomoi Synkollēsimoī," in *Ancient Archives and Archival Traditions: Concepts of Record-Keeping in the Ancient World*, ed. Maria Brosius (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 344–59.

⁸³ Epigraphic curses on graves often state that there will be a curse or fine for those who try to use the grave, mentioning also that a copy of the inscription qua document is also to be found in the archive; see Johannes Strubbe, *Arai Epitymbioi: Imprecations Against Desecrators of the Grave in the Greek Epitaphs of Asia Minor: A Catalogue* (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1997); note too the use of curses from Deuteronomy to protect third-century

depositing one more *defixio* among so many others – and in the case of some, the act of suspending within or affixing them to the shaft – recalls the public work of legal display, the hanging of documents in antiquity.⁸⁴ Even if the only viewers of a curse placed in a shaft were to be the chthonic divinities and spirits, the social force of the curse resonated above ground as information was passed along informally, through gossip and conversation, and through general knowledge of the practice of making *defixiones*.⁸⁵ There is a publicness to the display of the Amathous curses.

The curses at Amathous are part of a larger empire-wide seeking of justice by many means. One Amathous curse explicitly indicates resistance to larger political power – or at least someone in political power. A *defixio* at Amathous takes aim against “Theodoros the governor.”⁸⁶

CE graves (Acmonia MAMA VI.335a, MAMA VI.335; *CIJ* 770) and in Laodikeia on the Lycus (Thomas Corsten, *Die Inschriften von Laodikeia am Lykos*, vol. 1 [Bonn: R. Habelt, 1997], no. 111), also cited and discussed in Luigi Walt, “As If Not. Dissimulation Strategies from Paul to the Sixth Book of Ezra,” in *Figures of Ezra*, eds. Jan N. Bremmer, Veronika Hirschberger, and Tobias Nicklas (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 151 n. 47. See Brélaz, “Local Understandings,” 170.

⁸⁴ Wilburn (*Materia Magica*, 214) argues that this “display would not have served as social function” but was similar to the act of hanging votives, or the public posting of prayers for justice at Knidos, which indicate language of confession and accusation (see e.g., Audollent no. 4, = *CT* no. 89.3; cited at Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 206); at Kula (Asia Minor, cited in Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 208), we find evidence of oaths, their annulment, and necessary payment for the annulling of a curse (translation and discussion at Chaniotis, “Under the watchful eyes of the gods,” 34–35). On public display of law as adduced in an early Christian martyrdom, see Shaw, “Judicial Nightmares,” 540.

⁸⁵ While the audience for those posted objects was broad and often human, the audience for the posted curses of Amathous “was not residents of Amathous or supplicants to a divinity, but rather divine forces and the dead” (Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 214); see also David Frankfurter, “Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt,” *GRBS* 46 (2006): 37–62. Lydia Matthews and Irene Salvo (“Cursing-Prayers and Female Vengeance in the Ancient Greek World,” in *Revenge and Gender in Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, eds. Lesel Dawson and Fiona McHardy [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018], 150), write, “The ritual performance of these cursing-prayers was a rational tool of justice, approved by the male order of society. This power was not the same as that which was available to citizen men through the courts or through more direct violent forms of vengeance, but was dependent on their manipulation of social relationships through gossip.”

⁸⁶ This *defixio* by Alexandros a.k.a. Makedonios is aimed against Timon and Θεοδώρω τῷ ἡγε[μῶνι] [l. 13]. Audollent no. 25 = *CT* no. 46 = *IKourion* no. 130; “Theodoros the governor”; the fragmentary last word can be reasonably reconstructed from two other uses in the *defixio*, in lines 8 and 19, although these are also fragmentary. Gager, *CT*, 136 n. 66, states: “The term translated here as governor (*hegemon*) is restored in the text. Under Roman rule until the reforms of Diocletian, Cyprus was governed by a proconsul

That curses and resistance to government could be intertwined is well known from elsewhere in the empire. Three curses from Empúries (Ampuria, Hispania) condemn at least three Roman administrators in ca. 75–78 CE.⁸⁷ They also re-orient the world in their very form of writing, as they are inscribed retrograde (from right to left) and from bottom to top. The unusual writing, topsy turvy, does its own work of materializing reversals.⁸⁸ At Mainz, a *defixio* uses the word *adiutor*, likely a technical term denoting the *adiutor tabulatriorum* or assistant of a Roman magistrate.⁸⁹ Tacitus famously tells the story of Germanicus's death in the early first century CE in Antioch, in the midst of mysterious circumstances (a feud with the province's governor Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso and his wife, Plancina) and ritual foul play: "the remains of human bodies, spells, curses, leaden tablets engraved with the name Germanicus" (Tacitus, *Ann.*, 2.69).⁹⁰ As Wilburn explains,

(Greek *anthupatos*, the title of Sergius Paulus in Acts 13:7)." See also Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 210.

⁸⁷ Simón, "Execrating the Roman Power," 402–4. T. Aurelius Fulvus, the governor of Tarraconensis (also titled *legatus Augusti pro praetore*), Rufus (titled *legatus Augusti*), and Maturus (*procurator Augusti*). Both prosopographically and archaeologically, these can be dated to ca. 75–78 CE. Curses against Roman authorities at Amathous, Empúries, and Mainz, along with other locations, could be seen "from the perspective of the (new) Roman order, as 'disloyal' or 'anti-consensual,'" as Francisco Marco Simón puts it. But "from the perspective of the *defigens*" or curser, "the ritual deposition of such tablets, containing the names of Roman magistrates and representatives of communities who had allegedly benefited unfairly from their decision, would have been an appeal to that 'area of almost total liberty' which magic represented for those who used it" (p. 422).

⁸⁸ Simón, "Execrating the Roman Power," 402. For the larger theorizing of unusual forms of writing (retrograde and backwards writing), see *inter alia* Collins, *Ancient Magic*, 66–67; Christopher Faraone and Amina Kropp, "Inversion, Adversion and Perversion as Strategies in Latin Curse-Tablets," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, esp. p. 382 and their discussion of the phrase *adverse scribo*. The reason for the cursing here may have been land reorganization, which was conducted via census (and thus documentary) procedures; Simón, "Execrating the Roman Power," 409, esp. his use of Stephen Dyson's study of "native revolts in the Roman Empire" and pressure on towns to meet Roman administrative demands, such as census taking.

⁸⁹ Simón, "Execrating the Roman Power," 412; for *defixiones* from Mainz that use formulae associated with official petitions, see Blänsdorf, "The *Defixiones* from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz," 174 [no. 8], 186; Richard Gordon, "Imaginative Force and Verbal Energy in Latin Curse-tablets," in *Litterae Magicae: Studies in Honor of Roger S. O. Tomlin*, ed. Celia Sánchez Nataliás, vol. 2 (Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2019), 117.

⁹⁰ See fuller use of this passage above, pp. 29–30. Andrew T. Wilburn, "Building Ritual Agency: Foundations, Floors, Doors, and Walls," in *GSAM*, 555; see also Florent Heintz, "Magic Tablets and the Games at Antioch," in *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, ed. Christine Kondoleon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 163; Magali Bailliot, "Rome and Roman Empire," in *GSAM*, 189–90, on the *Lex Cornelia*.

Magic directed at the state, particularly aggressive magic aimed at harming members of the provincial administration, clearly would have been viewed as an illegal activity, endangering both parties, the practitioners and those who employed them. These proscriptions may suggest that the use of magical acts constituted resistance against Rome in the minds of the authorities.⁹¹

In addition, the vocabulary of curses and of official petitions overlaps: like combats like. The procedure of hanging and display of historical, documentary evidence includes both imperial petitions, as we shall see below, and curses: a curse is like an imperially posted document addressing situations of injustice.⁹²

Curses are mechanisms for producing otherwise possibilities against imperial bureaucracy and injustice, effected by calling upon various beings, whether *daimones* or god(s).⁹³ They are tools against exercises of power that could provoke fear. Roman legal procedure could transform defendants, draping their bodies with the emotional manifestations of shame and penitence.⁹⁴ The emotions (*pathē*, things you suffered or experienced), were politically useful tools. Francisco Marco Simón argues

⁹¹ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 211.

⁹² This similarity between legal documents and curses predates the Roman Empire. Elizabeth A. Meyer states: “Study of how tablets were used in the Republic reveals that the ordering of state, religion, magic, legal procedure, and some legal acts all shared an ancient and ceremonial protocol in which writing on *tabulae* played an important part.” This act, correctly performed, “irrevocably changed some aspect of the visible or invisible world: it did not need human enforcers, but drew its power and authority from the formal ritual of its own making” (*Legitimacy and Law in the Roman World* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 4–5). See also p. 174, which speaks about the physical work of the first- or second-century CE Roman prefect in Egypt who posted *tabulae* or wood tablets.

⁹³ Regarding otherwise possibilities, see discussion of Ashon Crawley and others on p. 9 above. Roman law sought to thwart so-called *magici*, but less than has been previously assumed. James B. Rives (“Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime,” *Classical Antiquity* 22. 2 [2003]: 77) argues that the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis* of 81 BCE, while often cited as evidence of Roman anti-magic laws, likely merely augmented preexisting laws and was aimed particularly at homicides perpetrated by those who “prepared, sold, bought, possessed, or administered a dangerous drug (*venenum malum*).”

⁹⁴ Shaw, “Judicial Nightmares”; see his example from Tertullian *Apol.* 1.1.10–13 cited at p. 544 n. 34. On the literary construction of juridical power in Tertullian, see Carly Daniel Hughes and Maia Kotrosits, “Tertullian of Carthage and the Fantasy Life of Power: On Martyrs, Christians, and Other Attachments to Juridical Scenes,” *J ECS* 28.1 (2020): 1–31. On Roman imperial terror evoked through sculpture and through spectacle, see *inter alia* Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul’s Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 51–84.

regarding some judicial *defixiones* that “[t]he practice clearly shows the emotional – or not strictly legal – dimension of lawsuits, which were of course heard in public, in some cases at least before a large audience.”⁹⁵ To resist the emotions’ or passions’ ability to render one passive, suffering from external stimuli, one needed management strategies, tools that are simultaneously philosophical and theological.

Stoics created a taxonomy of the emotions – a kind of psychic and community map that allows for people, mostly elite males concerned with self-mastery,⁹⁶ to find their way out of the confusion of having wrong opinions (*doxai*) about the circumstances that surround them. Cicero, while not himself a Stoic, sympathetically (!) outlines in his *Tusculan disputations* a classic Stoic response to the *pathē* or the emotions and summarizes: “Philosophy, in removing distress as a whole, also removes whatever errors may trouble us on any particular point: the bite of poverty; the sting of public disgrace, the darkness of exile; or the other things I have named” (*Tusc. disp.* 3.82). He offers a list of what falls under the genus of *aegritudino*: envy, rivalry, jealousy, pity, anxiety, grief, sorrow, weariness, mourning, worry, anguish, sadness, affliction, despair (*Tusc. disp.* 3.83).⁹⁷

Curses emerge among other techniques to master emotions in antiquity. *Defixiones* are one among many technologies and therapies (*therapeiai*) to regulate the self and to regulate the self *in community* – that is, not only to master the desire (*epithumia*) or fear (*phobia*) *within*, but also to control the circulation of emotions *without*. An extensive set of therapies could be found in philosophical practices of regulating delight, desire, distress, and fear.⁹⁸ This circulation of the *pathē* or emotions is fundamentally political, as a theoretical framework derived from

⁹⁵ Simón, “Execrating the Roman Power,” 410.

⁹⁶ See e.g., Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁹⁷ Translations are from Margaret Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). *Tusc. disp.*, 3.82–83, p. 36: “Distress of any kind is far removed from the wise person, because it is an empty thing; because it serves no purpose; because it has its origin not in nature, but in judgment and opinion and in a kind of invitation that is issued when we decide that grief is appropriate. Once this entirely voluntary belief is removed, distress will be eliminated.” On reading Cicero and ending up in a situation of judicial torture, see Jerome, *Ep.* 22.30. See also Winkler, *Constraints of Desire*, 82–93.

⁹⁸ See Graver, *Cicero and the Emotions*, xi–xxxvi, and eadem, *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); A. A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

contemporary queer theory helps us to see. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed writes, “Feminist and queer scholars have shown us that emotions ‘matter’ for politics; emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds. So in a way, we do ‘feel our way’. This analysis of how we ‘feel our way’ approaches emotion as a form of cultural politics or world making.”⁹⁹ Ahmed continues her diagnosis: “[F]ear works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others. Within feminist approaches the question of fear is shown to be structural and mediated, rather than an immediate bodily response to an objective danger.”¹⁰⁰ That is, fear is the product of threats that are themselves produced through narratives of who is to be feared. Fears are conjured by the fearful work of *daimones* in curse tablets; narratives of Christian apologists like Justin, as we shall see, both reflect and produce fear. Ahmed gives the example of political discourse in the United Kingdom about “bogus asylum seekers” and the importance of the nation resisting a “soft touch.” We could easily adduce examples of emotional-political strategies in the United States to stoke fear against immigrants “taking our jobs” or bringing disease or overrunning national boundaries – these racialized and political narratives stoke fear and disgust, and produce concrete effects like placing the children of border-crossers in cages.¹⁰¹

Curses are one strategy amid the search for justice and the circulation of emotion in antiquity. Roman law and Roman systems of pleading an injustice to the emperors are visible in the official legal documents. But as

⁹⁹ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 10. “In my model of sociality of emotions, I suggest that emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something ‘I’ or ‘we’ have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others” (p. 10). I am grateful to Sarah Porter (*Early Christian Deathscapes*) for discussions about Sara Ahmed and for her use of Ahmed to analyze the rhetoric of Julian and John Chrysostom, on which I depend.

¹⁰⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 82–100.

¹⁰¹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 72: “the language of fear involves the intensification of ‘threats’, which works to create a distinction between those who are ‘under threat’ and those who threaten. Fear is an effect of this process, rather than its origin. . . . Through the generation of ‘the threat’, fear works to align bodies with and against others.” Especially with regarding to immigrants and disease, see Yii-Jan Lin, “‘And the Lord Sent Sickness among Them’: Apocalyptic Epidemiology,” in her *Immigration and Apocalypse: The Revelation of John in the History of American Immigration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, in process).

Ari Bryen, Jill Harries, and Jeremy Williams have shown, legal discourse also appears in other sorts of texts, including novels or romances.¹⁰² The writings of a Christian apologist like Justin, alongside early Christian martyrdoms, are part of this literature. These philosophical-theological discourses in antiquity reveal concerns about managing the *pathē* or emotions in the face of injustice and sometimes, more specifically, in the face of legal cases. From the conflict-laden Roman republican period of Cicero to the dangerous Roman imperial period of Epictetus and far beyond, people debated how to cope with fear of unjust power and how to enact justice. Some, particularly elite males, used strategies of philosophical dialogues to cope with political fear and the circulation of emotion. They asked: Were the emotions (*pathē*) epistemologically misleading or useful? Did they distract a person from strength or excellence (the Latin *virtus*, which contains the word for man, *vir*) and courage (the Greek *andreia*, which does the same, *anēr*), terms coded as elite and masculine? Others used curses to cope with these fears regarding legal power. Some likely used both.

The popular philosophical writings of Epictetus reveal that emotions could be dangerously stimulated by political fear:

But what says Zeus? “Epictetus, ... since I could not give you this [complete freedom], we have given you some part of ourself, this faculty of choice and refusal, of desire and aversion. . . ; if you care for this and place all that you have within it, you’ll never be thwarted, never hampered, won’t groan, won’t blame, won’t flatter anyone.” ...

Now, Epictetus pictures a threatening dialogue:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| [CHARACTER 1] | But I will bind you. |
| [CHARACTER 2] | Dude, what are you saying? Bind me? My leg you will fetter, but my moral choice not even Zeus himself has power to overcome. |
| [CHARACTER 1] | I will throw you into prison. |
| [CHARACTER 2] | Only my paltry body. |
| [CHARACTER 1] | I will behead you. |

¹⁰² On Roman legal procedures as reconstructed from explicitly legal texts as well as the social discourse, see discussion in Williams, *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles*; Jill Harries, “Triple Vision: Ulpian of Tyre on the Duties of the Proconsul,” in *Roman Rule in Greek and Latin Writing*, eds. Jepser Majbom Madsen and Roger David Rees (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 193–209; Bryen, “Law in Many Pieces,” 346–65; Dolganov, “Reichsrecht and Volksrecht in Theory and Practice,” 27–60; Bryen, “Martyrdom, Rhetoric, and the Politics of Procedure,” 244–45.

- [CHARACTER 2] Well, when did I ever tell you that mine was the only neck that could not be severed?
- [EPICTETUS'S SUMMARY] These are the lessons that philosophers ought to rehearse, these they ought to write down daily, in these they ought to exercise themselves. (*Diss.* 1)¹⁰³

Note here the language of binding. In some ways it is not surprising that the semantic field for *katadesmoi*, binding spells, overlaps with terminology of punishment and imprisonment in the Roman Empire.¹⁰⁴ Yet its resonance is also striking, reminding us that the language of binding marks power and force. Justin, too, uses the imagery of binding and chains in his sly critique of the Roman imperial family and his complaint that they persecute Christians based on the name alone. He does so in his comment that some “condemn themselves so as to need no other judges, when they sentence us to death or chains [bindings, *desma*] or some other such penalty for having done these things” (1*Apol.* 69.2).¹⁰⁵

Fear was not the only dangerous emotion in circulation. Rivalry, according to Cicero, is a form of distress; envy, according to the physician Galen, is the worst form of grief. These are the sorts of emotions that could produce the conditions of conflict that blossom into a lawsuit. Galen, in a treatise on *The Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul's Passions*, pinpoints envy and grief as disease or emotion: “And what must I say of envy? It is the worst of evils. . . All grief is a disease (*pathos*), and envy is the worst grief” (*Aff. dig.* 35).¹⁰⁶ Envy, according to the second-century

¹⁰³ Ἄλλα τί λέγει ὁ Ζεὺς; “Ἐπὶ κτῆτε, . . . ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῦτο οὐκ ἡδυνάμην ἐδώκαμέν σοι μέρος τι ἡμέτερον, τὴν δύναμιν ταύτην τὴν ὀρηκτικὴν τε καὶ ἀφορητικὴν καὶ ὀρεκτικὴν τε καὶ ἐκκλιτικὴν. . . καὶ ἐν ἧ τὰ σαυτοῦ τιθέμενος οὐδέποτε κωλυθήσῃ, οὐδέποτε ἔμποδισθήσῃ, οὐ στενάξεις, οὐ μέμψῃ, οὐ κολακεύσεις οὐδένα. . . . “ἄλλα δῆσω σε.” ἀνθρώπε, τί λέγεις; ἐμὲ; τὸ σκέλος μου δῆσεις, τὴν προαίρεσιν δὲ οὐδ’ ὁ Ζεὺς νικῆσαι δύναται. “εἰς φυλακὴν σε βαλῶ.” τὸ σωματίον. “ἀποκεφαλίσω σε.” πότε οὖν σοι εἶπον, ὅτι μόνου ἐμοῦ ὁ τράχηλος ἀναπότμητος ἔστιν; ταῦτα ἔδει μελετᾶν τοὺς φιλοσοφοῦντας, ταῦτα καθ’ ἡμέραν γράφειν, ἐν τούτοις γυμνάζεσθαι. My translation. Epictetus, *Discourses, Books 1–2* (trans. W. A. Oldfather; LCL 131; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 10–13. Seneca’s Latin *Medea* is its own philosophical working out of questions of emotions and their dangers, and he died because of his politics. See also Seneca, *Ep.* 14.2 and discussion of this passage in Shaw, “Judicial Nightmares,” 539.

¹⁰⁴ Curbera, “Lexical Notes on Greek Prisons and Imprisonment,” 7–37; Bryen, *Violence in Roman Egypt*, 134.

¹⁰⁵ ἐκ τοῦ καὶ ἡμῖν ὡς τοιαῦτα πράττουσι θάνατον ἢ δεσμὰ ἢ ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτον προστιμᾶν ἑαυτοὺς κατακρίνοντας. Translation and edition from Minns and Parvis, 268–69.

¹⁰⁶ περὶ δὲ τοῦ φθόνου τί δεῖ καὶ λέγειν; ἔσχατον τῶν κακῶν ἔστιν. . . . πάθος μὲν ἐστὶ καὶ λύπη πᾶσα, χειρίστη δὲ ὁ φθόνος ἔστιν. Galen, *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul* (ed. Walther Riese and trans. Paul W. Harkins; Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), 53;

CE rhetor Apuleius, can even produce legal trouble. In his *Apologia* or defence against the accusation of magic, Apuleius says: “For no reason other than baseless envy can be found for concocting this lawsuit against me and the many dangers to my life that preceded it.”¹⁰⁷

The philosopher must work hard, cultivating an *askēsis* or a discipline, to inure himself (masculine used deliberately) against political power, even political power manifest in bodily control and harm, as the short passage from Epictetus shows.¹⁰⁸ Epictetus’s speeches are not personal, individualized musings on how to be a better person. Elite men spent hours discussing the management, moderation, and extirpation of the passions or emotions, with particular focus on how those of lesser status – children, the enslaved – could often provoke anger. Moreover, while being a philosopher could be a posh business, as one received salaries from elite students and even imperial attention and imperially sponsored positions or “chairs,” it could also be a dangerous, stomach-turning business. Seneca’s political philosophy led to his death. Philosophers and theologians who felt that danger addressed it in their dialogues and writings. These writings iteratively, in the back and forth of the dialogic form, worked out the conceptual bases for addressing and offering a *therapeia* for the real political and social fear around them. These are works of practical philosophy, even of practical theology. Their very form as dialogues shows their literary conceit as a community project: their dialogic nature maps intrapersonal development of skills of resistance – a verbal martial arts sparring ring. Epictetus’s *Dissertations* even represent a larger community in that they are the notes, it seems, of his student Arrian.

The philosophical texts we read can be seen as practice for future encounters with or stimulations of emotions, practice scripts aimed against external impressions that can mislead, and desire and aversion

Greek edition Galen, *De Propriorum animi cuiuslibet affectuum dignotione et curatione* (trans. Wilko De Boer; Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1937), 3–37. On iambic incantations within *defixiones* as a mechanism for stopping anger or colic – i.e., a viewpoint that helps us to understand the emotions as one form of disease or medical distress – see Faraone, “Stopping Evil, Pain, Anger, and Blood,” 227–55.

¹⁰⁷ Apuleius, *Apol.*, 66. The passage continues: “Yet what incited Aemilianus, even if he had truly found me to be a magician, to suppose he had a just motive for revenge? I had not harmed him by the least word, let alone by any deed.” Apuleius, *Apologia. Florida. De Deo Socratis* (ed. and trans. Christopher P. Jones; LCL 534; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 159.

¹⁰⁸ Nicole Kelley, “Philosophy as Training for Death: Reading the Ancient Christian Martyr Acts as Spiritual Exercises,” *CH* 75 (2006): 723–47.

that can hinder.¹⁰⁹ *Defixiones* do different work and likely often emerge from those of lower status. They nonetheless are technologies to cope with similar problems: how to manage in the face of judicial danger, how gods and other non-human beings might be present and engaged, and how to navigate toward what one perceives to be a just outcome, or safe harbor. These emotions should be seen not only or primarily as a private issue but also as a larger, public phenomenon. A curse that indicates annoyance on the part of Aristōn against Sotērianos or, as we'll see in the next chapter, a tiff between the greengrocer Babylas and the commissioner of the spell against him, discloses not just private anger ("Let me win my lawsuit!"), but also the kind of public emotion that produces multiple curses against Roman officials in the region of Spain in the first century CE. Sotērianos sought to ensure the outcome of his case by silencing his opponent and by whirling up *daimones* and divinities onto his side of the legal battle. This muzzling also functions to quell *thumos* and *orgē*; it is a bar against emotions.

CREATING LEGAL ARCHIVES: JUSTIN'S APOLOGIES AND IMPERIAL RESCRIPTS

Enter, in philosophical robes (*Dial. Tryph.* 1.1), Justin Martyr, a cosmopolitan man born in Flavia Neapolis (modern-day Nablus in Syria Palestine) and dweller in Rome, where he fought with the philosopher Crescens. These are facts that he announces at the beginning of his *Apologies*, as he introduces himself as a colonial subject to the emperors.¹¹⁰ As a provincial communicating with the imperial family at the level of petitions and at the level of contributing to Roman legal thought, Justin is not unique. The famed Roman legal thinker of the early third century CE, Ulpian, also writes "as a Roman lawyer, as a communicator with Greeks and as the native of a city with a 'provincial' identity containing both Greek and residual Phoenician elements," as Jill Harries puts it.¹¹¹ Indeed, Ulpian can even be seen as a generation-later rival to

¹⁰⁹ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (ed. Arnold I. Davidson and trans. Michael Chase; Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

¹¹⁰ Syria Palestina is the name given to the regions formerly called Judea after Hadrian's subjection of Jerusalem (Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* [Jena: Verlag Frommannsche Buchhandlung, 1923], 57). On Justin's introduction of himself, see Nasrallah, *Christian Responses*, 130–32.

¹¹¹ Harries, "Triple Vision," 194; on the significance of the foregrounding of Ulpian's provincial identity and concerns about enfranchisement and order in the provinces (vs.

the likes of Justin, since he was rumored to have guided provincial governors by listing rescripts directed against Christians.¹¹²

Justin writes in the shadow cast by brutal Roman quelling of Jewish resistance in 66–73 in Palestine, in 115–17 in Cyrenaica, Egypt, and Rome, and in 132–35 in the Bar Kochba revolt in Jerusalem.¹¹³ He writes at a time when Christ-followers were sometimes perceived as an aberration from or a heresy of Judaism, and Justin himself seems to be an early “inventor of heresy,”¹¹⁴ seeking to construct his form of Christianness by excluding other contemporaneous Christian and Jewish communities. In part because of the philosophical and culturally sophisticated tone Justin assumes, scholars have moved from interpreting him as (solely) an early Christian theologian to seeing him as one voice among many in the so-called Second Sophistic.¹¹⁵ He engages in broad

elite Roman men like Cicero or Pliny, concerned about more top-down governance of the provinces), see pp. 195–97. On Ulpian’s method of including Greek within his Latin and thus making his work more open and understandable to provincial readers (rather than centering on Rome and Latin only), see Tony Honoré, *Ulpian: Pioneer of Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 89–92.

¹¹² Tony Honoré, *Justinian’s Digest: Character and Compilation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6, citing Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 5.11.19 (trans. CCEL): “For both sacrilegious ordinances and unjust disputations of jurists are read. Domitius, in his seventh book, concerning the office of the proconsul, has collected wicked rescripts of princes, that he might show by what punishments they ought to be visited who confessed themselves to be worshippers of God.”

¹¹³ In the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin constructs a Jewish interlocutor. This text mentions the Bar Kochba revolt of 132–35, and in *1Apol.* 31 Justin asserts that Bar Kochba persecuted Christians. Justin also presents himself as an orator in competition with others – with Crescens, a philosopher in Rome, and with Trypho, his invented debate partner. See Andrew S. Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 27–32; and eadem, “Dialogical Differences: (De)Judaizing Jesus’ Circumcision,” *J ECS* 15.3 (Fall 2007): 291–335; Laura Nasrallah, “The Rhetoric of Conversion and the Construction of Experience,” in *Studia Patristica: Papers presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held at Oxford 2003*, eds. F. Young et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 467–74.

¹¹⁴ See esp. *Dial. Tryph.* 16, 130–32. The term “inventory of heresy” is Alain LeBoulluec’s: *La notion d’hérésie dans la littérature grecque, IIe–IIIe siècles* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1985); on Justin’s supposed authorship of a now-lost heresiological treatise, see Matthijs den Dulk, “Justin Martyr and the Authorship of the Earliest Anti-Heretical Treatise,” *VC* 72 (2018): 471–83.

¹¹⁵ Bryn, “Martyrdom”; Nasrallah, *Christian Responses*, esp. chaps. 1 and 4; Kendra Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. 28, 56, 67–68; Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Tom Geue, “Keeping/Losing Records, Keeping/Losing Faith: Suetonius and Justin Do the Document” and James

cultural practices of discussing justice, engaging philosophical ideals, and performing as a rhetor – even if he does so by using the Jewish scriptures and the story of a crucified anointed one.

Justin's *Apologies*, written ca. 150–55 CE, inscribe as addressees the imperial family members Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, and the Sacred Senate and Roman people. Justin uses the epithets of Roman emperors to question who they are: epithets of “piety” (*eusebeia* in Greek, *pious* in Latin, applied to Antoninus Pius) and “philosophy” or “philosophical” (applied to Marcus Aurelius). He also refers to Lucius as both philosopher and “lover of *paideia*.”¹¹⁶ Just the role of emperor and that of philosopher blur in Justin's writing and in imperial self-presentation, so too Justin constructs himself variously as rhetor, philosopher-theologian, and legal advocate.¹¹⁷

Justin's appeal to the emperors not only mentions documentary exchanges, but also participates in the documentary conventions of the time, appealing to Roman bureaucratic systems of adjudicating petitions. The conclusion to what is conventionally called the *First Apology* states:

And although, on the basis of a letter of the very great and very renowned Caesar Hadrian, your father, we are able to insist that you command that judgments be given in accordance with our petition, instead we have petitioned not on the basis that this decision was made by Hadrian – but we have made this address and

Uden, “The Noise-Lovers: Cultures of Speech and Sound in Second-Century Rome,” in *Literature and Culture in the Roman Empire, 96–235: Cross-Cultural Interactions*, eds. Alice König, Rebecca Langlands, and James Uden (Cross-Cultural Interactions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 203–22 and 58–74, respectively.

¹¹⁶ See Nasrallah, *Christian Responses*, 119–70, for further discussion of this passage and Justin's writings in relation to claims regarding justice and *paideia* visually manifest in Rome's Forum of Trajan.

¹¹⁷ Some in antiquity worried about the dangerous slide between the rhetor and the (seductive) courtroom speaker; if slippery words could persuade, where did truth lie? See e.g., Philostratus *Vit. soph.* I.1, from his late second/early third century CE vantage recalling to his readers classical Athens: “The Athenians when they observed the too great cleverness of the sophists, shut them out of the law-courts on the ground that they could defeat a just argument by an unjust, and that they used their power to warp men's judgement. That is the reason why Aeschines and Demosthenes branded each other with the title of sophist, not because it was a disgrace, but because the very word was suspect in the eyes of the jury; for in their career outside the courts they claimed consideration and applause.” Philostratus, Eunapius, *Lives of the Sophists. Eunapius: Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists* (trans. Wilmer C. Wright; LCL 134; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 11. See also Philostratus *Vit. soph.* I.15 regarding Antiphon: “Antiphon is attacked in Comedy for being too clever in legal matters, and for selling for large sums of money speeches composed in defiance of justice for the use of clients whose case was especially precarious” (LCL 134, p. 41).

exposition on the basis of our knowing that our petition is just. And we have attached a copy of the letter of Hadrian, in order that you might know that we are telling the truth in this manner also. And this is the copy (*to antigraphon*). (1Apol. 68.3–5)¹¹⁸

The word *antigraphon* can refer to a copy of an official document, and Justin's text goes on to cite a letter of the emperor Hadrian. This is not particularly exciting stuff: it is a bureaucratic gesture toward a bureaucratic document. But that gesture in itself is interesting. Justin adduces an assemblage and shows himself conversant with legal archival practices; he asserts the worth of his own document, with its appended evidence, within these protocols.

Justin offers an imperial letter as a rescript that responded to Christian complaints. Scholars of ancient Christianity have understood that there was an established procedure for petition of the emperors (*libelli*) and receipt of response (*subscriptiones*), but generally have engaged in a fruitless debate of asking whether Justin's document is real: if this rescript is genuine, it indicates that the Roman imperial family was aware of Christians and responded to concerns about them. Absent further documentary evidence, we cannot know more about this situation. What we can know is that Justin's adducing of an *antigraphon* indicates his performance of participation in a larger system. It is evidence of his competencies to navigate documentary exchange. He leans into contemporary practices of legal assemblage in order to argue his case. These practices are well known from petitions to the emperors and responses, a phenomenon revealed in epigraphic evidence and other texts that offer official complaints about governmental abuses.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ καὶ ἐξ ἐπιστολῆς δὲ τοῦ μεγίστου καὶ ἐπιφανεστάτου Καίσαρος Ἀδριανοῦ, τοῦ πατρός ὑμῶν, ἔχοντες ἀπαιτεῖν ὑμᾶς καθὰ ἠξιώσαμεν κελεῦσαι τὰς κρίσεις γενέσθαι, οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κεκρίσθαι τοῦτο ὑπὸ Ἀδριανοῦ μᾶλλον ἠξιώσαμεν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ ἐπίστασθαι δίκαια ἀξιοῦν τὴν προσφώνησιν καὶ ἐξηγήσιν πεποιήμεθα. ὑπετάξαμεν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς Ἀδριανοῦ τὸ ἀντίγραφον, ἵνα καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ἀληθεύειν ἡμᾶς γνωρίζητε. καὶ ἔστι τὸ ἀντίγραφον τοῦτο. Translation and edition from Minns and Parvis, 265; see also their notes regarding the manuscript and the question of *epiphanestaton* (265 n. 1).

¹¹⁹ Brélaz, "Local Understandings"; see also a bilingual Greek and Latin edict of 14–19 CE regarding requisitions of local goods by imperial travelers in SEG 26:1392; Stephen Mitchell, "Requisitioned Transport in the Roman Empire: A New Inscription from Pisidia," JRS 66 (1976): 106–31; G. H. R. Horsley, *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Burdur Archaeological Museum* (London: British Institute at Ankara, 2007), 232–33; and discussion in Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 76–104. See also Augustus's letter concerning abuses in Cyrenaica (FIRA I 68). Ulpian, author of *On the Duties of a Proconsul* (*De officio proconsulis*, preserved in part in *Digest* 1.16.9.2–4 and dating to ca. 209), was

We cannot know how or if Justin's documentary assemblage and display originally worked. We have no autograph with appended documents. The primary manuscript of Justin's mid-second-century *Apologies* is found in the fourteenth-century *Parisinus graecus* 450.¹²⁰ Yet even this late manuscript, along with evidence within Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, points to a constellation of texts around Justin's *Apologies*, including a rescript of the emperor Hadrian and one (or two) imperial letter(s).¹²¹ These rescripts and letters reveal social discourses regarding law. That is, as Roman legal historian Ari Bryen has argued, the history of power, force, justice, and debate can be found not only in documents we adjudge to be *bona fide* legal transcripts, or petitions and responses, but also in how these are discursively represented in non-legal texts.¹²²

A close look into the *Apologies* reveals even more assertions of documentary evidence and exchange. Justin refers the emperors twice to *acta*

likely secretary of petitions in the early third century CE under Severus; see Harries, "Triple Vision," esp. 194; Bryen, *Violence in Roman Egypt*, 95–96. Lukas Lemcke, *Imperial Transportation and Communication from the Third to the Late Fourth Century* (Collection Latomus 353; Brussels: Éditions Latomus, 2016), 24, discusses a Hadrianic edict about abuse of the Roman imperial transport system (which follows the logic of the well-known Tiberian inscription from Sagalassos regarding abuse of locals); for the Hadrianic edict, see Tor Hauken and Hasan Malay, "A New Edict of Hadrian from the Province of Asia Setting Regulations for Requisitioned Transport," in *Selbstdarstellung und Kommunikation: Die Veröffentlichung staatlicher Urkunden auf Stein und Bronze in der Römischen Welt*, ed. R. Haensch (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009), 327–48.

¹²⁰ *Parisinus gr.* 450 ("A") dates to 1364 CE; riddled with errors, it is best understood as the work of a scribe who was coping with a lacunate manuscript (Minns and Parvis, 19–21). It contains a large lacuna (2.2–16) that can be reconstructed in full from Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. Miroslav Marcovich, *Patristic Textual Criticism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 6 cites von Harnack's dismay at the quality of the manuscript. On the value of the manuscript and why it is the apograph for two other manuscripts, see Minns and Parvis, 1–7. To look at *Parisinus gr.* 450, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10722125b/f7.item.r=Grec%20450>. I am grateful to Gloria Korsman of Andover-Harvard Library, Harvard Divinity School, for helping me to find this resource. On variations between *Parisinus gr.* 450 and Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 4.12, see Minns and Parvis, 34–41.

¹²¹ The very organization of *Parisinus gr.* 450 indicates a thoughtfulness about collation and editing of documentary evidence. See discussion in Laura Salah Nasrallah, "A Formation of a Christian Archive? The Case of Justin Martyr and an Imperial Rescript," in *Literature and Culture in the Roman Empire*, 96–235, 179–202. For both letters, see Marcovich, *Patristic Textual Criticism*, Appendix I and II.

¹²² See helpful overview of changes in outlooks on Roman law in Bryen, "Law in Many Pieces," 346–65.

or legal documents by Pontius Pilate (1Apol. 35.9, 48.3).¹²³ He mentions “these things we have submitted to your inspection” (1Apol. 67.8), referring, it seems, to teachings of Jesus as documentary evidence. And Justin himself demands the physical display of documents: “And therefore we ask you to add the subscription which seems good to you to this petition and to post it up” (Justin 2Apol. 14.1 or 1Apol. 69.1).¹²⁴

Justin asks to participate in a culture of documentary bureaucracy and assemblage. He does so amid a larger socio-political context of “interminable embassies from cities, mainly Greek,” as well as retinues of bureaucrats that travelled with the emperors, even on military campaigns, and rich evidence from Egypt reveals the drone of quotidian petitions.¹²⁵ There was an aesthetics of display involved in these procedures. Tor Hauken and others have reconstructed the likely process: “petitions were handed in by petitioners or the representatives in person at the emperor’s residence; with or without the instructions of the emperor, the secretary *a libellis* prepared and signed an answer which was written underneath the petition on the same sheet, and in turn approved by the signature of the

¹²³ Both times he uses the phrase ἐκ τῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου γενομένων ἄκτων. I leave out here the possible overlaps with the *Acta Pilati*, a later “documentary” tradition which reveals early Christian imaginations around Pilate and legal procedures. On how early Christian martyrdoms sometimes use the form of *acta* in order to do their own ideological work around persecution, see Candida Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), and after her, Éric Rebillard, *The Early Martyr Narratives: Neither Authentic nor Forgeries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021) – or we could think of this also as the rhetoric of criminalization (Williams, *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles*) and the assertion of legal documentary evidence. See also the fourth-century CE bilingual account of court proceedings: *P.Lips.* I 40.iii.20–21 (= Ch.L.A. XII 518, A.D. 381), translated in *Law and Legal Practices in Egypt from Alexander to the Arab Conquest, 332 BC–AD 640*, eds. J. G. Manning et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 508–16; discussed in Bryen, *Violence in Roman Egypt*, 136–37. On the context for early Christian pseudepigraphy, see Irene Peirano Garrison, *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 224–55 and bibliography therein.

¹²⁴ καὶ ὑμᾶς οὖν ἀξιούμεν ὑπογράψαντας τὸ ὑμῖν δοκοῦν προθεῖναι τοῦτ' ἐν βιβλίῳ ὅπως καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τὰ ἡμέτερα γνωσθῇ. Translation and edition Minns and Parvis, 266–67.

¹²⁵ Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 6. While Millar and Honoré debate the ways in which petitions were brought to the imperial family, it is incontrovertible that many petitions were sent to provincial governors and the emperors, and that both engaged in responding, sometimes in epistolary form: Tor Hauken, *Petition and Response: An Epigraphic Study of Petitions to Roman Emperors, 181–249* (Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1998), 286; regarding Egypt, see Benjamin Kelly, *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1–2.

emperor.”¹²⁶ From the time period of Hadrian to Diocletian, the use of petitions was strictly formalized, involving a *libellus* and a *subscriptio*. Sometimes, instead of a rescript, one found an *epistula* (Latin) or *gramma* (Greek).¹²⁷ The answered petition was joined in a volume with other petitions and displayed at an established location. The Temple of Apollo and the portico of the Baths of Trajan in Rome were two such locations. A (putative) letter of Marcus Aurelius to the Senate about the Christians, which follows Justin’s *Apologies* in *Parisinus* gr. 450, states that the information within the letter should be posted in the Forum of Trajan. The documents would then be sent to the imperial archive.¹²⁸

We should picture documents displayed in stone in the cities of the Roman Empire, and also nailed up in key locations of deposit – hung, affixed. The *defixiones* of Amathous, some suspended in a shaft, echo this procedure. The assemblage of historical documents and nails in Kaphar’s *To Be Sold* allow us to see more clearly how a recent assemblage addresses larger questions of (in)justice; used as a theoretical framework, it allows us to ask whether and how such nails and affixing of documents served purposes of justice in antiquity, as well.

¹²⁶ Tor Hauken, Cumhur Tanriver, and Kazim Akbiyikoğlu, “A New Inscription from Phrygia: A Rescript of Septimius Severus and Caracalla to the *coloni* of the Imperial Estate at Tymion,” *Epigraphica Anatolica* 36 (2003): 33–44; Hauken, *Petition and Response*, 258–89.

¹²⁷ As we find with rules regarding jurisdiction at the Areopagus at Athens in the period of Marcus Aurelius: James H. Oliver, *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989), 235–36.

¹²⁸ “The two-stage preparation of the rescript can be identified by the signatures *recognovi* (a *libellis*) and *sub-/re-/scripsi* (the emperor) as the end of e.g. Skaptopara (l.168),” (Hauken et al., “A New Inscription from Phrygia,” 36). The most complete example of an epigraphic account of a *libellus* and rescript occurs in a now-lost inscription from Skaptopara (*CIL* III, 12336; *SIG*³ II, 888; *IGRR* I, 674; Hauken, *Petition and Response*, 74–139). Its authentication indicates a duplication format well known from the present administrative bureaucracies of the university or the government. The now-fragmentary, bilingual inscription on a marble stele in Phrygia indicates a communication from the emperor Septimius Severus to *coloni* and provides an authentication tag that informs us about the process of ‘publication’ and use of such rescripts (pp. 33–44). Lines 1–5 are Greek and indicate that the rescript that follows was copied from imperial collections of petitions (ἐκ τεύχους [βιβλιδίων] of the emperors. The following text, in Latin, indicates that this copy had to be verified by the signatures and seals of seven witnesses to complete the authentication tag; the seals would then be broken when the document was presented, in this case, “to the procurator Asiae or the proconsul Asiae” (p. 37). On papyrological evidence for petition (βιβλιδία) and subscription (ὑπογραφή), see Clarysse, “*Tomoi Synkollēsimoι*,” 345–47.

JUSTIN, DEMONS, JUSTICE

The echoes between Justin's writing and the rolled lead tablets and the selenite curses with their light, mineral moon glow are not limited to formal documentary procedures of demanding justice and of hanging or announcing the responses to requests for justice. Justin's appeal to the emperors also indicates concerns about *daimones* and magic; *daimones*, as we recall from Sotērianos's curse, can help to effect (what is perceived as) justice.

Daimones, for Justin, are engines of deceit. They learn about the future coming of the Christ, the anointed one, and proleptically lard into human history myths and practices to make it seem that the message of Christ is secondary. *Daimones* engage in the work of deceitful imitation or *mimesis* (e.g., 1Apol. 62.2; 64.1). Dionysus, the godly son of Zeus who is ripped and torn and is "taken up into the heavens" (1Apol. 23.3, 54.6) makes Christ look like a copyright infringer. *Daimones* heard about Moses taking off his shoes before the divine and instituted similar rites in their most sacred places (1Apol. 62.2). *Daimones* knew of the stories of creation from Moses and invented the births of Kore and Athena as imitations (1Apol. 64.1-5). Sneaky, powerful *daimones*.

Justin's very active *daimones* not only imitatively and maliciously fold time, making Christ's deeds and followers' rituals look derivative of non-Christian worship, but they also produce magic. Justin famously refers to "Simon, a certain Samaritan... who... through the art of the demons who moved him, performed magical deeds in your royal city of Rome, who was thought to be a god and was honoured as a god by you with a statue" (1Apol. 26.2; cf. 1Apol. 56.1-2, 2Apol. 15.1).¹²⁹ Justin also refers to one of Simon's students, Menander, who performs magical art (*technē*) in Antioch (1Apol. 26.4). And Justin associates his own community not with *invoking* (the *horkizō* used several times by Sotērianos in his curse) but with *revoking* or *exorcising* (*eporkizontes*, translated in terminology of exorcism):

For throughout the whole world and in your own city many of us ... exorcised many who were possessed by demons in the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate. And they healed them, though they had not been healed by all the others – exorcists and those who incant and potion-workers. And

¹²⁹ Σίμωνα μὲν τινα Σαμαρέα, τὸν ... διὰ τῆς τῶν ἐνεργούντων δαιμόνων τέχνης δυνάμεις ποιήσας μαγικὰς ἐν τῇ πόλει ὑμῶν βασιλίδι Ῥώμῃ θεὸς ἐνομήσθη καὶ ἀνδριάντι παρ' ὑμῶν ὡς θεὸς τετίμηται. Translation and text from Minns and Parvis, 147.

still they heal, breaking the power of the demons and chasing them away from human beings who were possessed by them. (2*Apol.* 5.6)¹³⁰

Here Justin not only puns on the term “revoke” (*horkizō*) used in many *defixiones*, but also displays a vocabulary of ritual practitioners: exorcists and healers and potion-workers (those who trade in *pharmaka*, poisons or medicines).¹³¹

Justin’s *Apology* is deeply concerned about the activity of *daimones* in a world thick with spirits, air and earth clogged with various kinds of beings. The theology of such a complex ontology – of beings that do not neatly align themselves into humans or gods or heroes – should be understood not only in light of Jewish apocalyptic thought, but also in relation to concerns about rerouting justice through practices of *defixio*-making. *Daimones*, among other beings, motor these ritual objects and rituals; on this, the curses and Justin Martyr agree.¹³² The term *daimōn* in the unpublished index to Karl Preisendanz’s *Papyri Graecae Magicae* takes up approximately two columns of entries. These *daimones* are not solely detrimental. We find recipes that both invoke and push away *daimones*, including a rite for acquiring an assistant *daimōn* (PGM I.42) and a phylactery *against* a *daimōn* (PGM IV.86–87).

¹³⁰ ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρα πόλει πολλοὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἀνθρώπων, τῶν Χριστιανῶν, ἐπορκίζοντες κατὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ σταυρωθέντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων ἐπορκιστῶν καὶ ἐπραστῶν καὶ φαρμακευτῶν μὴ ἰαθέντας, ἰάσαντο· καὶ ἔτι νῦν ἰῶνται, καταργοῦντες καὶ ἐκδιώκοντες τοὺς κατέχοντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δαίμονας. Modified from translation by Minns and Parvis, 289. In the translation I excise “human beings who are Christians” (ἀνθρώπων τῶν Χριστιανῶν) following the logic of Schmidt noted in Minns and Parvis, 289 n. 6, that this may have been marginalia which entered into the text.

¹³¹ Heidi Wendt finds evidence that Roman authorities probably considered Justin to be among other “freelance rivals” with expertise in magic: “‘*Ea Superstitione*’: Christian Martyrdom and the Religion of Freelance Experts,” *JRS* 105 (2015): 183–202. On exorcism “in the name” of Jesus (although neither book mentions Justin), see Giovanni Bazzana, *Having the Spirit of Christ: Spirit Possession and Exorcism in the Early Christ Groups* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); see also Jennifer Eyl, *Signs, Wonders, and Gifts: Divination in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹³² Justin may also be influenced by the Book of the Watchers and the idea of fallen angels and their demonic progeny: Annette Yoshiko Reed, “The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology, Demonology, and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr,” *JES* 12.2 (2004): 141–71, esp. 143–45; see also her *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 160–89. She sees Justin’s understanding of the *phauloi daimones* as a “radical indictment of Greco-Roman culture” (Reed, “The Trickery of the Fallen Angels,” 159).

Daimones operate in Justin's realm and in the realm of curses; so too legal terminology. Justin's *Apology* heats up considerably from the fairly polite, if snide, introduction in which he addresses members of the imperial family and calls upon them to be what they claim to be: just, pious, influenced by *paideia* (education, culture) and philosophy. The text mimics larger judicial processes of petition and response, and does so in a style – as Ari Bryen has put it, an “aesthetics of justice”¹³³ – rooted not only in Justin's self-presentation as a philosophical man, but also in the varied quotations and dramatic prose that constitute his rhetoric. The heating up of his prose is quite literal. Justin moves from calling upon the imperial family to “have prudent discernment along with kingly power” to the statement that “we believe and have been convinced that each of you will pay penalties in eternal fire according to the worth of his actions” (*1Apol.* 17.4).¹³⁴ The “you” is not directly or immediately the emperors, but given that they are the addressees at the start, they would be understood as the targets of eternal fire. (Justin himself accuses the emperors of listening to *magoi* [*1Apol.* 18.3-6].)¹³⁵ This language of punishment and penalty should be understood within the wider judicial procedures – sometimes felt as violence, sometimes the cause of nightmares, as Shaw reminds us, sometimes the condition which produced philosophical practices, often the cause of fear.¹³⁶

The themes of judgment of the emperors and others continues: “Consider what happened to each of the kings that have been,” it reads. “They died just like everybody else” (*1Apol.* 18.1). But, the text implies, such death does not come with *anaisthēsia*, with a lack of sense perception. If the emperors think they will be just fine after death – punished, but then left to the quiet of oblivion – they are wrong.

¹³³ Bryen, “Martyrdom,” 246; see esp. 249–51; Bryen's emphasis is more on the appearance of the judged character, but as Bryen of course recognizes, this appearance is tied to elite male values including that of speaking well. See also Gleason, *Making Men*; see further Bryen, *The Judgment of the Provinces*.

¹³⁴ πιστεύοντες μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ πεπεισμένοι κατ' ἀξίαν τῶν πράξεων ἕκαστον τίσειν διὰ πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκας. Translation and text Minns and Parvis, 121.

¹³⁵ Heidi Wendt argues that such an accusation is launched in a larger, competitive sphere of “free-lance experts” in which Justin himself may have been understood as a *magus* and the name itself, *Christianoi*, analogous to other ritual experts considered beyond the pale (“*Ea Superstitione*,” 183–202).

¹³⁶ Bryen, *Violence in Roman Egypt*, esp. chap. 4: “Narrating Injury,” but note that this violent rhetoric is usually found between those of low status; Kathleen M. Coleman, “Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments,” *JRS* 80 (1990): 44–73; and Shaw, “Judicial Nightmares.”

For conjurings of the dead – both visions obtained from uncorrupted children, and the summoning of human souls – and those whom magicians call ‘dream-senders’ or ‘attendants’ – and the things done by those who know these things – let these persuade you that even after death souls remain in consciousness – human beings seized and convulsed by the souls of the dead – whom all call demon-possessed and frenzied – and the oracles, as you call them, of Amphilocheus and of Dodona and of Pytho, and the other things of that sort. (1Apol. 18.3–4)¹³⁷

Justin evokes a larger discourse on the presence and procedures of oracles, both famous (the Pythian) and unremarkable (using children for divination) in antiquity. He points to the continued work of the dead who return to divine for the living. The term *daimoniolēptous*, “demon-possessed,” occurs in Greek literature only here and in Justin’s 2Apol. 5.6.¹³⁸ But if we extend our range of investigation outside of the normal lexica to so-called magical literature, we discover the creative buzz, clack, and hiss of many daimonic compounds: *daimoniazomenos* and *daimonizomenos*, *daimoniakon*, *daimonioplēktos*, *daimonissai* or *daimōnissai*, *daimonotaktas*.¹³⁹

Justin participates fully (cultically, semantically) in the daimonic, ritual-filled world of antiquity. He even recognizes the significance of nailing in ritual:

For the *daimones* we are talking about strive for nothing else than to lead humans away from the God who made them and from his first-begotten Christ. And those who are not able to lift themselves up from the earth, they nailed and continue to nail to earthly and manufactured things, and those who hastened toward the contemplation of divine things they beat back... (1Apol. 58.3)¹⁴⁰

It is likely that the living and the dead are both battered by *daimones* here. The phrase “those who can’t lift themselves from the earth” recalls the earthiness of the Sotērianos inscription, with its concerns for those things under the earth. The passage duplicates the verb for nailing, once

¹³⁷ νεκυομαντεῖαι μὲν γὰρ καὶ αἱ δι’ ἀφθόρων παιδῶν ἐποπτεύσεις καὶ αἱ ψυχῶν ἀνθρωπίνων κλήσεις καὶ οἱ λεγόμενοι παρὰ τοῖς μάγοις ὀνειροπομποὶ καὶ πάρεδροι καὶ τὰ γινόμενα ὑπὸ τῶν ταῦτα εἰδόντων πεισάτωσαν ὑμᾶς ὅτι καὶ μετὰ θάνατον ἐν αἰσθήσει εἰσὶν αἱ ψυχὰι καὶ οἱ ψυχαῖς ἀποθανόντων λαμβανόμενοι καὶ ῥιπτούμενοι ἄνθρωποι, οὓς δαιμονιολήπτους καὶ μαινομένους καλοῦσι πάντες, καὶ τὰ παρ’ ὑμῖν λεγόμενα μαντεῖα Ἀμφιλόχου καὶ Δωδωνῆς καὶ Πυθοῦς καὶ ὅσα. Translation and text Minns and Parvis, 122–25.

¹³⁸ Minns and Parvis, 125 n. 1, searching Greek literature currently included in the TLG.

¹³⁹ Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, III Index (Leipzig: Teubner, 1941 [unpublished galley proofs]), 75.

¹⁴⁰ οὐ γὰρ ἄλλο τι ἀγωνίζονται οἱ λεγόμενοι δαίμονες ἢ ἀπάγειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ποιήσαντος θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ πρωτογόνου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ τοὺς μὲν τῆς γῆς μὴ ἐπαίρεσθαι δυναμένους τοῖς γῆϊοις καὶ χειροποιήτοις προσήλωσαν καὶ προσηλωῦσι, τοὺς δὲ ἐπὶ θεωρίαν θεῶν ὁρμῶντας ὑπεκκρούοντες... Trans. modified from Minns and Parvis, 230–31.

representing completed action, and once using the present to intensify the ongoing action: Those who can't lift themselves from the earth are nailed and continuously nailed to earthly and handmade things. This passage makes little sense unless it is grounded in the rituals of nailing *defixiones* that we know from Amathous and elsewhere. It recalls also the nailing gesture of *minkisi*-making as the power figure is activated by the nail or blade penetrating into it. The art of Kaphar, Maynard, and Stout uses nails to produce a critical intervention: to evoke unjust conditions of power and legal action. What Justin sees as an oppressive nailing down, someone like Sotērianos might have seen as a mechanism of the display of injustice, an activism of resistance against a dominant, literally above-ground court system. Justin, in turn, fully above board, imagines his document or *biblion* nailed alongside imperial documents.

Justin refers to so-called magic, using in-house terminology like *nekuo-manteia* and referring to *magoi*. But what does this have to do with justice? Justin frames his own argument in terms of punishment for those who live unjustly (*hoi adikōs biōsantes*): Gehenna: “Do not fear those who kill you and after this are not able to do anything. Fear rather the one who is able after death to send both soul and body to Gehenna (Luke 12:5, cf. Matt. 10:28)” (1Apol. 19.8). This passage in which magic and *daimones* and punishment arise is part of a larger philosophical discourse about justice and about how God will effect it. Justin addresses the *pathos* of fear, which arises in the midst of the thrum of possible imperial violence, as Epictetus also evidenced.¹⁴¹

Sotērianos's curse from Amathous was one example from among the many legally focused *defixiones* from the same shaft. So too we find in Justin's writings a particular legal case that reminds us of the fearful and complex mechanisms of (in)justice. The case involves a governor named Urbicus and a legal petition brought to the emperor. A woman who has “learned the teachings of Christ” tries to persuade her husband of eternal fire for those who do not live according to right reason. The husband continues in her ways, and the woman refuses sexual relations with him. She seeks a *repoudion* – that is, a divorce, with the text here providing the technical Latin term in Greek transliteration: “She then submitted a petition (*biblidion*) to you, the emperor, praying that she be given leave

¹⁴¹ Justin had also earlier framed questions of justice and punishment in terms of Plato, who “said that Rhadamanthus and Minos would punish the unrighteous who came into their presence” (1Apol. 8.4, Minns and Parvis, 95).

to set her financial affairs in order first and to answer the charge later, after she had arranged her affairs, and this you granted” (2*Apol.* 2.8).¹⁴² This case is similar to early Christian stories found in what we call the apocryphal acts, in which a high-born woman who becomes a follower of Christ rejects sexual contact and problems emerge between her and her husband or fiancé, stimulating novelistic violence and even governmental crackdowns. Yet such a case – that of Justin’s high-status woman, sadly unnamed – demonstrates the perils of law suits and the ways in which even legal documents cannot prevent injustice.¹⁴³

Justin’s *Apologies* take the hybrid oratorical-philosophical-political form of something that claims to be like a *libellus* or petition. The *Apologies* evince an aesthetics that is in conversation with the legal assemblages of civic-imperial petition and response or the shaft of curses-as-legal-interventions at Amathous. The *Apologies* do not mimic the form or genre of the 60-line *defixio* from Amathous. Yet both Justin and the Amathous curses participate in the juridical archival practices of antiquity: assembling and appending documents. And both Justin and the Amathous documents use *daimones* to mobilize (what they think is) justice. Justin’s use of *daimones* and his claims for justice and eternal fire occur in an ontologically abundant world in which spirits, divinities, humans, and objects like curses or rescripts or imperial letters co-participate in effecting justice. Justin’s writings emerge in and refer to a context in which appeals to the emperor were a regular mechanism for curbing abuses. And the cache in Amathous offers its own archive against perceived injustices.

CONCLUSIONS

Titus Kaphar nails documentary evidence to a repetition of portraiture. His *To Be Sold* offers an ethical intervention into history by means of history and by means of nails. He self-consciously participates in a historical and aesthetic tradition. By foregrounding my analysis of the Amathous curses and Justin’s *Apology* in Kaphar’s work, I do not argue that he – or Stout or Maynard or other contemporary artists – do the

¹⁴² καὶ ἡ μὲν βιβλίδιον σοι τῷ αὐτοκράτορι ἀνέδωκεν, πρότερον συγχωρηθῆναι αὐτῇ διοικήσασθαι τὰ ἑαυτῆς ἀξιοῦσα, ἔπειτα ἀπολογήσασθαι περὶ τοῦ κατηγορήματος μετὰ τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων αὐτῆς διοίκησιν· καὶ συνεχώρησας τοῦτο. Text and translation from Minns and Parvis, 275 esp. n. 1.

¹⁴³ For a different interpretation, see Wendt, “*Ea Superstitione*,” 196.

same thing as the Kongolese ritual practitioners who produced or used power figures, or the ritual practitioners of antiquity who produced or used *defixiones*. Moreover, the art works of Kaphar, Stout, and Maynard which make reference to *minkisi minkondi* share similarities and also inevitably differ from each other, and their use of nails also at times references the nails of the cross or hoodoo practices. Yet, their art is a form of “rhyming” with Kongolese objects, to borrow a word from artist Edward Sorrells-Adewale;¹⁴⁴ it deliberately and politically draws on the “legacy of the ancestral arts” of Africa.¹⁴⁵

These contemporary art works provide a space for investigating the aesthetics of the nailed curse tablet and create the grounds for us to ask whether some *defixiones*, too, engage history, emotions, and justice. Justin’s own *libellus* or *biblidion* is legal material and appends legal materials; it works to control capricious and sometimes violent systems of justice. Justin’s own rescript plays with nails, demanding the physical display of documents.¹⁴⁶

At the beginning of Justin’s *Apology*, an account of injustice, Justin calls upon the emperors as *phylakes dikaïosynēs* (1*Apol.* 2.2), “guardians of justice.” He pleads for legal solutions and for justice, on behalf of a reader – likely not the imperial family, in the end, but fellow Christ-followers. Justin’s text is best understood in relation to and even through other strategies and materializations of seeking justice: appeals and imperial rescripts; *defixiones* as “prayers for justice”; *daimones* and divinities as guaranteeing or interrupting justice.

Few scholars of early Christianity or, for that matter, of Roman law have understood curses as justice-seeking mechanisms relevant for understanding ancient Christians’ engagement with Roman imperial judgment. Yet, when we triangulate work like Kaphar’s with the writings of Justice and a curse like that of Sotērianos, we can see that the latter takes part in larger experimental and improvisational attempts at justice: a legal system that runs alongside existing formal procedures of justice-seeking, in the midst of grinding state-sponsored procedures that were often perceived to be unjust. Curses were not only a matter of private anger or revenge, the steam valve of sick or frustrated individuals. They make sense in the context of legal exercises of power and the exchange of documents, and

¹⁴⁴ Harris, “Resonance, Transformation, and Rhyme: The Art of Renée Stout,” 107.

¹⁴⁵ Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, Inc., 1925), 258–75.

¹⁴⁶ Justin 2*Apol.* 14.1 (or 1*Apol.* 69.1).

in the midst of philosophical texts of the Roman imperial period which turned to issues of ethics and emotions.

These objects, whether the exemplary *defixio* from Cyprus or Justin's *Apology*, seek justice and gain authority in relation to other documents and the formal procedures of deposit: that is, they are archival practices. Archival practices create assemblages not only to retain information, but also to promulgate an aesthetics of justice. Justin cites imperial documents and forms his own miniature dossier within the *Apology*; the *defixio* from Amathous echoes others, indicating the existence of a paradigm, perhaps in book form, and it is laid along with at least 219 other lead *defixiones* and thirty selenite tablets in a shaft: an odd archive. These objects are theological and concerned with theodicy. They assume that divinities and *daimones* are interested in and involved in the procedures for seeking justice. This judiciary system, concurrent with and mingling its very vocabulary with state-sponsored legal proceedings, may have been conducted by those of low status or those who perhaps had little or no access to effective representation in court procedures.

I do not want to romanticize early Christians as heroic de-colonialists or resisters of Roman imperial power. No such simple story can be told. But we have seen that Justin suggests that the imperial family will stand for judgment, just as he acknowledges that some currently are unjustly judged according to the name "Christian."¹⁴⁷ Some of the tablets from Amathous "bear witness to covert resistance to Roman authority."¹⁴⁸ And Justin's *Apologies* weave in historical documentation – imperial letters, whether real or invented – to offer a critique of present imperial injustice. Sotērianos's *defixio*, or imperial rescripts, or Justin's *libellus* are mechanisms to reroute the emotions of litigants and the violence of legal systems. They are interventions into the challenges and means of finding justice in a world buzzing with humans, objects, and *daimones*.

¹⁴⁷ "The name" is a phrase with ritual power. See Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Joseph Kimmel, *Power in the Name: Toward a Theological Posthumanism* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2023); Nasrallah, "Judgment, Justice, and Destruction."

¹⁴⁸ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 173. He later argues more broadly: "Practitioners provided a means by which the unempowered within the community could improve their own social situation, case by case, and thwart the imperial system. The presence of a large number of tablets implies a community of individuals who were familiar with magic and used it in order to be victorious in court through the defeat of their enemies, to change their social position through self-empowerment, and perhaps, if the spell was effective, to better their lives" (p. 212).

Substance and Story

A Greengrocer and the Pharaoh at Antioch

In the storerooms at the Princeton University Art Museum lies a thin sheet of lead, originally rectangular, now broken into two pieces (Plate 8). In perhaps the fourth century CE, in the city of Antioch, a curse was inscribed into its soft surface, front and back. This *defixio* uses a story to curse someone. It reads, in part:

[6] O thunder- and lightning-hurling Iaō, strike, bind, bind together Babylas, [8] the greengrocer As you struck the chariot [12] of Pharaoh, so strike his [Babylas's] offensiveness. O thunder- and [14] lightning-hurling Iaō, as you cut down the firstborn of Egypt, [16] cut down his [livestock?] . . .

Flip the curse tablet over, and we read, again in part:

[4] just as you drown and will chill [this tablet] [6] in the disused well, so too [8] drown and chill the soul of Babylas, whom [10] Dionysia, also known as Hesykhia, gave birth to, weighed down with illness and [12] unprofitable wherever he might be . . .¹

The curse tablet comments on its own materiality or substance and on the aesthetics of lead, often characterized as cold and unprofitable. It reflects upon its drop location in a well. It uses the story of Exodus and the drowning of the Pharaoh's chariot. Story and substance are the themes of this chapter. The curse against Babylas uses a fragment of scripture, set within a rhythmic text, to seek some sort of justice for the petitioner.

¹ ML22 = PUAM 4740-I 130a+b. Edition and translation at Alexander Hollmann, "A Curse Tablet from Antioch against Babylas the Greengrocer," *ZPE* 177 (2011): here 159; see pp. 105–6 below for Greek and full text.

Unlike the curses of the previous chapter, this *defixio* does not seem to involve a legal case. But, like the curse tablets we have already encountered, it encapsulates a person's attempt to get their due. It does so by using the authority of a story or narrative and the power of substance. How does the curse tablet do its work?² The curse represents the story of the Pharaoh and his chariot, drowned in the sea, as urgently relevant to late ancient Antioch. It uses the substance of the lead and the cool watery location of its deposit in a well as mechanisms for its efficacy. Story and substance work together to intervene and disrupt. And the curse raises larger questions: What are the mechanisms by which a tiny, fragmentary history – here a mythic history of the Pharaoh and his chariot drowned in the sea – are deployed? And what are the ethics of deploying history, in this case embedded within the artifact of a curse table? What were folk in antiquity doing, and what are we doing now, when we invoke a story?

WHAT IS A HISTORIOLA?

“As you struck the chariot of the Pharaoh” is an extraordinarily economical way to invoke an entire myth. This phrase is a *historiola*, or a condensed story or “abbreviated narrative,” that serves to remind God(s) of their past actions and insists that they act in the same way now.³ The

² David Frankfurter, “Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magic *Historiola* in Ritual Spells,” in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, eds. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 451–70 asks a similar question regarding how *historiolae* work within curses and amulets. Regarding the curse tablet as a kind of technology, I am thinking through scholarship I engage more explicitly in Chapter 4, namely, writings on the phonograph and the circulation of music. See e.g., Shane Butler, *The Ancient Phonograph* (Brooklyn: Zone, 2015); Lerone Martin, *Preaching on Wax: The Phonograph and the Shaping of Modern African American Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Alexander Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). I am also interested in the transnational circulation of spirit(s) and power, sometimes through the medium of television; see Marla Frederick, *Colored Television: American Religion Gone Global* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); and Aisha Beliso-De Jesús, *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). Maria José de Abreu, *The Charismatic Gymnasium: Breath, Media, and Religious Revivalism in Contemporary Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), provides data and analysis provocative for antiquity. See p. 173 n. 76 below.

³ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 458. Pieter van der Horst defines it as: “a mini-history about the great deeds of a deity in the past, told in order to induce the deity concerned to remain true to its reputation and repeat its powerful act(s) in the present” (“The God Who Drowned the King of Egypt: A Short Note on an Exorcistic Formula,” in *The Wisdom of*

curse against Babylas is not unique in its allusion to larger stories by means of a *historiola* and its deployment via analogical logic (a *similia similibus* formula: *this* is like *that*, or what happens to one thing should also happen to another).⁴ Moreover, the use of a reference to the Pharaoh and the curse of the plague does not necessarily indicate a Jewish or Christian context. *Historiolae* are both particular and ecumenical.⁵ Everyone loves a good story, and these stories – whether of Isis or of Moses – did not belong solely to those of a particular cultic affinity.

How do *historiolae* work within the ritual materials of antiquity? A more extended *historiola* is found in a fourth-century CE Coptic recipe for a curse, to give an example. It evocatively opens: “It is Isis who is coming from the mountain at midday in summer, the dusty young woman. Her eyes are full of tears and her heart is full of sighs” (PGM

Egypt: Jewish Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, eds. Anthony Hillhorst and George H. van Kooten [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 135–39, see esp. 136). Brashear comments, “The precedent having been cited, the god is obliged to act the same way now as then, this time to the benefit of the conjuror/suppliant” (“The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994),” ANRW II 18.5 [1995]: 3439). Brashear explains that *historiolae* rely upon a common idea: “that mythical events (archetypes) ‘once upon a time’ (*in illo tempore*) retain their supernatural forces forever and can be reactivated at any given time by the simple act of recounting them” (p. 3439). Given the later practice of composing amulets using incipits, particularly gospel incipits and sometimes even just gospel titles, we can also wonder about other forms of efficiency: not just allusion to story, but also a *pars pro toto* power set forth by a few words: see Theodore De Bruyn, *Making Christian Amulets* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 142–53; and Joseph Emanuel Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

⁴ Juraj Franek and Daniela Urbanová, “‘May Their Limbs Melt, Just as This Lead Shall Melt...’: Sympathetic Magic and *Similia Similibus* Formulae in Greek and Latin Curse Tablets [Part 1],” *Philologia Classica* 14.1 (2019): 27–55; Juraj Franek and Daniela Urbanová, “‘As Isis Loved Osiris, So Let Matrona Love Theodoros’: Sympathetic Magic and *Similia Similibus* Formulae in Greek and Latin Curse Tablets [Part 2],” *Philologia Classica* 14.2 (2019): 177–207. Frankfurter (“Narrating Power,” 469) distinguishes between pure *historiolae* and “clausal” *historiolae*, which are subordinate to other forms of command and direct utterance. That is, a *historiola* which explicitly functions as a *similia similibus* formula (just as xyz happened in this story, so too may xyz happen to the person I curse) are not pure *historiolae*, in his definition. See also Jessica Lamont, “Cold and Worthless: The Role of Lead in Curse Tablets,” *TAPA* 151.1 (2021): 35–68 regarding lead and *similia similibus* formulae.

⁵ Van der Horst, “The God Who Drowned the King of Egypt,” 137–38, who cites Morton Smith, who “has figured out that out of the roughly 560 spells found in the corpus of pagan Greek magical papyri, some 200 show biblical or Jewish material one way or another” (“The Jewish Elements in the Magical Papyri,” in *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh* [Leiden: Brill, 1996], 246–47).

IV. 94–135).⁶ A dialogue of Isis with her father Thoth follows and, eventually, the text aims ritual words to restrain a female and gives instructions about how to vary the curse depending on the sex of the person cursed. The *historiola* provides instructions for what the ritual practitioner should do, grounding the curse’s authority and the practitioner’s situation in the story of the goddess.

Or we could look to a *historiola* on a perhaps second- to third-century CE red jasper gem, which is even more economical than that on the Babylas curse (Plate 9). It works by means of both image and text.⁷ One side depicts Herakles’s body and the lion, struggling, their bodies flowing in a circular pattern with Herakles’s arms and the lion’s dangerous head forming a node at the top third of the gem. Herakles’s wooden club, knotted and bulbous, rests behind him, and from its top emerges the parabola of an inscription: “Withdraw, colic, the divinity pursues you!”⁸ A line is incised under the figural scene, a thin base over which Herakles’s toes delicately step; under this, in the bottom quarter of the gem, are *charaktēres*, signs that look like letters, but have no meaning that we can yet discern.⁹ The other side of the gem offers a delicate triple Hekate, slim like a column, her multiple arms and feet and heads making it look like she might be in quick motion; over her head we read Iaō (ΙΑΩ);

⁶ Marvin W. Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 23–25. The story of Isis and Osiris is also used in a *similia similibus* formula in *Supp. Mag.* I.51, as Theodorus curses Matrona.

⁷ See also the example of a gem now in St. Petersburg, it “depicts an airborne Perseus holding the head of Medusa, with the inscription: ‘Flee gout, Perseus pursues you!’” (Christopher A. Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018], 211); see also C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets. Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 43.

⁸ Trans. Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets*, plate 19; see also the Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database (CBd), “Magical Gem: Heracles throttling lion, Greek inscription (A) Hecate, voces (B)” “Withdraw, bile, the god drives you away!”; Christopher A. Faraone, “Stopping Evil, Pain, Anger, and Blood: The Ancient Greek Tradition of Protective Iambic Incantations,” *GRBS* 49 (2009): 228–55 on amulets that involve the stomach and bile.

⁹ Kirsten Dzwiza, *Schriftverwendung in antiker Ritualpraxis: anhand der griechischen, demotischen und koptischen Sammelschriften des 1. – 7. Jahrhunderts* (Ph.D. diss., Erfurt University, 2013) and www.charakteres.com; Richard Gordon, “Charaktères between Antiquity and the Renaissance,” in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l’antiquité à la Renaissance*, eds. Véronique Dasen and Jean-Michel Spieser (Florence: SISMEI, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 253–300.

under her toes we read Abrasax (ΑΒΡΑΣΑΞ). The goddess Hekate is called upon to act; the god Herakles beats back both lion and colic.

So far, we have met Isis, Herakles, and Hekate. Christ-followers too produced *historiolae*. A perhaps fifth-century CE papyrus of unknown provenance aims to protect and heal the wearer. It reads in part: “Savior Jesus, we believe that you went then into the house of Peter’s mother-in-law, who was fever[ish, and you touched her hand and the fever left] her. And now we beseech you, Jesus, also now heal your enslaved female,¹⁰ who wears your great name, from every illness and from... f]ever and from shivering fever and from headache and from every malignity and from every evil spirit.”¹¹ The amulet is medical, with liturgical elements, drawings, and *charaktēres*. It offers a credal formulation. A creed, after all, is a series of *historiolae*, condensations of stories (“born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate”).¹²

¹⁰ Even the letters of Paul, the earliest writings produced by Christ-followers, provide evidence of those who were enslaved legally, as well as those who adopted the nomenclature of “enslaved” to refer to their relation to the divine. Such language should be understood as charged and significant in the context of a large slave state. See Katherine Shaner, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); on “doulology,” see Chris L. de Wet, *The Unbound God: Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought* (London: Routledge, 2018), esp. 146–47.

¹¹ *Supp. Mag.* I.31, pp. 87–88; I have modified the translation. The text below picks up in the middle of the second line of the amulet.

- (2) ... κύπερ Ἰ(ησοῦ), πιστεύομεν ὅτι ἀπῆλθες τότε εἰς τὴν [ο]ϊκίαν τῆ[ς] πενθερᾶς Πέτρου πυρε[ς] [κούσης καὶ ἥψω]
- (3) [τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς καὶ ἀφῆ]κεν αὐτὴν ὁ πυρετός. κ(αὶ) νῦν παρακαλοῦμέν σε, Ἰ(ησοῦ), θεράπευσον κ(αὶ) νῦν τὴν δούλην σου, τὴν φοροῦντα τὸ μέγα ὄνομα σου ἀπὸ πάσης νόσου κ(αὶ) [ἀπὸ σ. 10]
- (4) [σ. 20 π]υρετοῦ κ(αὶ) ἀπὸ ῥίγοπυρέτου κ(αὶ) ἀπὸ κροτάφου κ(αὶ) ἀπὸ πάσης βασκοσύνης κ(αὶ) ἀπὸ παντός πν(εύμ)α(τος) πονηροῦ...

There is a bit of circular logic, since the editors of the *Supplementum Magicum* reconstruct this amulet by means of Matt. 8:14–15; I look forward to Mara Rescio’s *Papyrologische Kommentar* on the synoptic miracle stories; she emphasizes medical and “magical” comparanda.

¹² *Supp. Mag.* I.31. “What else is the Creed than a recital of the histories (*historiolae*) about Jesus?,” writes van der Horst (“The God Who Drowned the King of Egypt,” 139), reflecting upon that fact that in “*Contra Celsum* 1.6, Origen says that Christian exorcists subdue demons ‘by the name of Jesus with the recital of the histories about him.’” Some examples of credal materials in amulets can also be found at *Supp. Mag.* I.23 = *P. Haun.* III 51, *P. Turner* 49, and BGU 3.954; the latter can be found with discussion in Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets*, nos. 3, 10. See Ra’anan Boustan and Joseph E. Sanzo, “Christian Magicians, Jewish Magic, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity,” *HTR* 110.2 (2017): 217–40 and *P. Lond. Lit.* 239 = no. 170 in Theodore S. de Bruyn and Jitse H. F. Dijkstra, “Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets,” *BASP* 48 (2011): 163–216.

What we find in the Antiochene curse against Babylas, with its reference to the Pharaoh, is evidence of a “scriptural practice” in the form of a *historiola*.¹³ As David Brakke insists, we should ask not how a singular canon evolved among ancient Christians, because no one universal canon existed or exists. Rather, we should ask *how* a community reads, and in what sort of setting they engage what they consider scripture: scholastic, monastic, prophetic. These “scriptural practices” are differently informed by these contexts, even as each context assumes the text’s authoritative nature and enforces its scripturalized status by formal engagements such as writing commentaries or homiletic citation and explanation. In this insight regarding scriptures, Brakke participates in a longer conversation that questions what canon and scripture are.¹⁴ Vincent Wimbush’s massive project on scripturalization connects the issue of textual authority, authoritative interpretative approaches to text, and what persons – of whatever race, gender, and access to authority – are considered meta-physically or exegetically competent to approach such texts. Wimbush writes: “I want and need to know how certain things – a collection of texts here, a particular social demographic there – are invented, are made to work, come to be authorized, come to be determined.”¹⁵ Wimbush

¹³ David Brakke, “Scriptural Practices in Early Christianity: Toward a New Understanding of the New Testament Canon,” in *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, eds. Jörg Ulrich et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 263. Three recent projects have understood the significance of amulets for the study of biblical texts and the formation of biblical canon(s). Sanzo (*Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt*, 9) argues that amulets reveal at least two logics of citation or “metonymic transfers, *pars pro toto* (‘part for whole’) and *pars pro parte/partibus* (‘part for part/s’).” Brice C. Jones’s *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016) details the text-critical history of the inclusion and exclusion of amulets from New Testament text criticism. He argues that we must include these materials to have a fuller sense of textual variants and uses of so-called New Testament texts. De Bruyn’s *Making Amulets Christian* attends to the physicality of amulets and their production by scribes and non-scribes.

¹⁴ Wilfred Cantwell Smith argued that “scripture” is not a commonsense term but stands in dialectic with human activity: *What Is Scripture? A Comparative Approach* (1993; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), esp. 1–2, 17, 242.

¹⁵ With Wimbush as with Smith, these “things” are linked to people; but unlike Smith, Wimbush points out that the theoretical frameworks by which we ask “what is scripture” are “hyperdetermined” by race. Vincent Wimbush, ed., “Introduction: TEXTureS, Gestures, Power: Orientation to Radical Excavation,” in *Theorizing Scriptures: New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 2. Wimbush explains (p. 4): “It should not surprise that the circumstances and experiences of those represented as (nonwhite, dark) ‘others’ can lead to expansiveness in questioning or critical awareness such that a re-consideration of some

prioritizes the study of a range of practices and contexts of power in which scriptures are produced and used and signified upon,¹⁶ as well as the materiality of their presentations: “the primary focus should be placed not upon texts per se (that is, upon their content-meanings), but upon textures, gestures, and power – namely the signs, material products, ritual practices and performances, expressivities, orientations, ethics, and politics associated with the phenomenon of the invention and uses of ‘scriptures.’”¹⁷

As I approach the particular *historiola* of this chapter, that of the drowned Pharaoh’s chariot, I do not primarily index the story to a scriptural antecedent. Instead, I understand the *historiola* as an act of signifying. *Historiolae*, whether that of the drowned chariot of the Pharaoh or the Herakles-clubbed lion or the fever-healed Petrine mother-in law, not only point to compelling, persuasive stories, but also are “material products” which now quietly indicate “ritual practices and performances, expressivities, orientations, ethics, and politics,” to apply Wimbush’s words. *Historiolae* are “oral utterance[s]” (even as we encounter them on the printed page) which direct “‘narrative’s power into this world,” as David Frankfurter has argued.¹⁸ To try to index these brief stories by saying how similar or dissimilar they are to a passage within what is now stabilized as a scriptural text misses the point. As Frankfurter says, “[T]he *historiolae* ‘are’ the myths.”¹⁹ The uttering of the *historiola* is a speech-act that renders “mythic time” present. It asks the god(s) to remake the moment into an instantiation of the myth.

of the normally taken for granted issues and phenomena associated with dominance, including even the issue or phenomenon of the Western naming and cooptation of the phenomenon of the making and using of ‘scriptures,’ is made possible. The new interpretive practice and agenda reflective of this different orientation I term *signifying (on) scriptures*.” See also the Institute for Signifying Scripture and its publications. Wimbush engages W. C. Smith explicitly in “Introduction: TEXTureS,” 9–11.

¹⁶ Wimbush is interested in “the socially and politically marginalized . . . Signifying in this sense includes the practices discovered among peoples off the stage, away from the center – in the dark” (“Introduction: TEXTureS,” 4). With the term signifying and the phrase “in the dark,” Wimbush also situates his scholarship in conversation with the literary critical work of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) (explicitly, citing him on pp. 2, 6) and Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

¹⁷ Wimbush, “Introduction: TEXTureS,” 3.

¹⁸ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 463, 457. Arguing from the Philinna spell, Frankfurter argues that the narrative itself, absent symbols or invoked names, conveys power (p. 459).

¹⁹ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 472; regarding mythic time, see 465–66.

Historiolae, including the one against Babylas, use the logic of similes. The “‘active analogizing’ involved in the coining of *historiolae* is really a form of dynamic story-telling, a ‘bricolage’ of environment, tradition, and ritual speech,” as Frankfurter puts it.²⁰ Ritual practitioners who use *historiolae* as similes take part in a larger literary technique. This analogical thinking, whether in ancient literature or curses, has a “performative force” and even is “‘weaponized,’ since the writers of the ancient curses wished to transfer, by magical means, the properties of certain objects and actions onto their adversaries or objects of desire.”²¹ These interventions – these curses! – are aesthetic, deploying literary techniques to power their work: “like x, so y.”²² The narrative, beautifully condensed to its essence, no matter how terrible the story is, provides fuel for the ritual object.

HOW TO THINK STORY AND SUBSTANCE: GLENN LIGON’S UNTITLED (*I AM AN INVISIBLE MAN*)

Glenn Ligon’s 1991 *Untitled (I am an invisible man)* (Figure 2.1) uses an *historiola*. It helps me to think about how condensed narratives (can) work. Ligon’s art often includes words stenciled onto sheets of paper or canvas.²³ Here, he stencils the first words of Ralph Ellison’s novel in black oilstick on paper:

²⁰ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 472.

²¹ Franek and Urbanová, “May Their Limbs Melt,” 29. The articles try to negotiate categories which I think are no longer helpful, drawn from older (Frazerian) anthropological categories.

²² Franek and Urbanová, “May Their Limbs Melt,” 30. They write: “Such use by Greek and Latin authors alike is both epistemic, which is to say that unknown or unfamiliar properties and relations encapsulated in a simile formula are explained via comparison with more familiar ones, and aesthetic, adding to the richness and beauty of the poetry” (p. 29).

²³ Connie Butler, “Glenn Ligon, *Untitled (‘I am an invisible man’)*,” in *Defining Contemporary Art: 25 Years in 200 Pivotal Artworks*, eds. Daniel Birnbaum et al. (New York: Phaidon, 2011), 92–93. She goes on: “In later works, Ligon began adding coal dust, which would stick to areas of wet lettering, further complicating any attempts to read the text but adding a luscious textural element, clearly positioning them as visually seductive works of art as well as fragments of writing” (pp. 92–93). While Ligon does not use coal dust in the work just discussed, it is worth pausing at this technique and substance, because from them we learn about the nexus of Ligon’s art-making as research-practice; he brings together word, image, and substance. Elsewhere, Ligon states that the coal dust “bulked up the text” as interviewed in Patricia Bickers, “I Am a Man: A Body of Work,” *Art Monthly* 317 (June 2008): n.p. Words can become substantial and stronger not only through an inscription or through the force of voice, but also through material accretion.

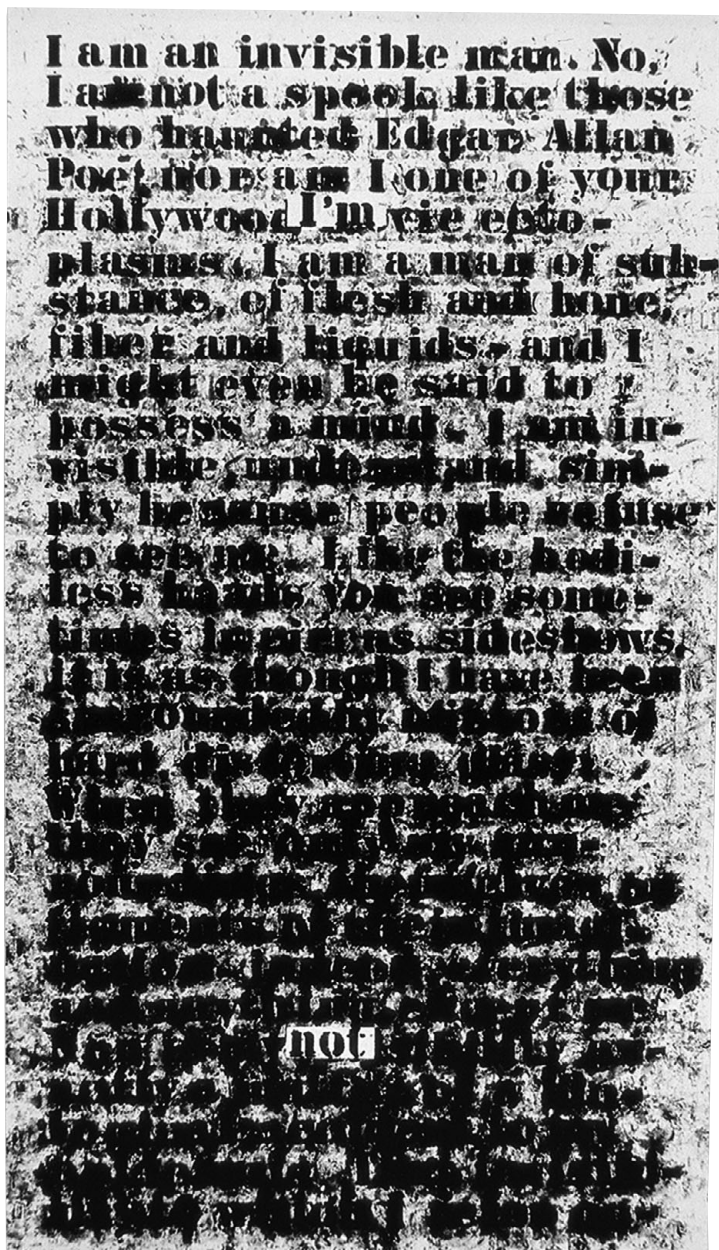


Figure 2.1 Glenn Ligon. *Untitled (I am an invisible man)*. 1991. Oilstick on paper. 30 × 17 1/4" (76.2 × 43.8 cm); Metropolitan Museum of Art 218.1992. © Glenn Ligon; Courtesy of the artist, Hauser & Wirth, New York, Regen Projects, Los Angeles, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, and Chantal Crousel, Paris.

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.²⁴

Ligon's rendering of Ellison's prologue recognizes and reinforces the authority of Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* as a "classic" of United States literature – a scripturalization. The work shifts from light at the top to dark at the bottom, increasingly calling attention to the abstract nature of this word/image as it moves from legible word to muddled. The piece also functions like a palimpsest manuscript: toward the top, at the word "Hollywood," we find layered the statement "I'm." Toward the bottom of the "page," easier to see against the increasing darkness of the stencilled oilstick, "not" drops in, layered over the word "invisibility." Both interventions are black letters on a quadrangle of white, and the vertical distance between them creates an attenuation or pause between assertion (I'm) and denial (not).

In introducing this layer of "I'm/not," Ligon's image dialogues with the content of Ellison's novel, about Black personhood in the United States. "I am an invisible man," Ellison offers. "I'm," answers Ligon's overlaid text, at first: Is this a response to the call of Ellison's proclamation, reinforced by the "I am" of Ellison's text immediately below it? Then, answers Ligon's second overlaid text, "not." Not what? Not invisible? Or not considered a man, in the racist politics of the United States, which dehumanizes those of African descent?

This very passage from *Invisible Man* is also the source for even darker works, the 1992 print (etching and aquatint) *Untitled (I am an invisible man)* and the same year, *Untitled (I am an invisible man. No)* (Figure 2.2), with black-grey words on a black surface.

Each of Ligon's iterations of Ellison's *Invisible Man* repeats the beginning of the novel; each ends at a different line break, the first at "fig- / ments of their imagina-" and the second extending a line further to "-tion – indeed everything." In *Untitled (I am an invisible man. No)*,

²⁴ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952; New York: Vintage International, 1990), 3. To be more precise, Ligon's quotation of Ellison continues as follows, breaking off mid-word: "Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me. Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a bio-chemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer oc-[curs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact.]"

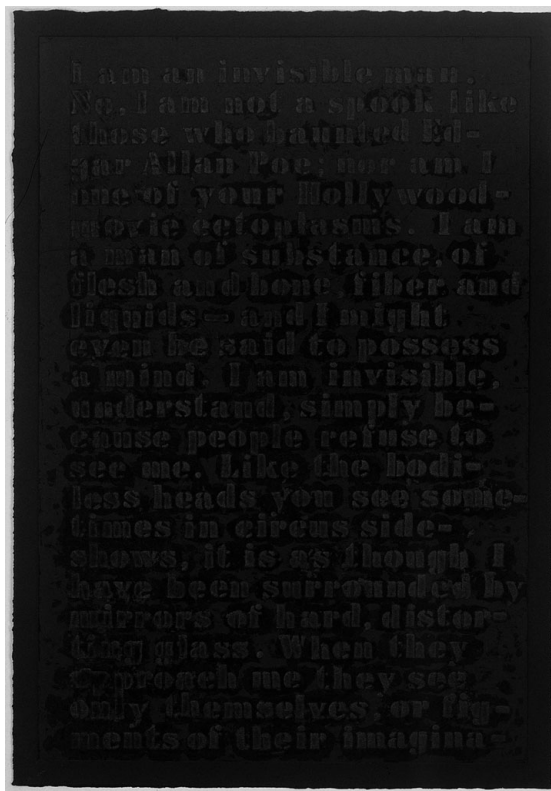


Figure 2.2 Glenn Ligon. *Untitled (Four Etchings)*. 1992. One in a suite of four, Softground etching, aquatint, spit bite, and sugarlift on paper; Each: 25 × 17 3/8 inches (63.5 × 43.2 cm); Edition of 45 and 10 APs; published by Max Protech Gallery; Printed by Burnet Editions, NY.

© Glenn Ligon; Courtesy of the artist, Hauser & Wirth, New York, Regen Projects, Los Angeles, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, and Chantal Crousel, Paris. Whitney Museum 93.35.4

the artwork or word picture is titled like a poem, known by its first line. In this iteration, Ligon emphasizes in his title the abstract and content-filled potential of breaking the line at “no,” raising questions about what is being negated, as with the palimpsest “not” of the 1991 *Untitled (I am an invisible man)*. The blackness of the piece and the Blackness of its creator and Ellison as a key African American writer are tied together. It’s hard even to describe this work as “black on black,” because the color of the artwork is so complex; a photograph does not convey what the eye experiences, and the legibility of the words depends upon the work’s

three-dimensionality, with the black shining or matte depending upon the lighting and where the viewer stands.

Other works in Ligon's corpus use a similar technique of black oilstick and stenciling; in addition, they add coal dust, which sticks to the moist surface of the oil paint. In a discussion of Ligon's exhibit *Stranger* (The Studio Museum, Harlem, 2001), Hilton Als asks Ligon about his engagement with and stenciling of a portion of James Baldwin's "Stranger in the Village," a narrative about Baldwin's time as a solitary Black man in a Swiss village, where he retreated with his lover, and Ligon's painting, which replicates Baldwin's story about a "masquerade of the Swiss children with the blackened faces."²⁵ "Why coal dust as a material?" Als asks. Ligon replies:

I used coal dust to make these paintings because I wanted a material that was very visceral and bumped up the physicality of the text, but at the same time obscured the text even more than the paintings that I was doing using oil paint. Coal dust is an interesting material for me because it's beautiful; it's a black, shiny material, but it's also a waste product, materials [*sic*] that is leftover from coal processing.²⁶

Ligon points out "the contradictory readings it [coal dust] engenders. Worthless. Waste. Black. Beautiful. Shiny. Reflective. I think it's interesting, also because Baldwin takes this sense of perceived negatives of being black, being gay, and being poor and sees them as 'hitting the jackpot.'"²⁷ Ligon reflects: "one of the things about the paintings is that there's always this question of whether I'm obscuring text or highlighting it, whether the accumulation of material on the paintings is about actually withdrawing meaning and my ambivalence about language and its ability to communicate, or is it about this incredible faith in language which someone like Baldwin had."²⁸ Ligon lays bare an aspect of his research practice of engaging Baldwin:

My approach to the essay [Baldwin's essay] of these particular works is one of questioning. The paintings are fundamentally about language and an ambivalence and pessimism about the project of communicating, of going back and forth between really wanting to communicate with the viewer and also wanting to

²⁵ *Glenn Ligon: Stranger* (New York: The Studio Museum, 2001), 27. This small volume was published in concert with the exhibition of the same name, and includes a conversation between Ligon and Hilton Als, moderated by Thelma Golden. Part of the discussion reflects on James Baldwin's "Stranger in the Village," first published in *Harpers Magazine* in 1953, then included in his 1995 *Notes of a Native Son*.

²⁶ *Glenn Ligon: Stranger*, 26. ²⁷ *Glenn Ligon: Stranger*, 27.

²⁸ *Glenn Ligon: Stranger*, 27.

withhold things and the aggression of that withholding I didn't want my paintings just to be re-presenting the text, saying 'Baldwin is important, here's the text, read it again.' I wanted to explore the more abstract level of why do certain things disappear or how they have become so known but they're not visible anymore, and pushing the viewer to think about this visual object.²⁹

Ligon's art hovers between image, object, and text. His word pictures are part of his longstanding interest in and production of abstract art.³⁰ Ligon *makes* Ellison's words, or Baldwin's, into abstracted visual art that asserts the significance of the written word and narrative, but that also involves "aggression" in its "withholding" of the larger story. This is not merely mimesis. Ligon's work re-presents a story as a visual sign, undergirded by the question of what is important and what is seen, work carried out via varied media: stenciling, etching, black oilstick, in some cases coal dust. Ligon's artistic engagement with Ellison's *Invisible Man* develops its own theories about the significance of the novel's story. And its media and technologies create a form of ethical intervention that differs from the media or technologies found, for example, in a scholarly essay.

In the two examples just discussed, Ligon's work offers iterative and varying engagements with the novel *Invisible Man*, evocations of the same *historiola* with different extents and different emphases: black on white, black on black, the palimpsest of "I'm/not," the different line endings.³¹ Ligon reflects the increasingly "classical" status of Ellison's novel. He participates in its "canonization" and, with his replication of Ellison's mention of Edgar Allen Poe ("I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe"), enters Ellison's work and Ligon's own work into an authoritative literary stream. Ligon plays with the passage's substantiality (canvas and oilstick, black on black etching and aquatint print). He invites reflection on identification both for the artist (Is the artist an invisible man? Is he not?) and for the viewer/reader (Are you?). Ellison's and Ligon's works antiphonally theorize how an African

²⁹ Glenn Ligon: *Stranger*, 28.

³⁰ Artist talk with Hilton Als, Princeton University Art Museum, 11 March 2021, Zoom. See also Darby English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), esp. 203–5; and Scott Rothkopf, *Glenn Ligon: America* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art; New Haven: distributed by Yale University Press, 2011).

³¹ Note that there is a version of *Untitled (I am an Invisible Man)* from 1991 that contains nine lines of white squares, forming an illegible word puzzle of a palimpsest over Ellison's passage.

American man is subject to invisibility or dangerous hypervisibility (dangerous to the visible entity, and dangerous to the one who looks).³²

Within Ligon's corpus, this use of Ellison is part of a larger project of questioning humanness and manhood in a racist society. Ligon's *Untitled (I am a Man)* (1998) is a calque of the famous signs (I / AM / A / MAN) carried in the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike, largely by Black workers, and then at the memorial march after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ligon iteratively questions how Man is defined within the currents of racism and colonialism.³³ His art philosophically engages the assertion of the dignity of labor and Black belonging as Man (and the masculinity of this assertion) amid Ellison's commentary on the invisibility of blackness, even as Ligon is aware of the paradoxical hypervisibility of blackness and even as his artworks physically manifest the multiplicity of blackness.

Ligon's *I am an invisible man* wakes us up to substance and story, as well as to the production and repetition of authoritative stories. These art works deploy and conceal words and stories by means of their materiality and substance. The letters that build the words that constitute the narrative beginning of *Invisible Man* also constitute abstract art: they are not (only) denotational but (also and primarily) signs.

THE BABYLAS CURSES

The 1934–35 excavations at Antioch mainly resulted in dragging lavish mosaics out of the ground and sending them to the museums which had sponsored the excavation, institutions we now call the Louvre, the Princeton University Art Museum, the Worcester Art Museum, the

³² See, e.g., Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17.2 (1987): 64–81; Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), esp. 6–7, 119–35; Weheliye draws on Sylvia Wynter, e.g., her "On Disenchanting Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," *Cultural Critique* 7 (1987): 207–44. See also the question of "I am a Man" as used to analyze the Acts of the Apostles in Jeremy Williams, *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles: Race, Rhetoric, and the Prosecution of an Early Christian Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023). Note also the black-on-black iteration of etching and aquatint Whitney Museum acq. no. 93.35.3.

³³ Gregg Bordowitz, *Glenn Ligon, Untitled (I Am a Man)* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018); English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness*, 206–9.

Baltimore Museum of Art, Dumbarton Oaks, and others.³⁴ These finds attest to the wealth of late antique Antioch and its well-watered suburb Daphne; they remind us of the political and religious significance of a site considered one of the four primary cities of the Roman Empire.³⁵

Also excavated were humbler objects, including thirteen curse tablets found in Antioch and environs.³⁶ The curse tablet of this chapter's focus lay at the foot of Mt. Staurin. Placed with three others in a disused cistern or well in the courtyard of the House of the Calendar, it curses a grocer named Babylas, who lived in the neighborhood of the Mygdonites.³⁷ Hollmann dates all four *defixiones* found here to the fourth to the sixth century CE (Figure 2.3). Three are inscribed with the same hand, including the *defixio* at the center of this chapter, which was found with another curse against Babylas, which “hands the *psychē*, power, and strength of Babylas over to Typhon, so that he grow weak, sick, hungry, sleepless.”³⁸ This Babylas had really pissed someone off.³⁹

³⁴ James A. Welu, “From Antioch to Worcester: The Pursuit of an Ancient City,” in *The Arts of Antioch: Art Historical and Scientific Approaches to Roman Mosaics and a Catalogue of the Worcester Art Museum Antioch Collection*, eds. Lawrence Becker and Christine Kondoleon (Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 2005), 3–16. Photos associated with the House of the Calendar can be found at <http://vrc.princeton.edu/researchphotographs/s/antioch/page/introduction>. To understand the relation between the city of Antioch and its urban growth and the larger topography, see Andrea U. De Giorgi, *Ancient Antioch: From the Seleucid Era to the Islamic Conquest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), esp. 89–92, 66–96.

³⁵ Andrea U. De Giorgi and A. Asa Eger, *Antioch: A History* (London: Routledge, 2021), 99–189; Christine Kondoleon, ed., *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 116–17; Catherine Saliou, “Libanius’s *Antiochicus*, Mirror of a City? Antioch in 356, Praise and Reality,” in *Antioch II: The Many Faces of Antioch: Intellectual Exchange and Religious Diversity, CE 350–450*, eds. Silke-Petra Bergjan and Susanna Elm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 35–52.

³⁶ Hollmann, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 157. The entire corpus, along with *defixiones* from a well in the procurator’s palace in Caesarea Maritima, is to be published in two volumes by Alexander Hollmann and Robert Daniel: *Magica Levantina*, in the series *Papyrologica Coloniensis* (Hollmann, personal email correspondence, 2018). Five were excavated in the drains along the central barrier and turning posts of the hippodrome of the circus that was likely attached to the imperial palace in Antioch. One curses the horses of charioteers. Calling upon Hekate and other deities of the underworld, it states: “Bind, lay waste, and overturn the horses of the Blue,” says the *defixio*, and thirty-six Greek names of horses follow. Florent Heintz, “Circus Curses and Their Archaeological Contexts,” *JRA* 11 (1998): 337–42.

³⁷ Hollman, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 157.

³⁸ Hollman, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 160.

³⁹ Hollman, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 157 n. 4. In the same hand is another curse (ML24= PUAM 4758-I 132) which seems to be about a business matter, and it makes some reference to the struggle of Ouranos and Kronos as *patroklastēs* (punisher of the

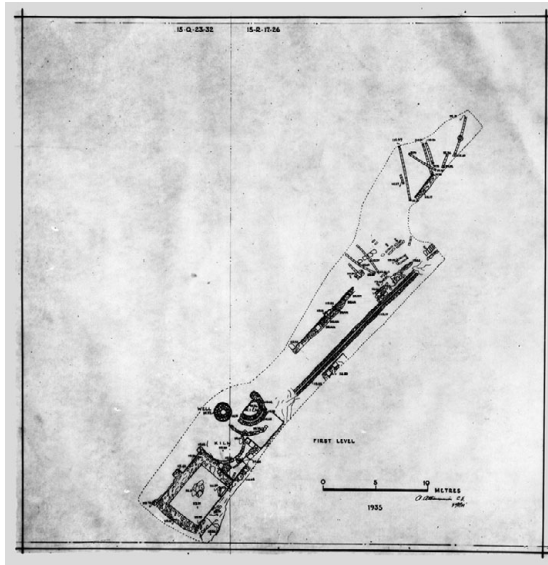


Figure 2.3 House of the Calendar. Plan of first level of excavations including House of the Triumph of Dionysus. October 12, 1935. Princeton University. Identifier: 2520 sector 15-R.

The curse of this chapter's focus is inscribed in the same hand on each side of a thin lead tablet (6.82 cm × 12.9 cm). It is nearly intact, except for a triangular portion of the text lost at what seems to be a fold; about twelve letters are missing.⁴⁰ The name of the person cursed, the greengrocer (*lchanōpōlēs*) Babylas, gives us further clues regarding date and religious affiliation. This Babylas was presumably named after Babylas, a bishop of Antioch, who was martyred during the Decian persecution, ca. 253 CE. His memory (and body) were eventually honored in the

father). It is directed against someone (illegible or missing) who also lives in the neighborhood of the Mygdonites – perhaps Babylas again. The final *defixio* (ML25= PUAM 4740-I 130d) from the same well is in a different hand, against a male, wishing that he be shaken with fever and confined to bed. Typhon is the name of the youngest son of the goddess Gaia and is frequently called upon in curses; see e.g., Jordan's discussion of fourteen tablets found in a Roman well in Athens, in which "names of the Egyptian god Seth-Typhon are mixed with those of the god of the Old Testament" (David Jordan, "Defixiones from a Well Near the Southwest Corner of the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia* 54.3 [1985]: 205).

⁴⁰ Hollmann, "A Curse Tablet from Antioch," 157.

cruciform church of Babylas at Qausīyeh.⁴¹ Thus the greengrocer Babylas probably lived in the late third or fourth century⁴² and was likely a Christian, named after a saint. We cannot know for sure, however, the cultic affiliations of either curser or cursed, other than that, for the curser and the ritual specialist, the story of the Pharaoh was considered efficacious.

The curse is carefully patterned, offering a literary aesthetics. Side A reads:

- (1) Britakulma arōdasidaki[]ā (2) ēllim abri makhrēmella (3) astrak iaēou santhnanō ōpakh (4) thalsou santarma khoukhi (5) erēbath sardoasirōs akhōrō.⁴³ (6) O thunder- and lightning-hurling Iao, (7) strike, bind, bind together Babylas, (8) the greengrocer, whom (9) the polluted womb Dionysia, also called (10) Hesykhia, gave birth to and who lives in the neighborhood of the Mygdonites. (11) As you struck the chariot (12) of Pharaoh, so strike his [Babylas's] (13) offensiveness. O thunder- and (14) lightning-hurling Iao, as you cut down (15) the firstborn of Egypt, (16) cut down his [livestock?] (17) as much as. . . (18) now, and bind, bind down, (19) bind together, lay out, (20) twist, let them be broken,⁴⁴ (21) let them not be able to move, (22) the livestock of Babylas himself (23) all the time from this hour (24) and from this day, now, (25) now, quickly, quickly, fill with evil fortune and

⁴¹ See Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch (300–638 CE)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 140; for the dating of 253 CE, see Hollman, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 160 n. 7; for analysis of Emperor Julian’s disgust at Babylas’s remains, the peripatetic nature of those remains as they were moved about the city, John Chrysostom’s advocacy of them, and the Church built by Bishop Meletius to house them, see Sarah Porter, *Early Christian Deathscapes in Late Antique Antioch* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2022), esp. chaps. 2–3.

⁴² Hollmann, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 157, dates the *defixio* to the third or fourth century CE.

⁴³ These letters have been understood as *voces magicae*, yet Yael Krämer has argued that they may be Aramaic. In her article in progress, “‘O thunder and lightning-hurling Iao’: Cursing Babylas the Greengrocer in Late-Roman Antioch,” which I quote with her kind permission, she suggests a possible translation of “Come create whatever I may wish for, my god, create, oh destroying god/destroyer, god), I will ruin/curse you, (by?) iaēou, our adversary, I revert”

⁴⁴ The verb κλαστέζω means to dress vines but also, metaphorically, to trim or humble. S.v. LSJ κλαστέζω.

(26) misfortune this same (27) Babylas the greengrocer, whom (28) Hesykhia gave birth to!⁴⁵

The twenty-eight lines begin with five full lines of *voces magicae*, which can be seen as powerful unknown language.⁴⁶ It then starts anew on line 6 with a one-line invocation to “thunder- and lightening-hurling Iaō.” Iaō is often thought to be a Greek rendition of the tetragrammaton – a reference to the god of the Jews.⁴⁷ Line 7 demands the striking and

⁴⁵ The text and translation are from Hollmann, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 159, 164:

βριτακυλμα αρωδασιδακι[[α RECTO
ηλλιμ αβρι μαχημελλα
αστρακ ιαηου σανθαναν ωπαχ
θαλσου σανταρμα χουχι
ερηβαθ σαρδοασιρως αχωρω
ὦ βρώ<v>των και ἀστ<ρ>άπτων Ιαω
βάλη δῆσων σύ<v>δησω<v> Βαβυλᾶν
τῶν λαχανωπῶλην ὦ<v> ἤτηκεν
εἰ μηρὰ μέτρα Διωνυσία εἰ κὲ
Εἰσυχία ὑκῶ<v>τα> ἐν γιτωνία Μυγδ-
ωνιτῶν· ὡς ἔβαλες τῷ ἄ<ρ>μα το-
ῦ Φαραῶνος, οὗτος βάλῃ τὴν δύσ-
{ω}ληψιν αὐτοῦ· ὦ βρ<ό>vτων και
ἀσ{σ}τρ<ά>πτων Ιαω, ὡς ἐξέκωψ-
ῃς τὰ πρωτότυκα τῖς Ἡγύπ-
του, ἄ<κ>κωψων τῷ λφ[γα α-]
ὑτο<ῦ> τόσυν {ΟΣΤ} ὅσ{ω}περ Η.[c. 3]
Σ ἐν ἄρτι και δῖσων κατὰδισ-
ων σύνδισων κατὰκλιν<ον> στρέ-
ψατη κλαστήτῳσαν μὶ δυ-
νιθοῦσιν κινῖ<σ>θ<αι> τὰ αὐτοῦ Βα-
βυλᾶ τὰ ἄλῳγα αὐτοῦ τόσ-
ων ὅσ<ον> ἀπού τῖς ὥρας ταύτις
και τῖς ἐμήρας ταύτις ἥδη
ἥδη ταχύ ταχύ κακιμερίας
δυσιμερίας π<λ>ήσατη τοῦ αὐτοῦ
Βαβυλᾶ λαχανωπῶλι ὦν ἤτηκ-
εν Εἰσυχία.

⁴⁶ See below Chapter 3 for discussion of *voces magicae*, esp. p. 196 n. 161 regarding efforts to catalogue and understand them.

⁴⁷ On the Judean god as a locative rather than a universal, monotheistic force in late antiquity, see Paula Fredriksen, “Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul’s Gospel,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 232–52 and her *Paul: The Pagan’s Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). Among the curses at Antioch, we find other references to Jewish scripture or names associated with Judaism. An Aramaic bowl inscription (to stop horses) mentions an angel of the Lord who stopped Balaam and his ass; one other Greek *defixio* mentions Abraam and Samouel. Personal communication with Hollmann: “apart from the Babylas tablet... (Red Sea crossing and killing of first-born) and the reference to

binding of Babylas the greengrocer: *balē dēsōn su<n>dēsō<n> Babulan*, which leads to a kind of poetics of binding: the repeated *ba*, the repeated *dē*, the repeated *sō*, the two syllables twice, then three syllables twice form a children's jump rope chant.⁴⁸ The text then identifies who Babylas is: the greengrocer (line 8); lines 9–10 drill down to specifics: he is from “the polluted womb” of “Dionysia, also called Hesykhia,” who lives in the neighborhood of the Mygdonites.

The curse proper then follows in two parts, with two *historiolae* or short narratives that do things with words, to borrow from J. L. Austin's terminology.⁴⁹ “As you struck the chariot of Pharaoh, so strike his offensiveness.” The Greek term which Hollmann translates as “offensiveness” is a rare one, as he notes, and perhaps should be understood to mean that Babylas is “hard to take” or slippery.⁵⁰ The binding spell gives instructions regarding what is to be done to Babylas, but also regarding what is to be done with the curse itself, conflated with Babylas and his livestock: “and bind, bind *down*, bind *together*, lay out, twist; let them be broken, let them not be able to move” (lines 18–20).⁵¹ The first three singular imperative verbs of these lines (*balē dēsōn sundēsōn*), which seem to address Iaō alone, ask the god “to bind,” the very word used to define the curse tablet: a binding spell. They crescendo. Were they incanted aloud, we would hear the resounding repetition of *dēsō*, climaxing in

Balaam and his ass in the Aramaic *defixio*, there are no other references to biblical passages.”

⁴⁸ I am grateful to Federico Maviglia and Prof. Tim Whitmarsh for help here; they note that the language has evolved from quantitative meter to rhythmic meter as the Greek of this inscription indicates an evolution or variation in pronunciation, particularly of vowels. I have transliterated from Hollman's edition, without attempting to regularize the Greek to something more classically correct.

⁴⁹ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words: The Williams James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962); Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 457–76.

⁵⁰ As Hollmann notes (“A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 161), “the only occurrence of this word in the corpus of Greek literature as preserved in the *TLG* collection is in the astrological poem of the 12th-century patriarch of Constantinople, Joannes Camaterus, *De zodiaco* 1001.” Hollmann sees the omega of δύσ(ω)ληψις as a “helping vowel.” In other words, we are not on secure philological grounds here. The term δύσληπτος can refer to something “hard to hold” (such as a heavy discus that is thrown; see Lucian *Anacharsis* 27). In my discussion of the term with Joseph Verheyden, he helpfully noted that δύσληπτος “is remarkably often used in technical works (e.g., for tools that are difficult to handle)” (personal communication, June 11, 2021).

⁵¹ καὶ δίσων κατὰδισ | ὦν σύνδισων κατὰκλιν<ον> στρέ | ψατή κλαστήωσαν μὶ δυ | νιθοῦσιν κινῖ<σ>θ<αι> (lines 18–21). Note what is probably merely unorthographic variation in vowels from δῆσων σύνδησων above to δίσων κατὰδίσων here.

the imperative *kataklinōn*, perhaps best translated “strike him down.” The curse then begins again, shifting suddenly to the second-person plural for “may you twist” and then moving to a passive imperative “may they be broken” and then to a third-personal plural passive subjunctive “may they not be able to move.”⁵²

Side A again calls to “o thunder- and lightening-hurling Iao”: “as you cut down the firstborn of Egypt, cut down his [livestock?]. . . .” (A lacuna in the text follows, but the curse a few lines later against the *aloga* or “animals” of Babylas indicates that perhaps it was his livestock that were to be cursed all along.) Thus side A of the *defixio* compactly not only does things with words, but also does things with narratives. The *historiolae* activate the stories of the first plague – the death of the firstborn males of Egypt – and the subsequent destruction of Pharaoh’s chariot (lines 14–16), plunged into the Red Sea as he chases the Israelites, enslaved, whom he had let go in a moment of desperation as the plagues destroyed Egypt (lines 11–12). “As you struck the chariot of Pharaoh” alludes to the story from Exodus and to the triumph celebrated in the Song of the Sea.⁵³ This image of the sea or the Jordan River turning back is found elsewhere in the Jewish scriptures (LXX Ps. 113:3–6; Josh. 3:13–14), and also in a recipe for a curse.⁵⁴ The *historiola* is a powerful, free-floating mythic

⁵² Hollmann, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 159 instead reads στέψατε κλαστήωσαν μι δυ | νιθοῦσιν κινί<σ>θ<αι>.

⁵³ van der Horst, “The God Who Drowned the King of Egypt,” 135. “As you struck the chariot of Pharaoh” (ὡς ἔβαλες τὸ ἄρμα τοῦ Φαραῶνος) in lines 11–12 alludes to a story also known in Exod. 14:23–28, finding its closest parallel in the Septuagint version of the Song of the Sea in Exod. 15:4a (ἄρματα Φαραῶ καὶ τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ ἔρριπεν εἰς θάλασσαν); see also Hollmann, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 161.

⁵⁴ van der Horst, “The God Who Drowned the King of Egypt,” 136–37: in a “famous exorcistic charm called the *Hebraikos logos* magical papyrus from Paris (PGM IV.3007–3086), we find the following adjuration: ‘I adjure you by the great god Sabaoth, through whom the Jordan river drew back and the Red Sea, which Israel crossed, became impassable’ (3053–55). This passage refers to both Josh. 3.13–14 (or Ps. 113.3) and Exod. 14.27. Here we do not find the exact formula ‘the god who drowned the king of Egypt’ but the idea is implied clearly.” See the translation of PGM IV.3007–3086, in Betz, pp. 170–72. Audollent notes a tablet from third-century CE Hadrumetum that seems to refer to Moses (ὀρκίζω σε τὸν διαστήσαντα τὴν ῥάβδον ἐν τῇ θάλασσᾳ, Audollent 271 line 12), but note that the meaning is unclear: “I adjure you, who has separated the rod in the sea.” Neither the Hadrumetum *defixio* nor PGM IV.3053–3055 mentions the Pharaoh and his chariot. Hollman, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 161 notes further evidence from an incantation found in the Cairo Genizah (T-S Arabic 49.54 = Geniza 25, Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993], 227–30), which calls for recitation of part of the Song of the Sea.

fragment, available for use by Jews and non-Jews alike.⁵⁵ It seems to cohere with Patricia Cox Miller's idea of "narratives 'lines'" or "strategies of narration" that

leave out unnecessary details, and . . . emphasize repetition. By omitting unnecessary details, such narratives foreground the objects – the fragments of the whole – around which they are structured. These objects are "charged with a special force" and become "like the pole of a magnetic field, a knot in the network of invisible relationships."⁵⁶

The poem/*defixio* ends by echoing its identification of the curse's recipient: "now, now, quickly, quickly, fill with evil fortune and misfortune this same Babylas the greengrocer, whom Hesykhia gave birth to!" These lines also have their poetic, sonic effect: the phrase "now, now, quickly, quickly" (*ēdē ēdē tachū tachū*) is very familiar from so-called magical texts. Its resounding familiarity is followed by another rhythmic fragment, "evil day bad day" (*kakimerias dusimerias*), with stress on the iotas of the penultimate syllables and the repetition of sound.⁵⁷

Yet it is not Babylas alone who is swept away by the current or plagued. His livestock are also affected, and the beginning of the tablet includes an emphasis on his mother. Many curse tablets identify their subject matrilineally, rather than deploying the more standard identification with the name of the father, so it is not unusual that Dionysia, or Hesykhia, is named.⁵⁸ But the term "polluted womb" is a surprising addition, and it reminds us that these curses are individual and personal,

⁵⁵ See also Hollman, "A Curse Tablet from Antioch," 157. See also Wilfred Lawrence Knox, "Jewish Liturgical Exorcism," *HTR* 31.3 (1938): 191–203, which adduces more phrases that draw from Jewish scripture/narratives; Martin Rist, "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: A Liturgical and Magical Formula," *JBL* 57.3 (1938): 289–303.

⁵⁶ Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 43. Miller is citing Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*.

⁵⁷ Hollmann translates this unusual phrase (there is only one other attestation for *kakimeria*) as "evil fortune and misfortune," but I emphasize the term *hēmera* within this otherwise strange phrase, since it may resonate with the Christian idea of judgment on "this day."

⁵⁸ Jaime R. Curbera, "Maternal Lineage in Greek Magical Texts," in *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens*, 4–8 May 1997, eds. David R. Jordan et al. (Bergen: Norwegian Institute, 1999), 195–203. Dawn LaValle Norman is working on the topic of matronymics in ancient Christian literature.

and they also involve a larger segment of a community and perhaps the gossip that circulates therein.⁵⁹

Side B of the curse is only fourteen lines. It names “Babylas the greengrocer” as lawless and impious; toward the end of the *defixio*, he is identified again as born from “Dionysia, also known as Hesykhia” (line 10). We have seen this curse do things with words, and do things with a story. Now, this side of the *defixio* does things with substance and location.

(1) I adjure you (pl.) on account of the (2) lawless and impious (3) Babylas the greengrocer: (4) just as you (5) drown and will chill [this tablet] (6) in the well (7) which is disused, so too (8) drown and chill the (9) soul of Babylas, whom (10) Dionysia, also known as Hesykhia, gave birth to, (11) weighed down with illness and (12) unprofitable⁶⁰ wherever he is,⁶¹ (13) and let no one live with him, (14) now, now, quickly, quickly!⁶²

The *defixio* offers an analogy between what one does with the tablet and what should happen to Babylas himself: as the *defixio* will be drowned and chilled in the unprofitable or disused cistern or well; so too Babylas’s soul should be drowned and chilled.

⁵⁹ See e.g., Lydia Matthews and Irene Salvo, “Cursing-Prayers and Female Vengeance in the Ancient Greek World,” in *Revenge and Gender in Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, eds. Lesel Dawson and Fiona McHardy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 146–50.

⁶⁰ Federico Maviglia notes that ἀρχημάτιστος is usually applied to days, i.e. “(a day) that doesn’t bring profit,’ when public business was forbidden (Lat. *dies nefas*).” The term may indicate that Babylas should not be able to make money.

⁶¹ Federico Maviglia notes that the puzzling εἴσθη could refer to ἴσθη (imperfect) or ἔσθη (aorist subjunctive) and should probably be translated “wherever he is” or “wherever he might be.”

⁶² ὥρκιζω ὑμᾶς<ς> διὰ τῶν VERSO
 ἄνωμων καὶ δυσεβῆν
 Βαβυλᾶν τῶν λαχανω-
 πῶλιν· ὥσ[υ]πηρ ὑμῖς
 βωλίζατη καὶ ψυγῆς<ε>τη
 ἐν τοῦ λάκου τοῦ ἀρχιμα-
 τίστου, οὗτος καὶ ὑμῖς βω-
 λίσατη καὶ ψύξατη τὴν
 ψυχὴν Βαβυλᾶ, ὣν ἔτηκεν
 Διωνυσία εἰ καὶ Εἰσυχία,
 νωσσοβαρῆα καὶ ἀκρι-
 μάτι[στο]ν ὧπρῳ εἴσθη καὶ
 [μη]ξῖς ὑκίσι σὺν αὐτοῦ
 [ῆ]δη ῆδη ταχύ ταχύ.

Text Hollmann, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 164; translation slightly modified from the same.

The location of the curse is significant. As Christine Shepardson writes, “Antioch’s urban and rural places, far from being an inert backdrop against which events transpired, were also ever-shifting sites of, and tools for, the negotiation of power, authority, and religious identity.” She refers to the larger landscape of Antioch, including St. Peter’s Grotto, the *palaia ekklēsia*, the Great Church, the stylites a bit off in the countryside, the monks from the mountains who rush into the city to protect it in 387 during the riot of the statues.⁶³ At Antioch and elsewhere, micro-locations such as wells are also significant as dropboxes. Other tablets were found in Antioch’s rich suburb of Daphne, in a well in the House of Gē and the Seasons and a well in the House of the Boat of the Psyches.⁶⁴ In the Roman period alone we have rich evidence of *defixiones* placed in wells. As we learned in Chapter 1, over two hundred lead and perhaps thirty selenite tablets were placed in what might have been a well or grave in Amathous, Cyprus.⁶⁵ Other groups of tablets have been found in wells: approximately sixty in a well in Caesarea Maritima, at Herod’s Praetorium; or seventeen texts of roughly the same date in a well in the Athenian Agora; or the famous cache of justice-seeking tablets associated with the worship of Sulis Minerva in Bath, England; or deposits with lead, poppets, and lamps at the fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome. Andrew Wilburn points to such deposits in wells or graves as fueled by an underlying logic of depositing one’s curse at an entrance to the underworld.⁶⁶ In the case of this curse against Babylas, the wet of the Red Sea in

⁶³ Christine Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places: Late Antique Antioch and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 1.

⁶⁴ Hollmann, personal communication via email, 2019. House of Gē and the Seasons = ML32 = PUAM 4868-1145; House of the Boat of the Psyches = ML33 = PUAM 5456-1170.

⁶⁵ Andrew T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 174–75.

⁶⁶ Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 180; Jordan, “Defixiones from a Well Near the Southwest Corner of the Athenian Agora,” 205–55, esp. 207 n. 3 for a longer list of *defixiones* found at wells up to 1985; R. S. O. Tomlin, “The Curse Tablets,” in *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath*, vol. 2: *The Finds from the Sacred Spring*, ed. B. Cunliffe (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988), 59–277; Marina Piranomonte, “Religion and Magic at Rome: The Fountain of Anna Perenna,” in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*, eds. Richard L. Gordon and Francesco Marco Simón (RGRW 168; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 196. We also know of wells as effective sites of deposit from recipes, e.g., “the [wrapped] ring may also be thrown into an unused well” (PGM V.345 in Betz, p. 106).

the *defixio* against Babylas is amplified by the placement of the *defixio* within the well at the House of the Calendar.

While side A used a narrative analogically – as the Pharaoh’s chariot, so too Babylas and his livestock – side B uses materiality analogically. Side B of the *defixio* deploys the terms “chilled” and “unprofitable,”⁶⁷ applying them both to the well⁶⁸ and to Babylas. They are called cold and useless, gray and dead. As Jessica Lamont puts it, “the medium mattered.”⁶⁹ Lead *defixiones* were sometimes shaped into something that resembled fetters or shackles or reflected upon their own fettering role in binding the accursed.⁷⁰ The coldness of lead also has its utility: “The curse aimed to chill the targets, their affairs, words, deeds, and tongues – just as the inscribed text was cold.” This coldness is also an aesthetic critique: Aristotle, for example, mentions “‘frigidity’ of style, and its effects in poetry and speech.”⁷¹ Lead curses sometimes reference their own

⁶⁷ ψυγήσ<ε>τη line 5; ψύξατη line 8; ἀχρηματίστου lines 5–6.

⁶⁸ Hollman, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 165, with possible allusions to LXX Exod. 12:29 in its reference to a λάκου.

⁶⁹ Lamont, “Cold and Worthless,” 40. While previous scholars sometimes argued that the popularity of lead in curse-tablet manufacture was due to its cheapness, Lamont notes that it would have been cheaper to produce *defixiones* on ostraka, or pottery sherds. While in the classical period there is a one-to-one ration of lead to ceramic private letters, in the same period, so far, there are four ceramic and approximately 500 lead Attic curses. Regarding silver mining and the sources for the lead used for *defixiones*, see Jochen Vogt et al., “Lead isotope analysis in magic artefacts from the Berlin museums,” *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* 10 (2018): 1111–27. See also Jaime Curbera, “From the Magician’s Workshop: Notes on the Materiality of Greek Curse Tablets,” in *The Materiality of Magic*, eds. Dietrich Boschung and Jan N. Bremer (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 97–122 on the lead Attic tablets collected by Wünsch, the history of the use of lead, and in the same volume Bremmer, “Materiality of Magic,” 9–10 and Richard Gordon, “From Substances to Texts,” 133–74 on the material turn. Gordon treats ideas of object agency (focusing on Alfred Gell and others, but oddly not addressing the significant work of feminist theorists like Karen Barad and Jane Bennett, and archaeologist/theorist Yannis Hamilakis). Gordon’s tripartite taxonomy of the “materialities of magic” includes 1) natural substances (from plants and animals), 2) manufactured objects (here, lead objects are included); 3) complex diagrams (e.g., *Schwindeschema*) (pp. 140–41).

⁷⁰ Lamont, “Cold and Worthless,” 44; see also Curbera, “From the Magician’s Workshop,” 101 on the production of lead tablets into the shape of binding fetters or the reference within the tablet to the idea of fettering (even if the tablet itself was a “normal” rectangular one).

⁷¹ Lamont, “Cold and Worthless,” 57. Lamont is discussing fourth-century BCE *defixiones* and so her use of Aristotle is particularly appropriate. But this question regarding the aesthetics of speech arises too in the Roman period (see Chapter 1 @ – the “chill, man,” of Sotērianos’s curse, and Chapter 3 @); on chill and the aesthetics of writing history, see also Peter von Möllendorff, “Frigid Enthusiasts: Lucian on Writing History,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 47 (2001): 138–39.

weightiness as part of a curse; the curse against Babylas consigns him to “weighty-sickness” (*nōsōbarēa*) – an extremely rare word, perhaps a neologism.⁷² The well and the lead together are substances deployed to effect substantial, substantive effects on Babylas’s body and that of his *aloga* or animals. There is a repeated watery chill to this *defixio*: the Pharaoh’s chariot is drowned; the *defixio* is drowned and chilled in the well; so too Babylas is to be drowned. In this chapter, with its focus on both story and substance, we see the significance of the lead – its weight, its deadness – and the significance of the substance of its resting place – the dampness, the drowning.

It is possible that the commissioner of the spells against Babylas was a fellow greengrocer, since we know of rivalry between Antiochene businessmen and artisans.⁷³ The Babylas *defixio* may be an attempt at “financial sabotage” – a curse against Babylas’s business,⁷⁴ in a city bustling with commerce. That commercial significance is even hinted at in the famous images which personify Antioch’s Tyche or Fortune, who is nearly always depicted as a seated female over the trade-facilitating Orontes River, which flows through the city, personified under her feet as a muscular show-off, arms poised to swim forward. In the fourth century CE, the orator Libanius (*Or.* 11) boasted that the city was bustling day and night, interconnected by colonnaded streets, a center of trade as goods from the east moved down the Orontes to the seaport of Seleucia Pieria.

⁷² According to Hollman, “A Curse Tablet from Antioch,” 165, the term νωσωβαρήα is found elsewhere only once, with the phrase νουσοβαρής θάνατος “heavily ill death” (*SEG* 2-.479 from Olbia); see also Lamont, “Cold and Worthless,” 57, 58–60 on use of lead as analogy to coldness and heaviness in law courts. As Lamont puts it, “the lead itself came to embody the curse’s malignancy” (p. 61).

⁷³ Florent Heintz, “Magic Tablets and the Games at Antioch,” in *Antioch: The Lost City*, 163–67. Heintz notes that greengrocers are mentioned in Libanius *Or.* 54.42, and competition and demonstrations between shopkeepers or artisans are mentioned in Libanius *Or.* 29.9. This question of commercial competition becomes a problematic part of Versnel’s categorization of some *defixiones* as “prayers for justice.” He implicitly defines a “good” religion versus a bad “magic” or curse tablet, for example in his statement that “In contrast to prayers for justice, conventional ‘competitive’ (Faraone) or ‘binding’ *defixiones* are intended to neutralise (= paralyse) competitors’ ability to worst the principal (or his interests) in some subjectively important competitive situation, as we can see in the curses concerning athletic or circus competitions, litigation, business/commerce, and in the context of so-called ‘Trennungszauber’, intended to knock out a rival in love” (Versnel, “Prayers for Justice,” 281).

⁷⁴ Silke Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth-Century Syria* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 54–55.

Antioch, considered one of the four major cities of the Roman Empire,⁷⁵ was not only an economically prosperous and competitive city; it was culturally prosperous and competitive too. There were even many forms of Jewish identity, including some Christ-followers who identified closely with Jewishness. The economic jostling of Antioch could be transmuted into something more metaphysical and ethically sharp in the preaching of John Chrysostom, an Antiochene bishop of the fourth century, who criticizes Christian misuse of money and encourages benefaction. He also famously preaches against those who associate with Jews, using their healing shrines at Matrona, participating in new year celebrations which he lambastes as promiscuous, and even swearing oaths on Torah shrines.⁷⁶ This is a city where Christian fights Christian; in it, we also see the failures of our scholarly, often hermetically sealed categories of Christian, Jew, pagan.

Among these cultic affiliations and ritual activities, John Chrysostom offers local contextualization of magic: as we learned in the Introduction, he and a friend grabbed from the Orontes River a floating sheaf of texts; reading it, they were terrified to find it was a book of magic, knowing that soldiers were then scanning the city, as John claims, for books connected with sorcery and magic. John and his friend were divinely delivered from the situation (*Hom. Act.* 38). Elsewhere, John criticizes the practice of making amulets and protective charms, as well as the ritual experts who manufacture and manipulate them. He praises a mother who would let her child die of fever rather than resort to healing amulets.⁷⁷ In one sermon, John uses the example of Lazarus, who sickened until he died, to argue: “Yet he did not seek out an incantation (*epaoidon*), he did not wear metal leaves (*petala*),⁷⁸ and he did not set in motion magical arts (*magganeias*), he did not call in those skilled in magic (*goētas*), nor did he

⁷⁵ This status is visualized in silver-gilt sculptures from approximately the fourth century CE: Anna Gonosová, “City and the People,” in Kondoleon, ed., *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, 116–17.

⁷⁶ See Chrysostom, *Discourses against the Jews* (sometimes titled *Discourses against the Judaizers*), 1.

⁷⁷ Dayna Kalleres, “Drunken Hags with Amulets and Prostitutes with Erotic Spells: The Re-Feminization of Magic in Late Antique Christian Homilies,” in *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, eds. Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 219–44, esp. pp. 232–33 discussing *Hom. 8 on Colossians*.

⁷⁸ We can picture these as *lamellae*, thin strips of silver and gold intended as apotropaia, or as the amulet cases sometimes pictured around the neck, for example in portraits from Fayum.

do anything he was forbidden to do" (*Adv. Iud.* 8.6.5).⁷⁹ In the same sermon, he states: "[I]f you reject the incantations, the spells, and the charms, and if you then die of your disease, you will be a perfect martyr" (*Adv. Iud.* 8.8.4).⁸⁰ There is potentially an extraordinarily high cost to John Chrysostom's form of Christian health care: health of the soul that ends in death.

Some contemporaneous Christians employ the same logic – that Lazarus's story does crucial work – with a different technology, invoking a *historiola* of Lazarus to lead to life or health. One charm addresses a "reluctant fetus": "come out of your tomb, Christ is calling you!" Another, for someone who has a bone stuck in the throat, states: "come up bone . . . , just as Christ led up Lazarus from his tomb and Jonah from the whale," a double *historiolae* whammy to address a bad dinner incident.⁸¹ Here and in John's criticism, we see the overlap between so-called magic and health care; the term *pharmaka* can refer to healing medicines or to poisons or to concoctions that some would consider medical and others superstitious.⁸² We can think of papyrus hung on the body or a recipe for the common problem of the stuck fishbone: these (hi)stories of Lazarus are deployed analogically for the safe exit of the fetus into the world or the fishbone from the throat. The spectacular evocation of Lazarus's resurrection and the oceanic expulsion of Jonah offer transformative outcomes for childbirth and for the amuletic equivalent of the Heimlich maneuver. Yet as Dayna Kalleres writes, "John was unequivocal. Only one Christian remedy existed: 'Sign the cross (*sphragison*).'"⁸³

⁷⁹ Ἄλλ' ὅμως οὐκ ἐπασιδὼν ἐζήτησεν, οὐ πέταλα περιῆψεν, οὐ μαγανείας ἐκίνησεν, οὐ γοητὰς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐκάλεσεν, οὐκ ἄλλο τι τῶν κεκωλυμένων ἐποίησεν. Greek edition Migne PG 48.936.

⁸⁰ οὕτω καὶ σύ, ἂν διακρούσῃ τὰς ἐπωδὰς καὶ τὰς φαρμακείας καὶ τὰς μαγανείας, καὶ ἀποθάνῃς τῇ νόσῳ, μάρτυς ἀπηρτισμένος εἶ. Migne PG 48.940. I am grateful to Chance Bonar for pointing me to these references in a paper he wrote for a seminar on Antioch.

⁸¹ Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets*, 213.

⁸² Gordon, "From Substances to Texts," esp. 149–52 on rhizomists and natural histories that offer stories of *pharmakopōlai*, sellers of *pharmaka*, who are sometimes also characterized as wonderworkers and magicians.

⁸³ Kalleres ("Drunken Hags with Amulets," 231–32) continues: "In this post-Constantinian era, Christianization problematized – but in no way resolved – the dilemma of correct ritual practice While a *defixione* (sic) might invite rousing and even unified rejection from the devout, and at the very least recognition of its theologically problematic nature from the lukewarm congregant, what about a verbal or written formula that simply invoked Jesus? Peter? The Trinity?" For another example of late antique Antioch and magic, see the *Confession of (Pseudo-) Cyprian*, e.g., 9. "Then, when I passed from the land of Chaldaea, I arrived in Antioch and was performing miracles like one of the ancients, and I gave proof of my sorcery and was a famous philosopher-magician, since I possessed a great understanding of the invisible realms" (trans. R. Bailey, "The

Antioch was a city of demons for John Chrysostom. He argues that they dangerously power many rituals, even if he fails to convince those to whom he speaks.⁸⁴ His hearers seem to go on engaging on these rituals, whether employing a spell against their child's fever or swearing on a Torah shrine (*Adv. Iud.* 1). For Chrysostom, demons lull city-dwellers into thinking that their activities, from weddings to seeking health care, are neutral or natural *habitus*, part of the normal events of civic life.⁸⁵ Such activities instead need to be guarded against by the powers of baptism and the vigilance of the soldier-like Christian, who stands against ethical disaster that corrupts the individual and the larger city.

How does a story work? Ligon deployed Ellison's (hi)story, not embedding it within a critical essay about Ellison, but materializing it with line breaks, with oilstick or etching, repeating it and producing an abstracted object that gives tribute to and reinforces Ellison's concerns about unjust invisibility. This medium creates an ethical intervention. It offers not an appropriation but a condensation of the story; the combination of medium and story hits you in the eye, drawing you close to make sense of the words. Looking at Ligon's "Invisible Man," the viewer does not engage Ellison's text by reading it in the privacy of an armchair or by reading about it in a scholarly essay; instead, in the public of the museum, you look (up) at it as object, sometimes in an iteration nearly as large as a doorway, which confronts you as words and as object. The curse against Babylas embeds the Pharaoh against a greengrocer. These *historiolae* are both words and objects, which deepen the viewer or hearer's interaction with the larger object, whether it is a painting,⁸⁶ a homily, or a curse. John's homily, in turn, uses the story of Lazarus to instruct. John presents himself as ethically and justly concerned that people avoid amulets and embrace a different spiritual health that may result in bodily death. The (hi)story of Lazarus is embedded within the smooth rhetoric of the homily.

Confession of Cyprian of Antioch: Introduction, Text and Translation" [M.A. thesis, McGill University, 2009], 53; Wilburn briefly discusses Cyprian in *Magical Materia*, 204–5. See also Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 9.2–3 regarding Theoteknos who sought to use magic to expel Christians from Antioch.

⁸⁴ Dayna S. Kalleres, *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 51–86.

⁸⁵ See Kalleres, *City of Demons*, 61.

⁸⁶ I refer here to Ligon's work but note also the painting of the story of the Pharaoh and his army in the sea in the synagogue of Dura Europos.

THE PHARAOH'S FATE

The *historiola* of the Pharaoh is useful not only for the Babylas *defixio* and for John, not only for Jews and Christians, but also for others: “the formula captures in a nutshell the essence of the most dramatic story of Israel’s past, its liberation by God from Egypt and the consequent destruction of its enemies.”⁸⁷ Famously, the third-century CE Christian writer Origen in his *Contra Celsum* discusses such Jewish formulae in magical spells:

In any event, it is clear that the Jews trace their genealogy back to the three fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their names are so powerful when linked with the name of God that the [formula] “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” is used not only by members of the Jewish nation in their prayers to God and when they subdue *daimones* by song, but even by almost all those who do business in incantations and magic. . . . Furthermore, “the God of Israel,” and “the God of the Hebrews,” and “the God who drowned the king of Egypt and the Egyptians in the Red Sea,” are often named to overcome *daimones* or certain evil powers. (*Contra Celsum* 4.33–34)⁸⁸

“The God who drowned the king of Egypt and the Egyptians in the Red Sea” is succinct and efficient, a gem-like *historiola* that evokes divine power – a power you may want to access whether or not you happen to be Jewish. The story does not dwell upon the violence done to the king of Egypt or the Egyptians, presumably because of the justice of their

⁸⁷ Van der Horst, “The God Who Drowned the King of Egypt,” 136. See also his reference to Origen’s *Contra Celsum* 4.34. Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times*, 18, writes regarding the Sicilian copper-alloy plate that shows a local tradition dependent on Jewish tradition about amulets that Moses wore when he met face to face with YHWH (p. 255; see also Faraone’s appendix C, pp. 267–70).

⁸⁸ Σαφές δὲ ὅτι καὶ γενεαλογοῦνται Ἰουδαῖοι ἀπὸ τῶν τριῶν πατέρων τοῦ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τοῦ Ἰσαάκ καὶ τοῦ Ἰακώβ· ὧν τοσοῦτον δύναται τὰ δνόματα συναπτόμενα τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ προσηγορίᾳ, ὥς οὐ μόνον τοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔθνους χρῆσθαι ἐν ταῖς πρὸς θεὸν εὐχαῖς καὶ ἐν τῷ κατεπαῖδειν δαίμονας τῷ ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραάμ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰσαάκ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰακώβ ἀλλὰ γὰρ σχεδὸν καὶ πάντας τοὺς τὰ τῶν ἐπωδῶν καὶ μαγείων πραγματευομένους. . . . Ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῶν Ἑβραίων καὶ ὁ θεὸς ὁ καταποντώσας ἐν τῇ ἐρυθρᾷ θαλάσῃ τὸν Αἰγυπτίων βασιλέα καὶ τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους πολλὰκις ὀνομάζεται παραλαμβάνομενος κατὰ δαιμόνων ἢ τινων πονηρῶν δυνάμεων. Translation modified from Origen: *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 209–10; Greek is from M. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse*, 4 vols. (SC 132, 136, 147, 150; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967–69). See also *Contra Celsum* I.23; Egyptians use names like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel for magical spells; I.24 on the nature of powerful names; V.45 on translation, pronunciation, and the power of names. *Supp. Mag.* I.29 uses this formula, albeit with τῶν κ(ύριο)ν Ἀβραμ, Ἰσακ, Ἰακώβ. For the phrase as a liturgical formula and its use in Philo, Justin, and others, see Rist, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” 289–303, esp. 297–303.

drowning, of the rightful power of God over oppressors and slaveholders. Pharaoh is, of course, a code for tyranny. He was disposable for this reason, and likely because of a centuries-long racializing discourse in which Egypt is often depicted as dark, idolatrous, and foolish in its worship of animals.⁸⁹ How in late antiquity might this story of the Lord's triumph – “horse and rider he has thrown into the sea” (Exod. 15:1 NRSV) – resonate with its hearers, especially the sorts of people we met in Chapter 1, who were concerned with justice in courts, justice sought as curses are dropped to the bottom of a shaft or hung in it; justice sought from (the) god(s)? Yet, the meanings of the waters of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Pharaoh and his armies within it were sometimes questioned in antiquity – the story hardly seems to evoke justice, ethics, or the kind of theodicy anyone would reasonably sign up for. What is the responsibility of God as actor, who first hardened Pharaoh's heart and then drowned him, along with his chariots and armies (see e.g. Rom. 9:18)? What is the moral culpability of the spell-commissioner who presumably assents to the image of Babylas struck down as Pharaoh

⁸⁹ On racializing discourses in antiquity, see Gay Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Denise Kimber Buell, *Why this New Race*; Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, 359. On Egyptianness, see Williams, *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles*. The first-century writer Philo, allegorically interpreting the Jewish scriptures, sees Hagar the enslaved Egyptian as a sign for mere Paideia (“education” or “culture”), to be slept with until you can make it to Sarah, who stands in for Sophia (“wisdom”) (*De congr.*). Egyptians were often mocked as ethically and religiously questionable, worshippers of animals and dark-skinned. Think of Roman expropriation of Egyptian goods, including obelisks of Psamtik II in the Augustan period, as well as the emulation of Egyptian artifacts in Roman art, as discussed for example in Molly Swetnam-Burland, *Egypt in Rome: Visions of Egypt in Roman Imperial Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), defines the wake and “wake work” in relation to the bodies of those unjustly defined as property, which went down into the seas of the Middle Passage, and about the lingering structural effects of that injustice that resonate today in racism: “If . . . we think the metaphor of the wake in the entirety of its meanings (the keeping watch with the dead, the path of a ship, a consequence of something, in the line of flight and/or sight, awakening, and consciousness) and we join the wake with work in order that we might make the wake and *wake work* our analytic, we might continue to imagine new ways to live in the wake of slavery, in slavery's afterlives, to survive (and more) the afterlife of property” (pp. 17–18). Sharpe's concern with wake work is radically differently oriented than an analysis of the bodies of the Pharaoh and his chariot gone down into the sea, but Sharpe's work sharpens (!) in me the question: What bodies are expendable? She focuses attention on the question of whose bodies go down into the sea and who is morally responsible for them (pp. 29–35). See also M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2008).

and his chariot? What is the ethical role of the ritual expert who wrote this *defixio*, even if s/he writes it out of a larger set of formulae and spells? Who is caught in the riptide?

We have already seen that Origen indicates that the phrase “the God who drowned the king of Egypt and the Egyptians in the Red Sea” is found in magic and incantations. He also is himself famously (sometimes) troubled by the theological issues raised by the story of God’s hardening the heart of Pharaoh and then drowning him. The fate of Pharaoh is a case study in theodicy, or the ethics of a God who drowns someone, or seems to.⁹⁰

For souls are, as one may say, innumerable, and their dispositions are innumerable, so many as are also the movements and purposes and inclinations and impulses, of which there is only one most excellent administrator, who understands both the seasons and the appropriate aids and the paths and the ways, the God and Father of all, who knows how he guides even Pharaoh by means of great events and by drowning in the sea, at which his dispensation for Pharaoh does not end, for he was not destroyed, when drowned: *For in the hand of God are both we and our words, and all understanding and skill in crafts* (Wis. 7:16). (*De princ.* 3.1.14)⁹¹

⁹⁰ See also Origen, *Philocalia* 27.3–9 and *Hom. in Exodum* 3.3. Elizabeth Clark writes that “Pharaoh was scourged for his own good; but here, Origen has him ‘destroyed in the deep abyss’” (*The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014], 196 n. 21).

⁹¹ Trans. John Behr, *Origen On First Principles* (2 vols.; Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.333; I cite Behr’s translation of the Greek. He here uses the edition of H. Görgemanns and H. Karpp, *Origenes vier Bücher von den Prinzipien* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976).

Ἄπειροι γὰρ ἡμῖν, ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις, αἱ ψυχαί, καὶ ἄπειρα τὰ τούτων ἦθη, καὶ πλεῖστα ὅσα τὰ κινήματα καὶ αἱ προθέσεις καὶ αἱ ἐπιβολαὶ καὶ αἱ ὁρμαί· ὧν εἰς μόνος οἰκονόμος ἄριστος, καὶ τοὺς καιροὺς ἐπιστάμενος καὶ τὰ ἀρμόζοντα βοηθήματα καὶ τὰς ἀγωγὰς καὶ τὰς ὁδοὺς, ὁ τῶν ὅλων θεὸς καὶ πατήρ, ὁ εἰδὼς πῶς καὶ τὸν Φαραὼ ἄγει διὰ τοσῶνδε καὶ καταποντισμοῦ. εἰς δὲ οὐ καταλήγει ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ Φαραὼ, οὐ γὰρ ἐπεὶ κατεποντώθη, ἀνελύθη. „ἐν γὰρ χειρὶ θεοῦ καὶ ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ λόγοι ἡμῶν πᾶσά τε φρόνησις καὶ ἐργατιῶν ἐπιστήμη“. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν μετρίως εἰς ἀπολογίαν περὶ τοῦ ἑσκληρύνθηαι τὴν καρδίαν Φαραὼ καὶ περὶ τοῦ „ὃν θέλει ἐλεεῖ, ὃν δὲ θέλει σκληρύνει“.

The Latin has some overlap with the Greek, then uniquely: “It must certainly not be supposed that in this drowning the providence of God towards Pharaoh came to an end; for it must not be supposed that, because he was drowned, he immediately perished substantially (*continuo etiam substantialiter interisse putandus est*). *For in the hand of God are both we and our words, and all understanding and skill in crafts* (Wis. 7:16), as Scripture declares” (trans. and Latin in Behr 2.332–33). This idea is echoed in the *Philocalia of Origen* (27.3–9), in a passage that reveals the contentious debate over whether it is possible to redeem God from the accusation that hardening the heart of Pharaoh, then punishing him, was fundamentally unjust: a theodical crisis.

This (to me) lovely glimpse at Origen's notion of *apokatastasis* – that one can be held in God's hand so that one is not destroyed, even in death – is abruptly followed by an *apologia* – a defense of the story – that reminds us that what truly concerns Origen is to justify such a God:

This, then, sufficiently provides a defence of the texts: *Pharaoh's heart was hardened* (Exod. 9:16; Rom. 9:17), and, *He has mercy upon whom he wills and hardens whom he wills* (Exod. 10:20; Rom. 9:18). (*De princ.* 3.1.14)

Origen and his interlocutors were not the only ones who tried to resolve the irritant of the story of the drowning of the Pharaoh after God had hardened Pharaoh's heart. Back in Antioch, John Chrysostom too was troubled.⁹² In a homily on 2 Corinthians (5:4), John reminded his hearers of the evil eye. He then argued that one should pray not *against* one's enemies but for them. (If the ritual practitioner[s] who produced the Babylas curse heard John, they might have shifted uncomfortably, knowing that they had manufactured a ritual utterance [a prayer?] against an enemy.) John went on to argue that one should act like the “three children,” who in the story of Daniel (2:13) were taken captive and yet did not pray against the king but prayed for God's mercy. John accused his listeners:

But not you, but when you suffer much lesser things than they did, and often justly, you do not cease to swear incessantly. And one says, “Overthrow the enemy, as you plunged the chariot of the Pharaoh into the sea.” And another: “Strike his flesh!” Again, another: “Stick it to the kids.” Or is it not the case that you recognize these very words?

Perhaps John Chrysostom paused for breath, taking in his hearers' nervous tittering, then continued:⁹³

Whence then this laughter of yours? See how laughable these things are, when they are spoken without emotions? And every sin is shown for how shameful it is precisely when you strip it of the disposition of the one who dares it. (*In ep. ii ad Cor.* 5)⁹⁴

⁹² On John Chrysostom as a psychagogue who offers his Christian injunctions in the tradition of medical-philosophical teachings at the time, see Wendy Mayer, “Shaping the Sick Soul: Reshaping the Identity of John Chrysostom,” in *Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium: Studies Inspired by Pauline Allen*, eds. Geoffrey Dunn and Wendy Mayer (VC Suppl. 132; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 145.

⁹³ On Chrysostom stoking his hearers' emotions as part of his pedagogical program, and regarding how his writings may encode their reactions, see Blake Leyerle, *The Narrative Shape of Emotion in the Preaching of John Chrysostom* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 4, 8, esp. 10.

⁹⁴ Ἄλλ' οὐχ ὑμεῖς, ἀλλὰ πολλῶ ἐλάττονα ἐκείνων πάσχοντες, καὶ δικαίως πολλάκις, οὐ παύεσθε ἀρώμενοι μυρία· καὶ ὁ μὲν φησι, Κατάβαλε τὸν ἐχθρόν, ὡς κατεπόντισας τὸ ἄρμα τοῦ Φαραώ· ὁ δέ, Πλῆξον αὐτοῦ τὴν σάρκα· ἕτερος πάλιν, Ἀπόδος εἰς τὰ τέκνα. Ἡ οὐκ ἐπιγινώσκετε ταυτὶ τὰ

Chrysostom seems to have overheard lines from a ritual expert's play-book for curse formulae. This vengeance by means of biblical passages, he suggests, is shameful sin. He points to the linkage between emotion and ritual cursing.⁹⁵ The curses "Overthrow the enemy, as you plunged the chariot of the Pharaoh into the sea!" or "Strike his flesh!" said without emotions (*chōris pathous legētai*) seem laughable.

Elsewhere, John Chrysostom suggests practices involving *historiolae* as an antidote to interpersonal anger.⁹⁶ His homilies regarding Saul's anger and madness and David's tempered response offer story and image simultaneously:

I have said these things now, so that we should not only praise, but also emulate them. Let each of us, therefore, paint this story on our own hearts, continually sketching out [this story] in our reasonings, as if by hand: the double cave, Saul's sleeping inside, as though bound by sleep, exposed to the sword hand of the man whom he had greatly wronged, David standing over the sleeping figure, the soldiers standing near, urging him on to slaughter, that blessed man reasoning rightly and restraining his own anger and that of the men, and defending the person who had acted so offensively. Let us not only draw those stories upon our thoughts, but also discuss them with each other constantly in our meetings, and awaken them ceaselessly with our wife, with our children. (*Dav.* 1.7)⁹⁷

ρήματα; Πόθεν οὖν ὑμῖν ὁ γέλως οὗτος; Ὁρᾷς πῶς ἐστὶ καταγέλαστα, ὅταν χωρὶς πάθους λέγῃται; Καὶ πᾶσα δὲ ἁμαρτία τότε δείκνυται πῶς ἐστὶν αἰσχρὰ, ὅταν αὐτὴν γυμνώσῃς τῆς διαθέσεως τοῦ τολμῶντος. . . Migne PG 61.434.

⁹⁵ On Chrysostom's detailing of how anger disfigures, see Leyerle, *The Narrative Shape of Emotion*, esp. 31–32.

⁹⁶ The focus of several days of speeches is rage or anger (*orgē*), as John Chrysostom states at the beginning of homily on David and Saul (see Leyerle, *The Narrative Shape of Emotion*, esp. chap. 1). These homilies may have been launched in the conditions of political emotions around taxes, the Antiochene destruction of imperial statues in 387, and subsequent rage of the emperor Theodosius (Robert Charles Hill, *St. John Chrysostom, Old Testament Homilies*, vol. 1: *Homilies on Hannah, David and Saul* [Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003], 2; Leyerle, *The Narrative Shape of Emotion*, 52). On the circulation of public emotion in Antioch, see discussion of Sara Ahmed on p. 71 above and esp. Porter, *Early Christian Deathscapes*.

⁹⁷ Translation and discussion in Leyerle, *The Narrative Shape of Emotion*, 61, translation slightly modified. Ταῦτα εἶρηκα νῦν, οὐχ ἵνα ἐπαινέσωμεν μόνον, ἀλλ' ἵνα καὶ ζηλώσωμεν. Ταύτην οὖν ἕκαστος τὴν ἱστορίαν ἐπὶ τῆς καρδίας ζωγραφείτω τῆς ἑαυτοῦ, καθάπερ χειρὶ τοῖς λογισμοῖς ὑπογράφων διηλεκῶς τὸ σπῆλαιον τὸ διπλοῦν, τὸν Σαοὺλ ἔνδον καθεύδοντα, καὶ καθάπερ ἀλύσει τινὶ δεδεμένον τῷ ὕπνῳ, καὶ ὑποκείμενον τῇ δεξιᾷ τοῦ τὰ μέγιστα ἠδικημένου· τὸν Δαυὶδ ἐφειστώτα καθεύδοντι, τοὺς στρατιώτας παρόντας, καὶ παροξύνοντας πρὸς σφαγὴν· τὸν μακάριον ἐκείνον φιλοσοφούντα, καὶ τὸν οἰκεῖον καὶ τὸν τοῦτων θυμὸν καταστέλλοντα καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοσαῦτα πεπλημμεληκότος ἀπολογούμενον. Ταῦτα μὴ μόνον ἐπὶ τῆς διανοίας γράφωμεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν συνεδρίοις διαλεγώμεθα πρὸς ἀλλήλους διηλεκῶς· ταῦτα καὶ πρὸς γυναῖκα, καὶ πρὸς παιδία συνεχῶς ἀνακινώμεν τὰ διηγήματα. Migne, PG 54.686.

The sentences offer participial clauses that heap up like waves. John Chrysostom's "bound by sleep" is combined with discussion of *thumos* (in translation "anger"), the passionate response that Sotērianos so feared that he commissioned a binding spell against Aristōn, as we learned in Chapter 1. This account of Saul and David "distills the entire narrative arc" and "recalls an amulet, an inscribed object with protective powers," in the words of Blake Leyerle.⁹⁸ John here offers a word-picture or ekphrasis of the *historiola*. His words evoke the physicality of its inscription: sketched by hand, the story painted onto the heart. This visual *historiola* might remind us of the amulet with Herakles and Hekate at the beginning of this chapter. A *historiola* serves as a theological-philosophical therapy. John suggests this in the cultural context of binding spells which seem to express anger (as with the one against Babylas), binding spells to restrain others' anger (as with Sotērianos's curse), and his own mention of curses that are fuelled by emotion.

Note that John Chrysostom, too, inevitably embeds *historiolae* within his sermons, as he engages scripture piece by piece in a commentary-like fashion and weaves in a short narrative from another part of scripture to bring his point home. In the case of his sermons and in the case of the curse against Babylas, scripture is transmuted into something that can be used to effect justice, or toward ethical ends. These are analogous technologies to the Babylas *defixio*. John deploys the Pharaoh, Lazarus, and other *historiolae* to critique the likes of the commissioner of the Babylas *defixio* and to seek to control the uses of scripture – to corral its power to ends that John thinks are ethical. Amulets and *defixiones* obviously have no time and space to argue with John Chrysostom; they go on with their work.

TOWARD A NEW POETICS OF RITUAL OBJECTS

The Babylas *defixio* is not a theological treatise but an object of everyday religion; a scrap of evidence of ancient ritual that deserves close attention. I have read this curse as ritual object and as aesthetically crafted, inspired by Henk S. Versnel's idea that curses often display a "poetics of magical formulas."⁹⁹ Curses work by "[f]ree association, the use of similes,

⁹⁸ Leyerle, *The Narrative Shape of Emotion*, 61.

⁹⁹ H. S. Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, eds. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 151.

metaphors, analogies, metonymy, synecdoche” which “are all basic poetical strategies, in fact, they are the stuff poetry is made of.”¹⁰⁰ Christopher Faraone asserts that “the proliferation of inscribed incantations of the Roman period” is part of a “newfound habit of inscribing on permanent media metrical charms that previously had been chanted aloud, in some cases for centuries before” – what Faraone calls the “textualization of these speech acts.”¹⁰¹ We miss the auditory nature of these objects (although Part 2 of this book constitutes an attempt to understand this problem).¹⁰² We can barely trace the gestures that produced and accompanied them.¹⁰³ Curse tablets have too often been considered primarily in terms of edited words on a page. They should instead be analyzed according to the simultaneous functions of their words (and perhaps intoning) and their materiality. In fact, the objects sometimes comment on the intertwining of their own substance with the work that they do, as we saw with the curse against Babylas.¹⁰⁴

This chapter moved slowly through the double-sided *defixio* against Babylas to demonstrate how story and substance and curse work simultaneously. Only with such a close reading are the *defixio*’s poetics and aesthetics visible: its marvelous efficiency in narrative summary, in materiality and placement, and in purpose. Versnel wrote about a “poetics of the magical charm” to ask historians of antiquity to think differently about the technology of spells, to think about what puzzles us about them – their repetitions, what seem to be nonsense words – as significant

¹⁰⁰ Versnel, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm,” 151–52.

¹⁰¹ Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets*, 218, 213.

¹⁰² See discussion in Chapter 4 and, *inter alia*, Lamont, “Early Greek Incantations in Late Roman Jerusalem”; Derek Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 104–31 on Homeric incantations; and the identification of poetic fragments in Faraone, “Stopping Evil,” 227–55.

¹⁰³ On gesture, see David Frankfurter, “Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions,” in *GSAM*, 12–18; Faraone, “Stopping Evil.”

¹⁰⁴ Lamont (“Cold and Worthless,” 36–37) raises the critique that too often those interested in *defixiones* have attended primarily to the words on the page of a printed edition, rather than taking seriously the materiality of the objects and how their perceived efficacy functioned in dialogue of substance and words. Her work is part of a larger sea change in studying the materiality of “magic”; see also her excellent summary of scholarship on pp. 40–42. Celia Sánchez Natalías (“The Medium Matters: Materiality and Metaphor in Some Latin Curse Tablets,” in *Material Approaches to Roman Magic: Occult Objects and Supernatural Substances*, eds. Adam Parker and Stuart Mckie [Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2018], 10) reminds the reader of “other media employed including papyrus, marble, and terracotta. The use of these various materials was by no means meaningless, but rather was always directly linked to the aim of successfully carrying out the ritual.”

in form and function. I want to go beyond Versnel's idea, drawing also on Derek Walcott's reflection on poetics. Walcott writes: "This gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles, and if the pieces are disparate, ill-fitting, they contain more pain than their original sculpture, those icons and sacred vessels taken for granted in their ancestral places. Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary." Walcott's analysis – its own poetics reduced by my term "analysis" and my own fragmented citation of it – is also a reflection on history: "The sigh of History rises over ruins, not over landscapes."¹⁰⁵ As Mayra Rivera explains, such poetics is "attentive to loss and opacity, interruption and silence."¹⁰⁶ And poetics are also political: these juxtapositions of fragments serve particular purposes of power. Scripture, too, can offer a fragment to be used for social and political purposes, a shard of history and a play with vocabulary.¹⁰⁷ The Babylas *defixio* uses a fragment of scripture, set within a rhythmic text, and thus seeks some sort of justice for the petitioner.

We should reconsider *defixiones* not only in light of Versnel's "prayers for justice" but also in terms of larger community-wide mechanisms for effecting justice. As we saw in Chapter 1, sometimes *defixiones* were launched as alternatives to official "justice" systems, to achieve what the commissioner perceived to be true justice. In this chapter, we have seen how a *historiola* is used as a condensed narrative of power, a *mythos* embedded within an object whose substance is relevant to its powers – the cold lead – and then bedded down in a place that also activates its powers – a watery well. Contemporaneously, John Chrysostom critiques this practice, and

¹⁰⁵ Derek Walcott, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory, 1992 Nobel Lecture." My original encounter with this material is thanks to Mayra Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 3. She engages with Edouard Glissant's idea of poetics in his *Poetics of Relation*. As Rivera explains, "Glissant is inspired by Caribbean poetics," and by Walcott himself.

¹⁰⁶ Thus, poetics extends past poetry per se and "may also influence other forms of writing." Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 3. Sharpe is also thinking through Glissant: "The disaster of Black subjection was and is planned; terror is disaster and 'terror has a history' (Youngquist 2011, 7) and it is deeply atemporal" (Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 5). Sharpe cites Paul Youngquist, "The Mothership Connection," *Cultural Critique* 77 (2011): 1–23.

¹⁰⁷ Rivera makes this connection, drawing on Virginia Burrus's analysis of Christian use of biblical fragments: "For as Virginia Burrus explains, 'drawn and lured by scripture, Christian writing emerges in late antiquity as a crazy quilt of biblical fragments, each piece placed in a new relation to the others, yet still haunted with the ever-multiplying memories of prior contexts of meaning.'" Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh*, 4, citing Virginia Burrus, "Seducing Theology," *Theology & Sexuality* 18.2 (2012): 118–21, see 121.

even exposes how ridiculous it is to use the particular *historiola* of the Pharaoh's drowning, even as he himself uses scriptures as powerful fragments embedded within and driving the persuasive rhetoric of his homilies.

CONCLUSIONS

We find a complex moral anatomy in the narrative of Babylas's projected demise. There is the accountability of the ritual expert who inscribed the *defixio* and his or her *poësis* – simultaneously poetry and an act of creation¹⁰⁸ – that went into the scratched lines, the alliteration, the rhythm, of the two-sided Babylas *defixio*. This ethical responsibility was shared by the one who commissioned the *defixio* asking for disasters to fall upon Babylas. The *defixio* argues that Babylas too is culpable: he is impious. Babylas himself, like the *defixio* that condemns him, is to be dipped in the cold well; like the Pharaoh he is to drown; his livestock are condemned, like the firstborn of Egypt. The small *historiola*, concise and precise, connects the maker of the Babylas curse to an ancient story. That story is weaponized: as with this, so with that, and thus Babylas the greengrocer ridiculously becomes (like) the Pharaoh. This curse is produced in the midst of things we can no longer see and hear: rhythmic words likely spoken out loud, gesture, the stuff of ritual and of performance. But what we can see is that substance and story matter; they are the engines of the curse.

I am not lauding these *defixiones* as taking the moral high ground in their pursuit of justice. I am, however, saying that we need to have a more capacious understanding of religious practices as means of effecting justice. Some of these religious practices may reveal troubling glimpses of mechanisms for justice or revenge for those who perceived that the civic or imperial legal systems in force would not attend to justice for them. The power of a curse can be increased by using even the tiniest scrap of historical narrative. Nor am I lauding these *defixiones* as works of art proper. But by insisting upon their poetics and by pointing to the ritual processes that often were involved, including considering substance (water, lead) significant, I am asking us to think about religious practice as a sophisticated activation of multiple theories of how things work.

Glenn Ligon's engagement with Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* shows us that (re)iteration of narrative is an aesthetic strategy. The repetition of the beginning of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* enforces the power of the

¹⁰⁸ Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm," 45, 47.

story. Ellison's narrative is scripturalized, produced as an object that depends upon the idea of authoritative writing. Yet, as Darby English argues, "Ligon's text paintings, despite appearances, fiercely resist the textualist 'solutions'"; they provoke "a pleasure in looking that has nothing to do with reading."¹⁰⁹ Ligon's work makes the viewer attentive to line breaks and format and the fragmented nature of a partial story. His *Untitled (I am an invisible man)*, for example, reminds us that words can be mobilized for abstract purposes, rendered into an abstract art: so too *defixiones*, perhaps largely illegible even to their commissioners, gain their power as much as total object as from their words – by their complete aesthetic. They gain power, as we learned in the previous chapter, from their collection and site of hanging or deposit, as Ligon's work does in its display. A historical fragment can become a conduit for power (authoritative and made more authoritative) and can become an (un)ethical intervention.

Whether in curse formulae or in theological writings of Origen or John Chrysostom, the story of the Pharaoh is useful, crystallizing larger issues of divine justice. I think of the use of *historiolae* as fragments of carbon, pressed over decades and centuries into something mineral and hard, that can be honed into a sharp diamond edge, inserted into a curse, and used to cut. The story of the Pharaoh and chariot downing in the sea, embedded in the Babylas curse, reminds us of the power of history and narrative. Even distilled and briefly cited, such historical narratives activate larger stories of culpability, violence, blame, justice, and the role of ritual as emotions circulated in a city – in this case Antioch. But they also compel new possibilities for history-writing today: How does the historian describe and replicate her source, making it into a *historiola*? How does she ethically engage in its redisplay?¹¹⁰ Do we embed stories into our narratives to effect ethics and justice? How do we take responsibility for the shards of narrative and history that we cull and embed within the larger objects of our writing?

¹⁰⁹ English, *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness*, 203.

¹¹⁰ Wyschogrod, Hartman, and Ligon push our understandings of what constitutes good work as historians. They help us to ask: How might desire and ethics be relevant to historiography? See Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007) and her *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019).

Interlude

In Part 1 of this book, we have felt the heavy materiality of *defixiones*, the weight of the lead despite the thinness of the hammered sheets onto which letters were inscribed. These curses may have been nailed or suspended or deposited in gestures and with archival practices that paralleled contemporaneous, official legal modes of display and collection. Justin, a Christian, similarly displayed documents seeking justice by citing or appending them to his *Apologies*. Sotērianos placed a judicial curse in a shaft or well in Amathous, Cyprus, along with many other such lead and selenite tablets, participating in another materially constituted archival practice. The very substance and location of the curse against Babylas were mechanisms for its successful working: the cool of the lead, the watery chill of the well. Drawing upon the coldness and deadness of lead to chill or thwart the tongue of a speaker was a common strategy of curse tablets. These substantial and sensory elements were essential to the ritual efficacy of the curse.

In Part 2, the book turns to sound, song, and language. *Glossolalia* – speaking in tongues – and *voces magicæ* – the unintelligible (to us) letter streams sometimes found in so-called magical writing – are evidence of sonic play and linguistic effervescence in Roman Corinth. These variations in known languages were mechanisms that deepened the work of curses and also sought to attain the attention of divinities. Moreover, *defixiones* operated in part through song and incantation, as we have already seen with their rhythms, poetics, and allusions to and quotations of literature. While we cannot guarantee in every case that they were intoned aloud, the very use of rhythm and rhyme indicates a world of sound. At the same time, song and incantation were ancient practices key to philosophical

development, to theological thought, and even to attaining health. Scraps of Aristophanes or allusions to Homer resonate powerfully over multiple centuries and multiple locations through curses and through Christian engagements with such materials. In Part 2, I try to reconstruct something of the aesthetics of song and sound evoked by curses.

In this Interlude I bridge the emphasis on materiality in the first part of the book and conversations on sound and language in the second part. How and why should materiality and sound belong together? The one seems so solid: an ugly, dirt-encrusted hunk of lead on an archaeological site, perhaps pierced by a nail. The other seems so evanescent: the voice of a woman lifted in song, the beat of dactylic hexameter rising in ritual, the roundness of vowels. Yet letters can function as a sign and the material constitution of language can supercharge its denotational meaning. We have already encountered such an idea in Glenn Ligon's text-images: in the various iterations of his *Untitled (I am an invisible man)*, the point was less to read the beginning lines of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* than to see the letters as abstractions, their formal aspect of black on black, or, in other works, black blurred oilstick and coal dust against white. Letters coming together into language and falling apart.

Materiality and sound converge in the curses and amulets of antiquity. They come together in the attempt to capture sound materially on objects, through writing. They coalesce in writing that is not only linearly communicative (first this, then that, in a narrative or a sentence) but also moves past the denotational and into the symbolic, at four levels: in the arrangement of letters which itself becomes a sign, in the use of signs that look like letters but have no clear linguistic value (*charaktêres*),¹ in sounds that seem like language (and are perhaps syllabic) but make no clear sense (*voces magicae*, perhaps speaking in tongues), and in the use of vowels marshaled to philosophical-theological and sonic effect. These plays with language power amulets, curses, and apotropaic objects – and also rhetorical, musicological,

¹ Richard Gordon, "Signa nova et inaudita: The Theory and Practice of Invented Signs in Greco-Egyptian Magical Texts," *MHNH: revista internacional de investigación sobre magia y astrología antiguas* 11 (2011): 15–45; idem, "Charaktêres between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-inventions," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance, Colloque Fribourg 17–19 mars 2011*, eds. V. Dasen and J.-M. Spieser (Florence: Micrologus' Library 60, 2014), 253–300; Amina Kropp, "How Does Magical Language Work? The Spells and *Formulae* of the Latin *Defixionum Tabellae*," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, eds. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 357–80; see also Kirsten Dzwiza, *Schriftverwendung in antiker Ritualpraxis anhand der griechischen, demotischen und koptischen Sammelschriften des 1. – 7. Jahrhunderts* (Ph.D. diss., Erfurt University, 2013).

and theological texts. We often turn to Stoic philosophy to understand the letters of Paul, or to the intricacies of middle and neo-Platonisms to interpret Clement of Alexandria. Less often do we turn to the intensely creative and complex understandings of letters and sound readily available, visually and sonically, on the bodies of individuals in the form of amulets, on the walls of the city in the form of inscriptions, in the books of ritual experts in the forms of recipes. These are not (only) esoteric but common practices that form a context for the production of philosophical and theological texts and a vital setting for our interpretations of these texts. And these texts – whether a letter from Paul or a treatise from Clement – are also philosophical and theological practices, joining curses and other ritual objects in the detritus of antiquity that serves as *our* archive for the reconstruction of late antique religion.

VOWELS/CALLING THE ARCHANGELS: AN INSCRIPTION FROM MILETOS

To understand better this practice of arranging letters, particularly vowels, and thus shaping sounds materially, we travel to Miletos, on the western shore of Asia Minor. There, at some point in the fifth or sixth century CE, an inscription invoking archangels was carved into a limestone block (0.595m high, 1.05m wide) at the external wall of the northwest side of the pre-existing theater, two rows up from the ground level (*IMilet* 943; *CIG* 2.2895) (Plate 10). The block is broken at its right side. The inscription faces the theater harbor, and the dangers coming from the sea.² Both its content and placement indicate that it is apotropaic, perhaps warding off plague.³ We cannot know what ritual produced the initial inscription or what rituals, individual or communal, might have occurred as folk greeted the inscription in times of quiet or crisis.⁴

The bottom of the inscription makes clear that archangels are invoked for protection, but none is specifically named, unlike similar amuletic or apotropaic objects which call upon each archangel by name. The

² Rangar H. Cline, “Archangels, Magical Amulets, and the Defense of Late Antique Miletus,” *JLA* 4.1 (2011): 57.

³ Cline uses as comparison epigraphic evidence from Didyma and Claros that indicates civic embassies to Apollo, to ward off disease (“Archangels,” 75). Regarding plague in Asia Minor, see Zsuzsanna Várhelyi, “Magic, Religion, and Syncretism at the Oracle of Claros,” in *Between Magic and Religion: Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society*, eds. Sulochana Asirvatham et al. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 13–31; Christopher P. Jones, “Ten Dedications ‘To the Gods and Goddesses’ and the Antonine Plague,” *JRA* 18 (2005): 293–301; idem, “Cosa and the Antonine Plague?” *JRA* 19 (2006): 368–69.

⁴ Some funerary epitaphs address their readers directly.

1	5 <i>charakteres</i> [probably originally seven]						
2	Ι Ε Ο Α Η Ω Ι Α Ω Α Ι Ε Ο Υ Η Ω Ι Ω Α Ε Η Ο Υ Ι Α Ω Ε Ο Υ Ε Ν Ο Ν [ca. 14]						
3	ΑΕΗΙ ΟΥΩ Ἄγιε φύλαξον τὴν πόλιν Μιλησίων καὶ πάντας τοὺς κατοι- κοῦντας	ΕΗΙΟ ΥΩΑ Ἄγιε φύλαξον τὴν πόλιν Μιλησίων καὶ πάντας τοὺς κατοι- κοῦντας	ΗΙΟΥ ΩΑΕ᾽ Ἄγιε φύλαξον τὴν πόλιν Μιλησίων καὶ πάντας τοὺς κατοι- κοῦντας	ΙΟΥΩ ΑΕΗ᾽ Ἄγιε φύλαξον τὴν πόλιν Μιλησίων καὶ πάντας τοὺς κατοι- κοῦντας	ΟΥΩ ΑΕΗΙ᾽ Ἄγιε φύλαξον τὴν πόλιν Μιλησίων καὶ πάντας τοὺς κατοι- κοῦντας	[ΥΩ Α[ΕΗΙΟ Ἀ[γιε φύ[λαξον τὴν πό[λιν Μιλησί[ων καὶ πάντ[ας τοὺς κατ[οι- κοῦ[ν]τας	ΩΑΕ] ΗΙΟΥ] Ἄγιε] etc.
4	Ἀρχάγγελοι φυλάσσεται ἡ πόλις Μιλησίων καὶ πάντες οἱ κατ[οικοῦντες]						

Figure I.1 Chart of Miletos archangels inscription, Rangar Cline (who depends upon Hermann, *IMilet* no. 943).⁵

inscription's top zone consists of five *charaktēres* (originally seven, which we know from similar invocations, and from the fact that the inscription breaks off). Each is associated with an archangel.

The second zone consists of thirty-three repeated vowels and two Greek letter *nus*. The third zone consists of roundels within which are inscribed first a specific order of vowels, then the invocation: "Holy one, guard the city of the Milesians and all its inhabitants" (Plate 10 and Figure I.1). Six (technically, five and a half) of these remain; the seventh, the rightmost, has disappeared. The lowest register of the inscription reads: "Archangels, the city of the Milesians and all its inhabitants are guarded."⁶

The inscription, with its ovals encasing seven vowels and the command to protect, recalls amuletic gemstones.⁷ To give an example: a cameo on glass paste, dating to the second or third century CE and from Aquincum (Hungary) (*SEG* 29.1047 = *IGPannonia* 96) (Plate 11), provides an example of stress-based poetry from antiquity; that is, a poetics that relies not on the quality and "weight" of long and short vowels, but on syllabic or rhythmic stresses.⁸

⁵ Cline, "Archangels," 60. Used with kind permission.

⁶ On the grammatical problems, see Cline, "Archangels," 61–62. On angels and vowels, see Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (1995; rev. ed.; Kettering: Angelico, 2014), 184–86.

⁷ Cline, "Archangels," 66–67.

⁸ Tim Whitmarsh, "Less Care More Stress: A Poem from the Roman Empire," *Cambridge Classics Journal* 67 (2021): 136.

Tim Whitmarsh has collated twenty versions of a simple, short popular text, often inscribed on amuletic gemstones. He argues that this text originated, likely in the first or second centuries CE, as a stress-based poem.⁹ These gemstones of course differ from the Miletos “amulets.” But it is worth looking more closely at an example from among these gemstones, because they teach us more about sign and sound, about language’s materialization and visibility. The collated examples result in a critical edition of the poem:

λέγουσιν	They say
ἃ θέλουσιν	What they like
λεγέτωσαν	Let them say it
οὐ μέλι μοι	I don’t care
σὺ φίλι με	Go on, love me
συνφέρει σοι	It does you good

Whitmarsh concludes that “[t]he simple, alluring beat, coupled with its half-rhymes, must have been one reason for the text’s popularity. Another was its adaptability into an elegant, patterned colometry that appealed aesthetically to the eye.”¹⁰ As Whitmarsh points out, in the example found in the grave of a young woman in Aquincum (Plate 11), the symmetry and repetition of letter forms are found in a diagonal cascade of three epsilons slanting down from the second letter in the first line; the doubled “CIN CIN” then “CAN” of the end of the first three lines; the lunate sigmas approximate omicrons,¹¹ so that the beginning of the last three lines looks similar. This elegance and beat are counterpoints to the fact that the text itself is not literarily complex and the kinds of chalcedony, or in this case glass, on which the gems are inscribed are not expensive.¹²

Common stuff, yet powerful and carefully aesthetically arranged. As Whitmarsh summarizes: “The letters start breaking apart from their positions in the words, and taking on independent lives as visual indices. The cameo takes on a mesmerising quality, as if the letters had a significance that went beyond their immediate function.”¹³ The rhythms and use of half-

⁹ Whitmarsh, “Less Care More Stress,” 136. Dating is based upon other scholars’ assessments (II or III CE) and Whitmarsh’s analysis of linguistic evolution. The majority appear on gemstones, with one graffito from Spain.

¹⁰ Whitmarsh, “Less Care More Stress,” 150.

¹¹ Whitmarsh, “Less Care More Stress,” 143.

¹² Whitmarsh, “Less Care More Stress,” 138.

¹³ Whitmarsh, “Less Care More Stress,” 143. See Max Leventhal, *Poetry and Number in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Cambridge Classical Studies; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Michael Squire, “POP Art: The Optical Poetics of Publilius

rhymes would be poetic in the ear, and the layout of the saying on the gemstone also “visually . . . poetic.”¹⁴ The short text is also a work of popular philosophy. The phrase *ou melei moi*, “I don’t care” indicates a philosophical stance, rejecting the power of others’ judgments.¹⁵ The phrase *melei moi* “means ‘I acknowledge my responsibility’: it is a marker of submission to social expectations”; its negation and the larger sentiment of the first four lines may “carry a countercultural charge.”¹⁶ Whitmarsh’s collection of texts which contain these words indicates that the bold idea of rejecting social expectations is found from Spain to Mesopotamia and among women and men. Yet the strong claim of individuality is ironically undercut by the replicability and cheapness of the inscribed saying.¹⁷

This popular poem offers aural and visual components, hints at so-called magical procedures, and offers philosophy crystallized into a fairly cheap gem or in a graffito. It helps us to recognize how the visual and the aural work together, how “countercultural” philosophical ideas might be produced and consumed by those of lower status, how the philosophical meets the practical amulet, how all this might be worn on the body in the form of a gemstone.

Back in Miletos, the archangels inscription shows a logic of material transfer: the shape of the oval around the inscription echoes gems worn by individuals. The power of the sign “works” on a flat stone wall in monumental epigraphy or in a small carved gemstone.¹⁸ Large or small, *charaktēres*, names, the arrangement of letters, and *symbola* were thought to have power to guard and to protect at the individual level and also at a public, communal level.¹⁹ In Miletos, the “gems” are reframed within a public, civic inscription aimed at the protection of the city.

Optatianus Porphyrius,” in *The Poetics of Late Latin Literature*, eds. Jaś Elsner and Jesús Hernández Lobato (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 25–99; in a different vein, see Johanna Drucker, *The Visible World: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909–1923* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹⁴ The example Whitmarsh adduces “produce[s] a square, with columnar diagrammatic patterns down either side” (“Less Care More Stress,” 142).

¹⁵ Whitmarsh (“Less Care More Stress,” 145) cites Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), on the last point.

¹⁶ Whitmarsh, “Less Care More Stress,” 145.

¹⁷ Whitmarsh, “Less Care More Stress,” 147, 149. The second stream of thought is contained in the last two lines which, Whitmarsh proposes, “strongly suggest erotic aggression, and even recall (albeit distantly) magical *agōgai* that seek to induce passion in the victim, and to lead them forcibly to the spellweaver” (p. 147).

¹⁸ Cline, “Archangels,” 61.

¹⁹ Cline (“Archangels,” 71–74) also discusses an amulet found in Beth She’an (modern-day Israel) (Bonner 317) and a gold *lamella* from Thessaly (IG IX,2 232); the former refers to

But who was invoking archangels to protect the city? While early approaches to the inscription in Miletos assumed that it dated to the seventh century and was a Christian formulation, Cline has argued that its content and letter forms fit within an earlier context in which invocations of archangels appear on papyrus and gem amulets. Moreover, the Milesian inscription is part of the larger cultural matrix in which archangels associated with Jewish traditions were broadly called upon in antiquity – not just invoked by Christians or Jews.²⁰ Not private but civic,²¹ the inscription and its invocations remind us that ideas of the conviviality of humans with other kind of beings – humans and angels in this case, humans and *daimones* and god(s) in the previous chapters. That is, among Christ-followers, Jews, and other cults, non-human beings are assumed to be at the ready, available to join and aid humans (or to constrain and attack other humans). Such techniques of communication (*charaktēres*, vowels) to get the attention of divinities, *daimones*, and angels are not only deposited in wells and limited to a few individuals. These techniques can be manifest in an apotropaic civic inscription that imitates gemstones, in amuletic gemstones, or in *defixiones*. They tap into broader theology-conceptualizations. They can transform the individual's condition; they can transform the city's.

The vowels on the exterior wall of the Milesian theater face toward the harbor, protecting the city from something approaching by sea. Inscribed into the solid materiality of limestone, they imply vocalization and sound: the special properties of vowels, here deployed in a visual schema that activates sound, shape, and sign together. The content of the Milesian inscription *works* for Miletos, but it is not unique. It echoes papyrus recipes for “spells”; it fits within broader ritual and sonic logics in the ancient world, which materialize not only on limestone but also on papyrus, and then on *lamellae*, thin sheets of metal which are inscribed and used as amulets. Look, for instance, at a fourth- or fifth-century recipe or instruction for a spell, that includes an inscribed rectangle on

“holy names and symbols and fearful *charaktēres*” and the latter contains a list of angels’ names, including Ariel, Michael, Raphael, and Iao Sabaoth. For *symbola* in present art – tags or street art which are denotational and then function as images in their own right – see Adam Pendelton’s Untitled (WE ARE NOT) or his OK DADA OK BLACK DADA OK (WE NEED).

²⁰ Cline, “Archangels,” 55–57. Adolf Deissmann had argued that the inscription was Christian and of a later date in his *Licht vom Osten*, originally published in 1909; for the English translation of the 1924 German edition, including discussion of this inscription, see Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (New York, 1927; facsimile Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 1995), 454–55; Cline, “Archangels,” 55–57, 62–65.

²¹ Cline, “Archangels,” 76–77.

the second column of a papyrus (Plate 12). This is a graphic that should be copied onto a *lamella*.

The spell is powered in part by a complex combination of *charaktēres*, vowels, and, at the top, a word associated with the “magical” words called the *Ephesia grammata*. The left side of the rectangle at the top half of the page can possibly be read bottom to top as a stuttering *laō* (a rendition of the tetragrammaton of the Jewish god) rendered twice and with an extra iota each time, then *aō*. The right side offers a vertical palindrome of vowels. In the middle, we find Egyptian-sounding words, in the bottom, more vowel-driven syllables; in the two “windows,” (likely) unvocalizable *charaktēres* point to language beyond human language, signs which might be abundant with unknown meaning.

The bottom of the second column on this papyrus leaf contains another recipe. It is a *thumokatochon*, a spell to restrain anger:

Anger-restrainer which works in all cases. It works against enemies and accusers and bandits and fears and apparitions in dreams (*phantasmous oneirōn*). Taking a gold or silver *lamna*,²² engrave on it the characters and names, and, having completed (*telesas*) it, wear it in purity.²³

Remembering Sotērianos’s concern about Aristōn’s anger, discussed in Chapter 1, we might think of whether he could have used this *thumokatochon*, which reveals a wide set of triggers for the *thumos* or anger or emotional center of a person: enemies, *katēgoroi* (accusers, a term used for legal opponents), *lēstes* (bandits or pirates, sometimes used as invective against political opponents),²⁴ then emotions (fears, *phoboi*), and finally images from dreams, which Betz translates “nightmares” (*phantasmoi*).

²² Probably a *lamella* or leaf.

²³ My translation, made with reference to Betz, *PGM* X.24–35 (trans. R. Hock); Greek edition Preisendanz, *PGM* II.53. Note that some of the word forms are difficult to square with conventional Greek, leaving the meaning elusive.

Θυμοκάτοχον, πρὸς πάντας ποιῶν· ποιεῖ γὰρ πρὸς ἐχθροὺς
καὶ κατηγοράς (*sic*; sc. κατήγορας) καὶ ληστὰς καὶ φόβους καὶ φαντασμοὺς
ὄνειρων. λαβὼν λάμναν χρυσᾶν ἢ ἀργυρᾶν χάραξον
ἐπ’ αὐτῆς τοὺς χαρακτῆρας καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα καὶ τελέσας φόρει
καθαρίως. ἔστι δέ·

This is immediately followed by an alternative spell that involves a tongue – a frog’s tongue (γλώσσαν βατράκου, or, in this papyrus, βαθράκου, the metathetical variant). The term καθαρίως may overlap with the term καθάριον, which refers to a purgative medicine; with thanks to Federico Maviglia for the latter point and for discussions of the Greek; so too Tim Whitmarsh for questions regarding the Greek forms.

²⁴ See Jeremy Williams, *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles: Race, Rhetoric, and the Prosecution of an Early Christian Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

In this anger-restraining recipe the diagram or “box” is framed with Greek, in a quick hand above and below the box, using “normal” language. Yet the spell works in part because of *charaktēres* and a suffusion of vertical vowels. In the anger-restraining recipe just below it on the papyrus, seven vertically stacked iterations of seven vowels are inscribed in a box. This *thumokatochon* of Apollo prescribes an inscribed *lamella* (and a frog’s tongue) to trample a trouble-maker (PGM X.36–50). The “box” of vowels exactly parallels the (presumably) sevenfold iteration of vowels that crowns each amuletic roundel in the Miletos inscription. While we do not know the mechanisms of the transmission of this vowel-based technology, we find the same letters, here vowels, and sounds used in different media and for different purposes and on different scales. The inscription at Miletos uses vowels and signs to harness the power of archangels for the city and its inhabitants, while the papyrus recipes are iterative and can be replicated, and work at the individual level, for the person commissioning the spell.

In another amulet, vowels and other letters are literally *shaped* (PGM XIXa.1–54 = Berlin papyrus 9909; Plate 13). Folded three times vertically and four times horizontally, as can be adduced from the fracture lines, this third- to fourth-century papyrus may have been used as an amulet, bundled tightly into a pouch and perhaps hung on the body.

The text invokes Egyptian gods and various unknown names (*voces magicae*), mentions a “divine mystery,”²⁵ and is written by or on behalf of Apalos against Karosa, to bring her “in *eros* and friendship (*philia*) and intercourse (*sunousia*), in this very hour, immediately, immediately, quickly, quickly.” To effect this purpose, it offers letter patterns, including a diamond shape of vowels.²⁶ The same seven vertically stacked iterations of seven vowels appears here, too (Plate 11, lines 17–23, right-hand side). What are we to make of the aesthetics of this papyrus amulet with its rich use of shapes? These experiments in language make a literate impact – they presume that gods or *daimones* read and respond and perhaps even take pleasure in the visual arrangement of letters. This amulet makes a

²⁵ For the phrase τὸ θεῖον μυστήριον, see Eleni Pachoumi, *Concepts of the Divine in the Greek Magical Papyri* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 126, citing PGM XIXa.1–54:52.

²⁶ A pattern of reducing letters so that the text looks like a wing or triangle (πτερυγοειδώς or *Schwindschema*) is common; in the case of a recipe to be used against a thief, found in PGM V.70–95, two triangles are used, with their apices from one vowel, increasing line by line into bases constructed from seven vowels. Another is found in PGM XLIII.1–27, in which one of the *Ephesia grammata* is reduced letter by letter; angel names are also given there; see also PGM XLIV.1–18.

visual impact in the configurations of letters into shapes; it made an auditory impact if the spells were read aloud in ritual context.²⁷

The varying pattern of seven vowels, presumably associated with different archangels in the inscription at Miletos, is thus exactly matched through some intertextual transmission by the fourth- or fifth-century CE *thumokatochon* recipe and by the papyrus amulet by Apalos against Karosa, with its diamond of vowels. The vowels also worked, somehow, in the archangel inscription for the city of Miletos. Understood in the broader context of recipes and amulets, the archangel inscription at Miletos demonstrates the iterative use of vowel streams and thus perhaps the power of sound in different times and places, and different scales, protecting both individuals and a city. It opens the possibility that we should see the printed pages of our Greek editions or English translations of ancient religious texts, from 1 Corinthians to Clement of Alexandria's *Protreptikos* to Julius Africanus's *Kestoi* (as we'll see in the chapters to come) in light of these practices. These different media and different contexts draw on a broader cultural context of letters as patterns, vowels opening up sound, and symbols which invoke or perhaps represent non-human beings like archangels or *daimones*.

The context for use of sound and particularly vowels to tap into different ontologies and to transform a situation is also found in broader contemporaneous literature: Pythagorean speculation about music and sound transmitted through philosophical-theological-theurgic writings of Iamblichus, for instance, or the philosophical-theological rituals hinted at in a text like the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, or alchemical texts. Iamblichus, whom we shall meet more fully in Chapter 4, also "knows of the use of ineffable names, including unintelligible (*asēma*) names, and argues that they are not, in fact, without sense to the gods."²⁸ The *Gospel of the*

²⁷ Christopher A. Faraone in an aside refers to a "deity, who... is presumed to be literate" (*The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018], 186). He makes this comment in discussing a light brown chalcedony amulet, which requests that "Lord gods angels, entirely protect the one who wears this sacred *stèle* from every attack and from every poison or disease." I want to distinguish carefully a divinity or divinities who know all sorts of languages (audition) from those who can read, but Faraone's comment is thought-provoking. This theme is also taken up in Derek Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 64–103, which gives evidence of spells in the form of letters to *daimones* or to Persephone, or in a third case to Hermes and Persephone. The dead are also enjoined to read "these letters" (*ta grammata tauta*) (p. 76).

²⁸ Birger Pearson ("Theurgic Tendencies," in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, eds. Rich T. Wallis and Jay Bregman [Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern 6; Albany:

Egyptians, found among the Nag Hammadi codices, contains an ineffable name given to an aeon, which “is made up of the seven Greek vowels written 22 times each.”²⁹ A surviving portion of the perhaps fourth-century alchemical text of Zosimos of Panopolis begins: “Round Omega is the bipartite letter, the one that in terms of material language belongs to the seventh planetary zone, that of Kronos.”³⁰

The examples of sonic and language experimentation across multiple media which we have seen so far in this interlude – whether the Miletos inscription, the papyri, the thinkers just adduced – mainly date to the fourth century and beyond. But this interest in the special quality of vowels evokes a centuries-long discussion. In the first century CE, Dionysius of Halicarnassus ties together composition and vowels, linking their euphony to their movement through the trachea and the resonant breath that produces them:

These are seven in number: two are short, E and O; two long, H and Ω; and three common, A, I, and Y. These latter can be pronounced either long or short, and some call them “ancipital,” as I have done, others “variable.” All these sounds are produced from the windpipe, resounds to the breath, while the mouth is formed in a simple shape, while the tongue is doing nothing other than remaining still. But the long vowels, and those common vowels that are pronounced long, take an extended and continuous column of breath, while the short vowels and those which are pronounced short are uttered abruptly, with one burst of breath and only a brief movement of the windpipe. Now the most powerful of these, and those which produce the most pleasant sound, are the long vowels, and those common ones which are lengthened in utterance, and this is because they are sounded for a long time, and do not arrest the flow of the breath. (*De comp.* 14)³¹

SUNY Press, 1992], 258), who cites Iamblichus, *De myst.*, VII.4. See also Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 173–82, 187, *passim*. Regarding Iamblichus, see Chapter 4.

²⁹ Pearson, “Theurgic Tendencies,” 258. On the dating of materials within the Nag Hammadi codices, including an emphasis on Christian materials of the second century CE, see e.g., Karen King’s work, *inter alia* “The Gnostic Myth: How Does its Demise Impact Twenty-First Century Historiography of Christianity’s Second Century?,” in *Christianity and the Second Century: Themes and Developments*, eds. James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 122–36; for those who focus on the fourth-century materiality of the Nag Hammadi codices, see Hugo Lundhag and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); Nicola Denzey Lewis and Justine Ariel Blount, “Rethinking the Origins of the Nag Hammadi Library,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 399–419.

³⁰ Zosimos of Panopolis, *On the Letter Omega*, ed. and trans. Howard M. Jackson (SBL Texts and Translations 14; Graeco-Roman Religion 5; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1978), 17. Reference to round omega as bipartite letter probably refers to its rounded ω shape.

³¹ ἔστι δὴ ταῦτα τὸν ἀριθμὸν ζ, δύο μὲν βραχέα τὸ τε εἰ καὶ τὸ οἶ, δύο δὲ μακρά τὸ τε ηῖ καὶ τὸ ω, τρία δὲ δίχρονα τὸ τε αῖ καὶ τὸ ι καὶ τὸ υῖ, καὶ γὰρ ἐκτείνεται ταῦτα καὶ συστέλλεται· καὶ αὐτὰ οἱ μὲν

Dionysius values the openness of the human body as a kind of instrument of the vowels. Within a cultural context of theories regarding sound, he grades the vowels:

Of the long vowels, the A is the most musical, when lengthened, for it is pronounced with the mouth open to the fullest extent and the breath forced upwards to the palate. Second comes H, both because it presses the sound down around the base of the tongue but not upwards, and because the mouth is moderately open. In the third place is Ω, for in pronouncing it the mouth is rounded, the lips are contracted into the round and the breath makes its impact on the edge of the lips. Still lower on the scale than the previous one is Υ, for here, since a considerable contraction takes place around the lips themselves, the sound is choked and comes out thin. Last of all comes Ι: with this the impact of the breath is on the teeth, while the mouth is slightly open and the lips do not amplify the sound. (*De comp.* 14)³²

Ritual specialists and philosophical-theological writers manipulated a variety of materials: metal *lamellae*, the papyrus plant, the stone of the Milesian theater wall, the precious-seeming gemstone. Or we could travel to a cryptoporticus of a basilica in Smyrna to see how people manifest “ordinary religion”³³ – everyday non-elite practices – by thinly incising word puzzles onto plaster, graffitiing letters into palindromic squares and calculating the numerical value of letters within words to assert, for

δίχρονα, ὥσπερ ἔφην, οἱ δὲ μεταπτωτικά καλοῦσιν. φωνεῖται δὲ ταῦτα πάντα παρὰ τῆς ἀρτηρίας συνηχοῦσης τῷ πνεύματι καὶ τοῦ στόματος ἀπλῶς σχηματισθέντος τῆς τε γλώττης οὐδὲν πραγματευομένης ἀλλ’ ἡρεμούσης. πλὴν τὰ μὲν μακρὰ καὶ τῶν διχρόνων ἃ μακρῶς λέγεται τεταμένον λαμβάνει καὶ διηνεκὴ τὸν αὐλὸν τοῦ πνεύματος, τὰ δὲ βραχέα ἢ βραχεῶς λεγόμενα ἐξ ἀποκοπῆς τε καὶ μιᾷ πληγῇ πνεύματος καὶ τῆς ἀρτηρίας ἐπὶ βραχὺ κινηθείσης ἐκφέρεται. τούτων δὴ κράτιστα μὲν ἐστὶ καὶ φωνὴν ἡδίστην ἀποτελεῖ τὰ τε μακρὰ καὶ τῶν διχρόνων ὅσα μηκύνεται κατὰ τὴν ἐκφορὰν, ὅτι πολὺν ἡγεῖται χρόνον καὶ τὸν τοῦ πνεύματος οὐκ ἀποκόπτει τόνον. Translation (modified, with gratitude to Federico Maviglia) and Greek from Dionysius of Halicarnassus. *Critical Essays, Volume II: On Literary Composition. Dinarchus. Letters to Ammaeus and Pompeius* (trans. Stephen Usher; LCL 466; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 94–97. For more discussion see pp. 164–67 below.

³² Trans. and ed. Usher, LCL 466, pp. 96–97. αὐτῶν δὲ τῶν μακρῶν πάλιν εὐφωνότατον μὲν τὸ α, ὅταν ἐκτείνῃται· λέγεται γὰρ ἀνοιγομένου τε τοῦ στόματος ἐπὶ πλεῖστον καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ἄνω φερομένου πρὸς τὸν οὐρανόν. δεύτερον δὲ τὸ ἦ, διότι κάτω τε περὶ τὴν βάσιν τῆς γλώττης ἔρειδει τὸν ἦχον ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἄνω, καὶ μετρίως ἀνοιγομένου τοῦ στόματος. τρίτον δὲ τὸ ὦ· στρογγυλίζεται γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ στόμα καὶ περιστέλλεται τὰ χεῖλη τὴν τε πληγὴν τὸ πνεῦμα περὶ τὸ ἀκροστόμιον ποιεῖται. ἔτι δ’ ἥττον τούτου τὸ υ· περὶ γὰρ αὐτὰ τὰ χεῖλη συστολῆς γινομένης ἀξιολόγου πνίγεται καὶ στενὸς ἐκπίπτει ὁ ἦχος. ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων τὸ ι· περὶ τοὺς ὀδόντας τε γὰρ ἡ κροῖσις τοῦ πνεύματος γίνεται μικρὸν ἀνοιγομένου τοῦ στόματος καὶ οὐκ ἐπιλαμπρυνόντων τῶν χειλῶν τὸν ἦχον.

³³ Nicola Denzey Lewis, “Ordinary Religion in the Late Roman Empire: Principles of a New Approach,” *SLA* 5.1 (2021): 104–18.

example, “equal in value / lord 800 / faith 800.”³⁴ By the fourth century CE, we find shape poems or poems appear in organized stoichedon letter grids, and may encode words on diagonals, as in the work of Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius. By the sixth century, Romanus the Melodist would incorporate acrostics into his hymns. Letters were shaped not only into words and sentences, but also into games and number equivalencies and shapes. Letters bore not only the meaning of language, but also effervesced with extended roles as shapes and signs.

Note how we’re moving across time (the electric slide from the first to the perhaps sixth century), space (the circulation of Dionysius’s writings about composition, the solidity of an inscription at Miletus), and materiality (papyrus or parchment, limestone inscription, lead tablet, gemstone). And note how we’re moving across socio-cultic-civic registers: the publicly available inscription that protects the city, the cheap gem hung at the hollow of the clavicle, the esoteric alchemical text or perhaps jealously transmitted amuletic recipe, the first-century rhetorician’s ideas of sound in the throat and mouth. I emphasize the multiple media in which we find such play with language and form so that we understand that these are instantiations of a broader discourse. I emphasize the multiple registers on which such phenomena are found to show that these ideas – such as the harnessing of the vowels, and the voicing of vowels – are not only elite, esoteric, intellectual experiments but also on-the-ground practices shared by elites and non-elites. These outflows of theory resonated in (or in the case of an amulet, perhaps on) the throats of many.

And that is what we are moving to next, in the second part of the book: the sound in the throat, insofar as we can reconstruct it: particularly glossolalia and song. While I assume no continuity between ancient practices of speaking in tongues and experimentation with language, on the one hand, and modern practices and experimentation, on the other, Nicholas Harkness’s ethnographic analysis of glossolalia in South Korean

³⁴ ισόψηφα
κύριος ω
πίστις ω
equal in value
lord 800
faith 800

Roger Bagnall, *Graffiti from the Basilica in the Agora of Smyrna*, eds. idem, Roberta Casagrande-Kim, Akin Ersoy, and Cumhur Tanriver (New York: ISAW/New York University Press, 2016), 45–46 (TP100.3). On isopsephy and poetry in antiquity see Leventhal, *Poetry and Number in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, esp. chap. 2 on Leonides of Alexandria.

Christian communities raises helpful questions as I study these ancient Mediterranean materials. He intervenes in a conversation that often revolves around narrow linguistic points: How/is glossolalia (like) language? Harkness argues instead that “glossolalia should be conceptualized as cultural semiosis – sign behavior – that is said to contain, and therefore can be justified by, an ideological core of language, but in fact is produced at the ideological limits of language.”³⁵ Denotational fragments (phonemes which sound like Korean syllables, or repeat the hallelujah of the Hebrew translated into English or Korean) partake in the “ideological core of language” and offer a form of communication: “the immersive, overwhelming semiotic effects of glossolalia and cacophony impose limits on speech that, together, undermine ‘normal’ linguistic functions while intensifying the very act of communication itself.”³⁶ The linguistic practice of glossolalia functions both as a standard language claim that is denotational and as a semiotic system in which sounds function as signs. Glossolalia is also then a system of possibilities: “although denotation is absent in practice, it is there in potential.”³⁷

To use Ashon Crawley’s terminology, glossolalia, and more specifically the speaking in tongues of Blackpentecostalism, points to “otherwise possibilities” in linguistic practices but also to transformations: the *pneuma* that rushes through the flesh, the sound that emerges from the body. Harkness carefully analyzes glossolalia that seem syllabic and denotational but function “at the ideological limits of language.” This approach provides a useful framework not only for the idea of speaking in tongues or “kinds of tongues” that we shall encounter in 1 Corinthians, but also for the wall at Miletos or the many recipes, *defixiones*, and amulets that contain strings of letters that seem to make no sense or

³⁵ Nicholas Harkness, *Glossolalia and the Problem of Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 7; see also 43. In “glossolalic utterances,” he writes, “the syllables can never actually be construed as morphemes, so the utterance never rises to the level of linguistic ‘sense.’ Instead, phonetic residue is reconstituted to masquerade as a phonological system. Only through mystical acts of ‘interpretation,’ bypassing grammatical equivalences across codes, can glossolalic utterances be said to contain or produce denotation” (p. 41).

³⁶ Harkness, *Glossolalia*, 40.

³⁷ “[C]ultural semiosis at the limits of language allows Korean Christians to posit glossolalia as language, and collaboratively to transform the intensity of unintelligibility into the clarity of propositional truth.” Harkness, *Glossolalia*, 43. See also Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 181: “The translation of ‘sacred names’ would be ineffectual, ‘for even if it were possible to translate them, they would no longer hold the same power’ ([Iamblichus] *DM* 257, 13–15).”

charaktēres which mean something via their resemblance to letters, but have no clear linguistic function. Discussing an early nineteenth-century writing by Sapelo Island (Georgia) dweller, Bilali, which came to be called Ben Ali's Diary, Crawley writes: "Nothingness has, at its core, meditation and celebration, often misunderstood because of its refusal to give itself over to rationalist projects of cognition and thought. The five pages of nonempty, nonreadable script speaks back against and is resistance prior to the articulation and enunciation of power." Sometimes, in Crawley's interpretation, these

graphemic markings serve to break down the distinction between script and speech, talk and text, and is a preface, a prelude, a prolegomenon to the music, the choreosonics, of nothingness. In a word, the nothingness of such script is anything but empty; it is, rather, full. Overflowing. Script otherwise, minoritarian speech.³⁸

I cannot and do not claim that all speaking in tongues, *voces magicae*, *charaktēres*, or other *symbola* in antiquity were always complex enunciations of this abundantly overflowing, minoritarian sort of possibility-making. But Crawley's analysis of a historical document of the nineteenth century (in his chapter on speaking in tongues, with mention of Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, no less), opens the possibility for recognizing beyond-linguistic experimentation as *sometimes* engaged in opening up the strictures of human language for otherwise possibility. Elsewhere, as we shall see, incantation, song, and sound are used to produce power over – competitive engagements of domination through ritual speech or through musical competition.

A POEM CAN RAISE THE DEAD

What model could we find for understanding sound, song, language at its limits, manipulated in visual play, and fragments of historical materials together? I turn to Tyehimba Jess's 2016 *Olio*. It is a book of poetry and more, mixing history (Scott Joplin, ragtime and cakewalks and blackface, the Fisk Jubilee singers, and Black church arsons)³⁹ with new poetic

³⁸ Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 198–99.

³⁹ Tyehimba Jess, *Olio* (Seattle: Wave Books, 2016). See for example its use of documentary evidence to create a (half) poem, such as "Irving Berlin's reply to rumors regarding theft of Scott Joplin's 'Real Slow Drag'" in the 1916 *Greek Book Magazine* (*Olio*, 174), or the reconstruction of the voice of Fisk Jubilee singer Jennie Jackson (1852–1910) in a poem which is found between lists of 1996 Black church arsons (p. 151). My gratitude to Todne

forms, including poems that look like butterflies, and poems in two voices that can be read across a line or in two columns, and poems focused on Black musical traditions: on sound and song.

Olio is, as “olio” means, a miscellany. It is one produced in a particular condition of power: the denigration and theft of African bodies and of the music and cultural production of those of African descent. Jess’s *Olio* is “a book of technical wizardry,” including his use, in the words of critic Jacob Sunderlin, of “the double-jointed sonnet, which can be read a total of three, or possibly infinite ways, both down and across the caesura, or diagonally. In these poems, two voices emerge from the poem, distinct, and two voices combine into a single song.” These poems are “sculptures of song.”⁴⁰

Jess even includes instructions for his poems. His “Appendix: regarding facts and audience instruction,” calls to the reader in the voice of the barker or circus vendor: “Step right up!” (Figure 1.2). Then, Jess explains his craft, including the doubleness of many of his poems, in which he juxtaposes two “syncopated” or contrasting historical voices. For syncopation he offers the voices of the singers the conjoined MacKay twins; for contrasting historical voices he offers, for example, the accounts of Scott Joplin and his musical vandal Irving Berlin.⁴¹ “[W]hen combined it’s a sculpture you’ll find liberated from these bifurcated pages of history,” writes Jess of his engagement with the history of Paul Dunbar and Booker T. Washington, “singing stichomythic backup twisting through time.” “Create your own path through their side-by-side: start anywhere, and read them line-by-line, backward, forward, and diagonal wise.”⁴²

Photographs show how Jess’s poems can be cut and rolled into a cylinder “that reads back and forth and up and down, end of line into beginning into end again until there is no beginning” or how the torus of the cylinder can be twisted into a Möbius strip, “a paradox poem on a two-dimensional surface but with one side that flips seamlessly from Dunbar to Booker and back again and again and again ad infinitum.”⁴³

Thomas for introducing me to Jess’s work and for her engagement with it; see e.g. her “Black Church Arson in the Museum,” *JAAR* 89.4 (2021): 1360–405.

⁴⁰ Jacobs Sunderlin, “‘The Gut Meaning of Grace’: Tyehimba Jess’s *Olio*,” *The Kenyon Review*, <https://kenyonreview.org/reviews/olio-by-tyehimba-jess-738439/>. See also James Baldwin, “Many Thousands Gone,” in *Notes from a Native Son* (1955; Boston: Beacon, 2012), 25: “It is only in his music, which Americans are able to admire because a protective sentimentality limits their understandings of it, that the Negro in America has been able to tell his story.”

⁴¹ See pp. 255–57 below. ⁴² Jess, *Olio*, 213. ⁴³ Jess, *Olio*, 214.

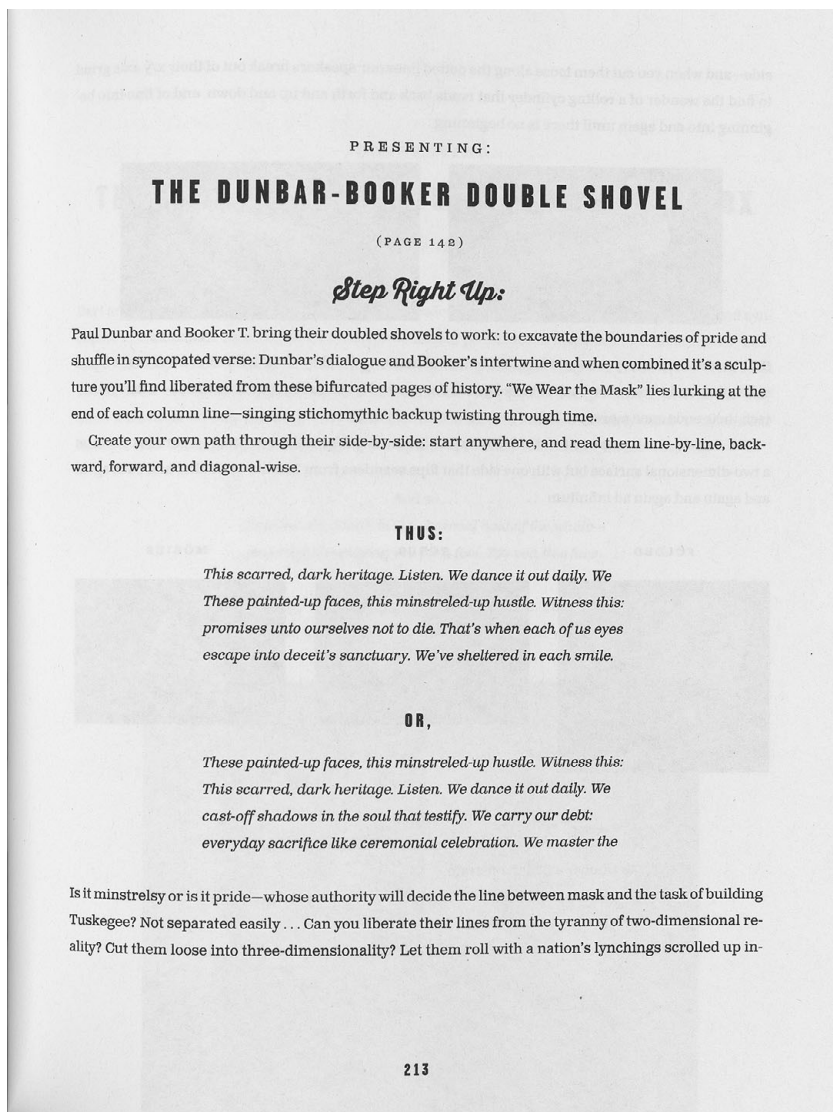
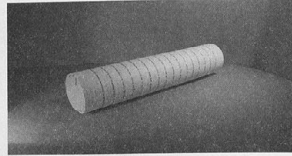
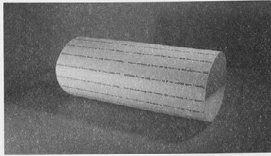


Figure I.2 Tyehimba Jess. "Presenting: The Dunbar-Booker Double Shovel." *Olio*, pp. 213, 214.

Jess's poetic plan thus occurs not only in the doubling of poems themselves, in which two voices can be read separately or joined into one, or in the vocalizing of historical figures, but also in the further manipulation of pages of his poetry into twists so that you can "listen to them sing three-

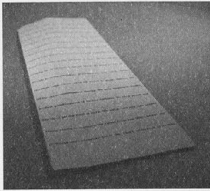
side—and when you cut them loose along the dotted lines our speakers break out of their x/y axis grind to find the wonder of a rolling cylinder that reads back and forth and up and down, end of line into beginning into end again until there is no beginning...



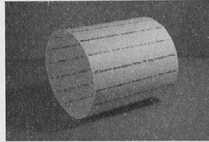
Still, there's more story to be told from the fixture of masks so flexible—find the caesura and make it fold so Dunbar and Booker are back to back against the stacked lynch mobs they hold inside—when you attach their ends once more, you'll find their tale told in torus form.

But there's more—one half twist before you join the torus will reveal the Möbius—a paradox poem on a two-dimensional surface but with one side that flips seamless from Dunbar to Booker and back again and again and again ad infinitum...

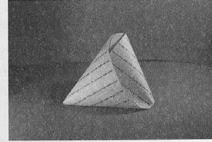
FOLDED



TORUS



MÖBIUS



POSTSCRIPT:

Each singer also croons in their own circle independently.

As Dunbar will demonstrate:

We got our lies shinin' White folks on like spit-polished shoes.

And Booker will dissertate:

It's about bowing, and bestudded with built-in automatic smiles.

Figure I.2 (cont.)

dimensionally.”⁴⁴ He is providing prescriptions for poetic engagement. These ask for intellectual lability and for an understanding that shape and

⁴⁴ Jess, *Olio*, 216.

material and meaning are linked. They remind me of the recipes and directions we sometimes find in so-called magical materials which also play with the shape of letters on a page, which also sometimes involve the triple and quadruple folding and beyond of an amulet.

The work that Jess does as poet and ritual instructor helps me to think about language, shape, form, and history. He navigates historical documents to re-present them, past figures to give them new voice and dialogue. He calls forth voices of the long-dead. He shows that, in a particular time and place, two dissonant voices – say, Paul Dunbar and the negotiated compromises of Booker T. Washington – can coexist as two different solutions to the same discourses. Jess's *Olio* uses poetics to engage history, and offers both voice (the many singers whose experience he reconstructs) and an aesthetic and ritual engagement with the materiality of his book, encouraging the reader not only to vocalize aloud historical voices but also to manipulate the materiality of the page. We shall meet Tyehimba Jess's work again, but here I want *Olio* to conduct us toward sound and song, to glossolalia and even scraping cicadas, as we shall see in Chapter 4, that can praise God.

This interlude, or pausing point, has allowed us to view the two territories of this book, materiality and sound. On the one hand, this book is a social history, seeking to understand how ancient Christian texts fit within and are elucidated by the varied ritual practices of antiquity and particularly those disclosed through the dirt encrusted and cracked remains of *defixiones*. On the other hand, this book aims at glimpsing otherwise possibilities, ways of being for those whose social status, gender, and “insignificance” means that they leave historical evidence that is fragmentary, ways of being that indicate ethical and unethical modes of deploying historical fragments (the song, the phrase, the god, the site) to effect what these subjects thought was justice and beauty. Can you use a series of vowels to jump-start an ontological shift and exit the forward trudge of historical time? Or use a sign that looks like a letter but belongs to no discernible alphabet and who knows how it was voiced? Or use letters arranged into a pattern to shift you out of your present distress? We head next to these questions about sound and song.

Tongues, Breath, Stutter

1 Corinthians and a Corinthian Curse

Shiver me into silence, into the evaded word...

JJJJJerome Ellis, “Prayer to my stutter #3”¹

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and angels, but do not have love, I am resonating bronze or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13.1).² These words were written in a letter by Paul and Sosthenes and read aloud to Christ-followers in Roman Corinth in mid-first century. The first recipients of the letter called themselves an *ekklēsia* or assembly, a political term indicating civic engagement and debate.³ They included those of low status, the enslaved, and women. We already met the garland weaver Karpimē Babbia, whom we met in the Introduction. To their north, the blue waters of the Corinthian Gulf lapped at Lechaion Harbor; to their south, they were shadowed by a high, rocky Acrocorinth, which sheltered *defixiones* or curse tablets. Eighteen curses have been found at the Acrocorinth’s Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, and more than thirty within the larger region of the *Corinthia*.⁴ Some of these curses include what scholars call *voces magicae*: sequences of known Greek letters that nonetheless make no sense to us. The curses were moving beyond the

¹ <https://theoffingmag.com/micro/prayers-to-my-stutter-1-and-3/>. Used with kind permission.

² All translations from 1 Corinthians are mine unless otherwise indicated; the Greek edition is NA28.

³ Anna C. Miller, *Corinthian Democracy: Democratic Discourse in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2015).

⁴ John Fotopoulos, “Paul’s Curse of Corinthians: Restraining Rivals with Fear and Voces Mysticae (1 Cor 16:22),” *NovTest* 56 (2014): 291.

linguistically normal. So too were the Corinthians in Christ who stood in the plateau of the city, practicing the tongues of mortals and angels.⁵

I am curious about what is historically irretrievable: the sound of angelic tongues, the production of *voces magicae*, what it means to “speak in tongues” (*lalein glōssais*, 1 Cor. 14:5) or “kinds of tongues” (*genē glōssōn*, 1 Cor. 12:10), and the theologies, philosophies, and ontologies that made these conceptualizations possible. I wish I could hear the tongues of mortals and of angels, from the mouths of the Corinthian Christ-followers.⁶ I wish I knew what they were up to, with their linguistic experimentation, their transgression – I believe – of standard language. I am optimistic, maybe overly so, about what Michel de Certeau calls “glosso-poeisis” and its joyful flight from language, its use of sound to dematerialize the boundaries between angelic, divine, daimonic, and human. Even the evaluation of what is noise and what is sound is racialized, as Ashon Crawley explains, with the sounds of Black persons – whether joyful or lamenting – often seen as peculiar products of bodies, as paradoxically entertaining and horrible noise.⁷ In turn, the inbreaking of tongues at the Apostolic Faith Mission at Azusa Street in Los Angeles in the early twentieth century facilitated something transformative, “countercultural forms of political agency,” in theologian Keri Day’s analysis: “The subversive community this church cultivated . . . defiantly refused the racist and market-driven momentum of early industrial capitalism.”⁸ For Day, these early twentieth-century practices of speaking in tongues and the political, economic, and racial radicalism of Azusa Street go hand in hand; the idea of Pentecost is simultaneously religious, linguistic, economic, and political.⁹ This chapter probes the question: How, in

⁵ Fotopoulos, “Paul’s Curse,” has the important insight to juxtapose 1 Corinthians with curses and *voces*, but largely limits his analysis to the Aramaic of 1 Cor. 16:22 used as a *vox magica*.

⁶ I use “in Christ” or “Christ-followers” to remind us that the Corinthians to whom Paul and Sosthenes write are Gentiles interested in affiliating with Jewishness and with the messianic (*christos*) figure Paul and others preach.

⁷ Some late nineteenth-century writers on the aesthetics of the sublime produce their theories out of anti-blackness; see Ashon Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 141; also Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17–48, especially on the coffin.

⁸ Keri Day, *Azusa Reimagined: A Radical Vision of Religious and Democratic Belonging* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022), 3.

⁹ Day, *Azusa Reimagined*, 6–7: “some white scholars describe Azusa’s religious life as primarily oriented toward otherworldly dimensions. They focus on its practices of speaking in tongues or healing to the exclusion of its embodiment of a subversive

antiquity, were language, tongues, non-normative speech, oppression and liberation, and ethnicity entwined?

When we talk about tongues, we necessarily talk about sound. But tongues also involve materiality, whether that materiality is the physicality of the human body or the lead on which *voces magicae* are inscribed. This emphasis on materiality finds odd resonance (!) in de Certeau's writing on glossolalia:

The scene is immediately physical. As a glossolalist puts it: it is "an event in my throat," and often, in the beginning, without phonation, a glosso-labial movement, "a warmth in my tongue and lips," and so on. A glottal movement inaugurates a talking. Little by little, rough phonations come, then more structured articulation It seems that the threshold between muteness and speaking can be extended and organized, can be reconstituted like a "no man's land," a space of vocal manipulations and jubilations, already free from silence but not yet subject to a particular language. Games on the frontier. Intoxications of beginning.¹⁰

And glossolalia involves not only materiality, but also sign; Nicholas Harkness's insights about contemporary practices of speaking in tongues may be relevant for antiquity as well. He writes, "glossolalia should be conceptualized as cultural semiosis – sign behavior – that is said to contain, and therefore can be justified by, an ideological core of language, but in fact is produced at the ideological limits of language."¹¹ Crawley sees speaking in tongues "[a]s a defining feature of Blackpentecostal aesthetic practice. . . such an experience allows a way to think epistemology, to think the world of knowledge production otherwise."¹² Keri Day discusses Pentecost as the miraculous which "break[s] open *impossible* spiritual possibilities for flourishing together."¹³ For artist JJJJerome Ellis, cited in the incipit, the alternative form of language within stuttering can open up possibilities: "Set the jewel of the psalm into my midnight speech."¹⁴

community that stands as an affront to the segregated cultural norms of that era." See also p. 13.

¹⁰ Michel De Certeau, "Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias," *Representations* 56 (1996): 38 (trans. Daniel Rosenberg and originally published as "Utopies vocales: Glossolalias," *Traverses* 20 [1980]: 26–37); Certeau refers to glossolalia as "originary joy" (p. 41). On the history of theorizations of glossolalia, see Nicholas Harkness, *Glossolalia and the Problem of Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 9–19.

¹¹ Harkness, *Glossolalia*, 7. ¹² Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 207.

¹³ Keri Day, *Notes of a Native Daughter: Testifying in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 15.

¹⁴ JJJJerome Ellis, "Prayer to my stutter #3." On evidence of stuttering (*isnophōnia*) in antiquity, see Richard Last, "Paul among the Fluent in Corinth: Introducing Paul and the

Yet, as Crawley writes about the particularities of Blackpentecostal practices, this “noise” stands outside History as a critique of western ideas of “Man,” ideas grounded in racialized capitalism and colonialist ideas of who has the right to speak rationally:

Joyful noise, black praise noise, the Blackpentecostal sense of being is an enactment of the ante-historical, is an enactment of the ante-History. The foundational vibrational noise, joyful noise, black noising – to borrow a bit from Hortense Spillers – is to be before as vestibular to not only culture, but also vestibular to the historical and History, the modality of theological-philosophical thought that produced such distinctions.¹⁵

I do not conflate whatever was meant by “tongues” in first- and second-century CE texts with Pentecostal practices today or the phenomenon that broke out at Azusa Street in 1906, even if the latter understand themselves to be continuous with early Christian practices. What I do glean from Crawley, Day, Harkness, and others is a lens to understand experiments in the limits of language. Some Corinthian Christ-followers were speaking in tongues. The Corinthian curse tablets, too, provide material evidence of the limits of language and of linguistic experimentation, as gods and *daimones* are called upon to effect something in the world. They do not point to the joyful or to flourishing. The curse tablets do not exhaust or explain the phrase “tongues of humans and of angels” in 1 Corinthians, or the Corinthians’ practices of speaking in tongues. Yet, they provide fragmentary evidence of a broader world of linguistic and sonic experimentation, and the place of the tongue, breath, and *pneuma* – spirit itself – within it.¹⁶

‘Associated Behaviours’ of Stuttering into the Study of Dysfluency in Antiquity,” *NovTest* 64 (2022): 54–78, esp. 54–55; Last argues for Paul’s own dysfluency.

¹⁵ Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 149; see esp. 147–51; see also Day, *Azusa Reimagined*, chap. 2.

¹⁶ Henk Versnel explains that in many curses from antiquity, “a form of address taken from normal communication... continually lingers on the brink of normal and abnormal language, leaving the reader or user with the problem where exactly the world of the addressed person, demon or god must be sought.” H. S. Versnel, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words,” in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, eds. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 140. He continues (pp. 141–42): “Even if a formula originated in normal and comprehensible language, a sometimes demonstrably deliberate process of deconstruction soon took its toll. What we see, in other words, is a marked drive to alienation. . . . [I]n the magical formula often the *lectio difficilior* is indeed *melior*: the more difficult, aberrant, the less ‘normal’ a reading, the better it seemed in the eyes of the author, transmitter or user of the charm.”

LANGUAGE/TONGUE/VIOLENCE

How shall we think about the tongue, this muscular bit of the body and its ability to produce known languages and sounds beyond language? M. NourbeSe Philip's poem "Discourse on the Logic of Language" as research-creation and artistic practice offers a critical perspective on the problems and possibilities of language, depicting the tongue in light of fleshy intimacy and as a muscle subject to colonial control (Figure 3.1). On the left side of its first page, words in all capitals align perpendicular to the usual reading orientation in English. They evoke the intimacy of mother and child, offering an almost anthropological description of licking a newborn. By the third page of the poem, it becomes clear that mother and child are human, and that the exchange includes breath: "she touches her tongue to the child's tongue, and holding the tiny mouth open, she blows into it – hard. She was blowing words – her words, her mother's words, those of her mother's mother, and all their mothers before. . . ."¹⁷

This intimacy of the vertical left margin contrasts with the stark regulations on the right side of the page. There, a paragraph floats, titled *Edict 11*. It declares in part: "Every slave caught speaking / his native language / shall be severely punished. / Where necessary, / removal of / the tongue is / recommended." The intimacy of touching tongues and the breath that enlivens words are disciplined by legal limits put upon language, here "native language" or the mother tongue.

In the central column, left justified under the title "Discourse on the Logic of Language," we find balanced a central poem between the mother tongue and the punishing law. We know from the poem's beginning that

English
is my mother tongue.

¹⁷ M. NourbeSe Philip, "Discourse on the Logic of Language," in *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2015), 30–33; the figures and quotations are used with kind permission of the poet. On the problems of language as producing an initial cut in or limitation of the self, see the engagement of Jacques Lacan's theories (among others) by Hortense J. Spillers, "'All the Things You Could Be by Now If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother': Psychoanalysis and Race," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Summer 1996): 710–34; and Antonio Viegó, *Dead Subjects: Toward a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), on race and the "barred subject" (p. 6); Viegó continues: "Although most people tend to think of language as particularly 'human,' in Lacan one is pushed to understand its inhumanness or its other-than-humanness" (p. 14); see esp. pp. 17–19 on Spillers and Lacan.

THE MOTHER THEN PUT HER FINGERS INTO HER CHILD'S MOUTH—GENTLY FORCING IT OPEN;
 SHE TOUCHES HER TONGUE TO THE CHILD'S TONGUE, AND HOLDING THE TINY MOUTH OPEN,
 SHE BLOWS INTO IT—HARD. SHE WAS BLOWING WORDS—HER WORDS, HER MOTHER'S WORDS,
 THOSE OF HER MOTHER'S MOTHER, AND ALL THEIR MOTHERS BEFORE—INTO HER DAUGHTER'S
 MOUTH.

but I have
 a dumb tongue
 tongue dumb
 father tongue
 and english is
 my mother tongue
 is
 my father tongue
 is a foreign lan lan lang
 language
 l/anguish
 anguish
 a foreign anguish
 is english—
 another tongue
 my mother

mammy
 mummy
 moder
 mater
 macer
 moder
 tongue
 mothertongue

tongue mother
 tongue me
 mothertongue me
 mother me
 touch me
 with the tongue of your
 lan lan lang
 language
 l/anguish
 anguish
 english
 is a foreign anguish

EDICT 11

Every slave caught speaking his native language shall be severely punished. Where necessary, removal of the tongue is recommended. The offending organ, when removed, should be hung on high in a central place, so that all may see and tremble.

Figure 3.1 M. NourbeSe Philip, “Discourse on the Logic of Language,” third page of the poem.

Further on we read

my father tongue
is a foreign lan lan lang
language
l/anguish
anguish
a foreign anguish
is english –

“Language” evolves to “languish” and to “anguish”: not quite homophones, but something like, technically called a minimal pair. The word stutters, and that stuttering produces something epistemologically crucial, the link between language and subjective undoing: “lan lan lang” resolves into “language” before evolving into “l/anguish.” “Mother” appears in multiple languages, its cognates echoing, and the stack of words evolves from “my mother” to “mothertongue.” M. NourbeSe Philip, a Caribbean-Canadian writer, takes her mother tongue and presents it as the tongue-to-tongue, breath into body intimacy of mother to child. She also presents it as a violent colonial anguish/english, something that replaces a “native language.” The poem treats tongues and language three ways: with anthropological intimacy, with legal terror, and with a play with syllables and letters themselves, providing cues for an analysis of tongue and language in ancient texts.

The larger poem frames these passages on language, on the intimacy of the mother’s tongue, and on the violence of law in relation to shards of historical data, a cool-ly described history of ideas of the brain: “Those parts of the brain chiefly responsible for speech are named / after two learned nineteenth century doctors, the eponymous Doctors / Wernicke and Broca respectively.”¹⁸ The said Doctor Broca argued that white males have larger brains and are superior to women, blacks, etc. From this historical data, Philip formulates several small multiple-choice quizzes (Figure 3.2).

The poem’s quizzes ask the reader to evaluate epistemology: What do you know about language and how it works? What do you know, historically, about the violent constraints on language, about how patriarchal power, colonialism, and racism operate in and through language? The poem brings together historical material – a found, documentary poetics – with and as the poet’s own words. The emphasis on the bodily,

¹⁸ Philip, “Discourse on the Logic of Language,” 31.

A tapering, blunt-tipped, muscular, soft and fleshy organ describes

- (a) the penis.
- (b) the tongue.
- (c) neither of the above.
- (d) both of the above.

In man the tongue is

- (a) the principal organ of taste.
- (b) the principal organ of articulate speech.
- (c) the principal organ of oppression and exploitation.
- (d) all of the above.

The tongue

- (a) is an interwoven bundle of striated muscle running in three planes.
- (b) is fixed to the jawbone.
- (c) has an outer covering of a mucous membrane covered with papillae.
- (d) contains ten thousand taste buds, none of which is sensitive to the taste of foreign words.

Air is forced out of the lungs up the throat to the larynx where it causes the vocal cords to vibrate and create sound. The metamorphosis from sound to intelligible word requires

- (a) the lip, tongue and jaw all working together.
- (b) a mother tongue.
- (c) the overseer's whip.
- (d) all of the above or none.

Figure 3.2 M. NourbeSe Philip, "Discourse on the Logic of Language," fourth page of the poem.

particularly the operations of tongue and larynx, attune us to hear ancient discussions of rhetoric and how *pneuma* or breath moves through the body to produce ugly and pleasing sounds. The formal aspects of the poem, which involve writing placed vertically as well as horizontally, wake our eyes to the aesthetics of some so-called magical spells or their recipes. Philip's poem concisely, visually and sonically, asks her reader: What is the relation between sound and word? When is the tongue forced or punished, when it is coaxed into speech? What l/anguish does the tongue repeat and also what pleasure and intimacy might it give? These questions emerging from the poem/research creation in turn open research possibilities for glossolalia and *vores magicae* in Roman Corinth.

1 CORINTHIANS

Christ-followers in Roman Corinth received a letter addressed to them by Paul and Sosthenes. This occurred in ca. 54 CE; it was not the first letter to them (1 Cor. 5:9) nor the last (we find more letters collected in what we call 2 Corinthians), and oral communications had also occurred between Paul and Sosthenes and some Corinthian Christ-followers, who were perhaps enslaved messengers from the house of Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11). For historians of antiquity, this documentary and interpersonal exchange, even if we only have portions of the evidence, is a precious thing. It indicates continued circulations of people, papyrus, ideas, and assertions of power – the power of the divine, the power of the apostle, the power of the spirit-filled person, the power of “the rulers of this age” (1 Cor. 2:8). We do not have letters from the Corinthians in Christ. Yet, because we have more than one letter of Paul and co-writers to the Corinthians,¹⁹ we can plot a longer story of agreements, disagreements, and tensions. The message of the letter we call 1 Corinthians did not strike *all* the Corinthian Christ-followers as wise.

The letter of 1 Corinthians, an eminently pragmatic work of practical theology, often returns to the topics of defining wisdom and knowledge, to the idea of being spirit(ual) people (*pneumatikoi*), to practices

¹⁹ The salutation of 2 Corinthians is from Paul and Timothy. Many scholars think that 2 Corinthians consists of conjoined fragments from multiple letters; see e.g., Margaret Mitchell, “Paul’s Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction,” in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, eds. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen (HTS 53; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 307–39.

connected with food and sex, to acts of speaking within the *ekklēsia* itself, which included the speech of wo/men.²⁰ The letter seeks to control and redirect “gifts” or *charismata* in which the Corinthians engage, such as an utterance (*logos*) of wisdom, an utterance of knowledge, gifts of healing, acts of power, prophesying, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:8–10).

Using ancient rhetorical traditions, the letter tries to persuade its first hearers to curtail their assumptions about their own wisdom and pneumatic gifts and spiritual power, to constrain freedom, and to tamp down the voices of the wo/men in their midst. The full participation of who were enslaved is also called into question.²¹ First Corinthians is prescriptive. Its language and argument do not describe problems or moral infractions in the *ekklēsia*, but rather constitute the audience (what is sometimes called the “inscribed” audience, in contrast to the elusive actual audience). The letter constructs the *ekklēsia*’s problems and successes; it seeks to persuade.²²

²⁰ In her New Testament scholarship, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza uses “wo/men” to include both those who identify as women and marginalized men, and to point to the instability of gender in antiquity: *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), 57–59, 108–9. Regarding women at Corinth prophesying, see Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Arminta Fox, *Paul Decentered: Reading 2 Corinthians with the Corinthian Women* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019); Joseph Marchal, “Still After: Reintroducing the Corinthian Women Prophets at Thirty,” and Shelly Matthews “Hearing Wo/men Prophets,” in *After the Corinthian Women Prophets: Reimagining Rhetoric and Power*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), 1–46 and 47–68, respectively.

²¹ The participation of the enslaved is also called into question; see Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 39–70; Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 40–75. On whether and when those who were enslaved were identified as gendered, see Sheila Briggs, “Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society,” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklēsia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 115; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, e.g. 41; Matthews, “Hearing Wo/men Prophets,” 60. On gender performance in antiquity, and how easily men could be accused of sliding into the effeminate, see esp. Maud W. Gleason, “Portrait of Polemo: The Deportment of the Public Self,” in *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Preservation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 21–54. Joseph Marchal interprets the Corinthian women, who are told their behavior is so shameful that is as if their heads are shaved, as trans/gender androgynes or transgressing gender (interpreting 1 Cor. 11:4–6) (“A Close Corinthian Shave,” in his *Appalling Bodies: Queer Figures Before and After Paul’s Letters* [New York: Oxford, 2020], 29–65).

²² Elizabeth Castelli (*Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991]) has analyzed the letter’s multiple calls to imitation (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:1: “Imitate me, as I imitate Christ”), demonstrating how this rhetoric was part of a

The beginning of the letter emphasizes spirit and wisdom. Wire reconstructs a historical context in which some Christ-followers at Corinth understood themselves to have been filled with spirit and guided by a Christ who is also understood to be Sophia or Wisdom. These Christ-followers believed themselves to be transformed by the initiatory ritual of baptism and its attendant and efficacious words: “in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male and female.”²³ Yet Paul and Sosthenes seek to limit such transformation and to constrain those who were identified as women by insisting that women be veiled when they engage in the practice of prophecy. Among feminist scholars, Wire has picked apart multiple and sometimes contradictory rhetorical strategies involving wo/men’s participation in assembly, especially in 1 Corinthians 11. This passage offers many reasons that women must be veiled as they pray and prophecy, including arguments from creation, from common practice and, mysteriously, an argument about the angels (“For this reason a woman ought to have an authority over her head, because of the angels”; 1 Cor. 11:10). Tongues are devalued among other

rhetoric to shore up Paul’s leadership, to seek to persuade the Corinthians-in-Christ to follow Paul’s injunctions regarding food, sex, enslavement, and wisdom. Margaret Mitchell (*Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993]) demonstrated that Paul’s language of “one body,” among many other tropes, is best understood in the context of civic rhetoric. Jennifer Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 24–47) investigates how Paul’s rhetoric of his abused body fits within martial and master-enslaved discourses of the day; see L. L. Welborn’s *Paul, a Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1–4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), which argues that Paul’s emphasis of the fool and foolishness (*mōria*) in 1 Corinthians 1–4 fits into the discourse of the low-status buffoon who has unique philosophical insights and critiques existing authority – including the depiction of the enslaved Aesop. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* ([Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], 105–28) demonstrated how Paul’s limitations on the voices of wom/en was not incidental to but deeply integrated within a hierarchical and subordinating logic of chapters 11–14: God, Christ, man, woman.

²³ Gal. 3:28; see 1 Cor. 12:13 with its omission of “neither male and female,” discussed in e.g. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, 126; Matthews, “Hearing Wo/men Prophets,” 56–57. Regarding 1 Corinthians 11 as primarily concerned with men’s *unveiling*, see Cynthia L. Thompson, “Hairstyles, Head-Coverings, and St. Paul: Portraits from Roman Corinth,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 51.2 (June 1988): 99–115; Richard Oster, “When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11.4,” *NTS* 34.4 (1988): 481–505; on Corinthian gender transgression, see Marchal, *Appalling Bodies*, 29–65.

spiritual things and gifts (*pneumatika*, *charismata*).²⁴ The letter reinforces the key role of prophecy rather than tongues and ends with an injunction against wo/men's speech in assembly.

Amid these important studies of rhetoric and 1 Corinthians, we have not yet reckoned sufficiently with the ways in which ideas about ancient rhetoric intersect with theories about the breath (*pneuma*) moving through the body. This line of thinking may have been especially important in an assembly or *ekklesiā* deeply interested in spirit (*pneuma*) and spiritual gifts (*pneumatika*). The Corinthians in Christ were experimenting with ways of being and with methods of voice (prophecy, prayer, hymns, speaking in tongues) within a larger cultural context of training in voice, breath, and persuasion. Speaking about both the fourth-century BCE philosopher Aristotle and the first-century CE literary theorist Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for example, James I. Porter writes: "The breathy substance of voice lay at the source of the language arts that would eventually culminate in an exclusive attention to the voice: 'Voice, the most mimetic of all our parts, was there to start with. Thus, the [verbal] arts were established: rhapsody and acting and the others' ([Aristotle *Rhet.*] 1404a22–24)."²⁵ The Corinthians in Christ, particularly those who were enslaved and those considered weak and low in the world (1 Cor. 1:26–29), were not reading Aristotle and they were not famed Greek rhetors. They were not likely to have trained in rhetorical performance or to have been engaged in rhapsody or acting. Yet oratory was a popular art. And the Corinthians were speaking – perhaps speaking more freely than ever in the Corinthian *ekklesiā*, prophesying and speaking in tongues – within a larger cultural context that prized rhetoric and oratory, and they were experimenting with ideas of *pneuma*.

1 Corinthians itself indicates the link between rhetoric – composition, speech – and spirit:

²⁴ On *pneumatika* as spiritual things more generally (rather than the usual translation of spiritual gifts, which conflates *pneumatika* with *charismata*), see Kathy Ehrensperger, "Between Polis, Oikos, and Ekklesia: The Challenge of Negotiating the Spirit World (1 Cor 12:1–11)," in *The First Urban Churches*, vol. 2: *Roman Corinth*, eds. James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn (WGRWSup 8; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 105–32, esp. 105–6.

²⁵ The passage continues: "Later on, writers of prose would realize the fruitfulness of the conjunction of delivery and *lexis*, treating them nearly as functions of each other, as in Dionysius of Halicarnassus: 'Here the style itself (*lexis*) shows what kind of delivery (*bupokriseōs*) is needed for it' (Demosthenes 54)." James I. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 98.

1 When I came to you, siblings, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you with superiority of speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 My speech and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).²⁶

The powerful first-person singular, the “I” of the speaker, uses a common rhetorical technique of claiming not to know rhetoric, but to offer uncrafted and sincere communication. (Today, orators still make claims to straight talk and downplay their educational attainments in political debates.) “My speech and proclamation” occurred with a demonstration of spirit and power. This is usually taken to mean that the Holy Spirit or a spirit infused Paul’s teaching with power, in contradistinction to the sophisticated and potentially deceptive rhetoric – the fancy words and training – of the time.²⁷ But to say that one’s speech comes with a “demonstration of *pneuma*” also draws on contemporaneous educational and rhetorical training that emphasized breath. The phrase recalls the overlapping work of orators, poets, and actors as they intoned words.²⁸ The concatenation of vocabulary in 1 Corinthians hints at the rhetorical-mechanical discussions of the time that scrutinize breath, larynx, tongue, voice in the production of effective and powerful oratory and composition.²⁹

²⁶ 1 Κάγω ἐλθὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἦλθον οὐ καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας καταγγέλλων ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ. 2 οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον. 3 κάγω ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ καὶ ἐν φόβῳ καὶ ἐν τρόμῳ πολλῷ ἐγενόμην πρὸς ὑμᾶς, 4 καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖ [ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως, 5 ἵνα ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν μὴ ᾖ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ’ ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ.

²⁷ Important discussions of anthropology and spirit-possession are found in Jennifer Eyl, *Signs, Wonders, and Gifts: Divination in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); and Giovanni B. Bazzana, *Having the Spirit of Christ: Spirit Possession and Exorcism in the Early Christ Groups* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); see also Albert Schweitzer’s Christ mysticism in *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (trans. William Montgomery; London: A&C Black, 1931).

²⁸ James I. Porter, “Rhetoric, Aesthetics, and the Voice,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, ed. Erik Gunderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 99.

²⁹ Porter, “Rhetoric, Aesthetics, and the Voice,” 100: “an entire branch of literary criticism would come to be devoted to the way language sounds, above and beyond the subdivision of grammatical research into a special topic devoted to the voice (*peri phōnēs, de uoce*). Rhetoric was once again involved in this evolution, which brought with it an increasing isolation of the voice. We might compare Cicero: ‘For on the question of voice (*de uoce*) I am not yet speaking of points that concern delivery, but about a matter that seems to me to be connected with utterance as such,’ by which he means the mechanics of utterance,

1 Corinthians goes on to question the value of “kinds of tongues” (*genē glōssōn*, 1 Cor. 12:10) and speaks of tongues which are human and angelic (*tais glōssais tōn anthrōpōn kai aggelōn*, 1 Cor. 13:1). This phrase appears in a larger section of the letter concerned to argue that “there are a variety of gifts (*charismatōn*), but the same spirit” and “a variety of service roles (*diakoniōn*), but the same master,” and “a variety of activities, but the same God who activates all things in all” (1 Cor. 12:4–6).³⁰ Amidst a rhetoric of oneness, sameness, and building up,³¹ the letter also discloses the diversity of practices and activities. In fact, it ranks “gifts”:

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the assembly first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work powerful deeds? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. (1 Cor. 12:28–31)³²

The statements about a variety of gifts might have led the hearers to recollect the multiplicity and effervescence of *charismata* or gifts within their own community, but tongues come in dead last after deeds of power, healing, assistance, and forms of leadership.

What exactly is meant by “tongues” in 1 Corinthians? We can reach no certainty from our existing sources. 1 Corinthians only offers hints of the conceptualization of glossolalia.³³ Speaking “in a tongue” (*lalōn*

the regulation of the ‘tongue and breath and actual tone of voice (*uocis sonus . . . ipse*)’ (*On the Orator* 3.40–41; trans. Rackham).”

³⁰ 4 Διαίρέσεις δὲ χαρισμάτων εἰσὶν, τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα· 5 καὶ διαίρέσεις διακονιῶν εἰσιν, καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς κύριος· 6 καὶ διαίρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων εἰσιν, ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς θεὸς ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in all people.

³¹ 1 Corinthians emphasizes *oikodomē* and uses building metaphors, as do texts on rhetoric, indicating a shared discourse; see Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*. Porter states that “[a]rchitecture was a conventional analogue to verbal composition from the age of Pindar onwards” (“Rhetoric, Aesthetics, and the Voice,” 103).

³² 27 Ὑμεῖς δὲ ἔστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους. 28 Καὶ οὓς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήμψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν. 29 μὴ πάντες ἀπόστολοι; μὴ πάντες προφῆται; μὴ πάντες διδασκαλοί; μὴ πάντες δυνάμεις; 30 μὴ πάντες χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων; μὴ πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν; μὴ πάντες διερμηνεύουσιν; 31 ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μέζονα. Καὶ ἔτι καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῶν δείκνυμι.

³³ “Glossolalia” itself is a late invention in German (*die Glossolalie*); see Harkness, *Glossolalia*, 175–83. For a study of glossolalia in the U.K., see Mark J. Cartledge, *Charismatic Glossolalia: An empirical-theological study* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

glōssei) is related to “speaking mysteries” that are directed not to other humans but to God (1 Cor. 14:2).³⁴ Yuliya Minets refers to “experimenting” found in the “phraseology in 1 Corinthians 12–14.”³⁵ Sometimes the letter uses “tongue” (*glōssa*) in the singular and sometimes in the plural, sometimes it refers to “voice” or “language” (*phōnē*). The idea of tongues is also discussed in relation to the value or meaning of language (*tēn dynamin tēs phōnēs*, 1 Cor. 14:11) and often in terms of interpretation (*hermēneia*).³⁶

In a broader theorization of glossolalia, Michel de Certeau, as we have seen, would emphasize the joyfulness of glossolalia, not its denotational work.³⁷ Yet an early interpreter of 1 Corinthians and “kinds of tongues” changes the terminology of the letter to the Corinthians and conceptualizes tongues in terms of denotational languages. The Acts of the Apostles regularizes the phrase “speaking in tongues” (*glōssais lalein*) and offers a different imagination of these tongues: one of (what scholars call) heteroglossia or xenoglossia (speaking in different languages or other languages). Acts 2:3–4 reads: “Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with a holy spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the spirit gave them ability.”³⁸ The “devout Jews from every nation” who were in Jerusalem

³⁴ ὁ γὰρ λαλῶν γλώσση οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ ἀλλὰ θεῷ· οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει, πνεύματι δὲ λαλεῖ μυστήρια· For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in a spirit.

³⁵ Yuliya Minets, *Slow Fall of Babel: Languages and Identities in Late Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 170–77, quotation at 175; her chapter “Speaking in Tongues” provides sources from the second to the fifth centuries CE.

³⁶ 2 Cor. 12:3–4 offers the phrase “unspeakable words” (*arrēta rhemata*) in an account of being caught up into the “third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2):

3 And I know that such a person – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows – 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat, 3 καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον, εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν, 4 ὅτι ἡρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι.

³⁷ Certeau, “Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias,” 33: “This fiction of language does not cease to be taken for a language and treated as such. It is ceaselessly obliged ‘to mean’ something [‘vouloir dire’]. It excites an unwearying impulse to decrypt and to decipher that always supposes a meaningful organization behind the sequence of sounds. The history of glossolalia is made up almost entirely of interpretations that aim to make it speak in sentences and that claim to restore this vocal delinquency to an order of signifieds.”

³⁸ 3 καὶ ὤφθησαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμενοι γλώσσαις ὡσεὶ πυρὸς καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐφ’ ἑνα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, 4 καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθέγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς. On xenoglossia and glossolalia as interpreted at Azusa Street and beyond, see Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 210–17; he defines the “xenolalic as aimed toward ‘neoliberal’” ends (p. 221).

heard the apostles speaking in the varied languages of the nations (*dialektō*) (Acts 2:6). Elsewhere in the same text, Peter preaches to the gentile Cornelius and his companions, and the spirit comes upon them and they are heard “speaking in tongues and praising God” (*lalountōn glōssais kai megalunontōn ton theon*) (Acts 10:46). When Paul baptizes at Ephesus, “they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (*elaloun te glōssais kai eprophēteuon*, Acts 19:6). A similar idea of tongues, along with acts of casting out demons and handling snakes, appears in Mark 16:17–18, one of the variant endings of the Gospel of Mark: “they will speak in new tongues” (*glōssais lalēsousin kainais*).³⁹

Many have sought to find a context for 1 Corinthians’ mention of tongues in ecstatic speech associated with the god Apollo, for example in the speech of the Pythian prophetess that was then rendered by the priests at Delphi into Greek oracular poetry.⁴⁰ Alternatively, some link 1 Corinthians’ concerns regarding women’s hair and its mention of women praying and prophesying to madness and frenzy on the part of the *bacchantes* or followers of Dionysus. These arguments presume as correct Paul and Sosthenes’s characterizations of Corinthian speech as appearing “mad” (1 Cor. 14:12, *mainesthe*). Yet, there is no easy contemporaneous context to be found. Outside of the writings of Christ-followers, the phrase “to speak” is used with the word “tongue” (*glōssa* or *glōtta*) only in Achilles Tatius’s *Leucippe and Klitophon*, regarding the speech of someone inflamed by love or lust.⁴¹

³⁹ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 813; Minets, *Slow Fall*, 174.

⁴⁰ E.g., Minets, *Slow Fall*, 174.

⁴¹ Achilles Tatius 6.18.3: “Such is the way with lovers, when they try to talk with their girlfriends: they don’t let logic rule their words but rather, since their soul is entirely focused on the loved one, their tongue alone does the talking, unrestrained by its charioteer [i.e., guiding] logic.” (Translation John Winkler in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, ed. B. P. Reardon [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989], 257.) τοιοῦτοι γὰρ οἱ ἐρωῶντες, ὅταν πρὸς τὰς ἐρωμένας ζητήσωσι λαλεῖν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιστήσαντες τὸν λογισμὸν τοῖς λόγοις, ἀλλὰ τὴν ψυχὴν εἰς τὸ ἐρώμενον ἔχοντες, τῇ γλώττῃ μόνον χωρὶς ἡνιόχου τοῦ λογισμοῦ λαλοῦσιν. Greek ed: E. Vilborg, *Achilles Tatius. Leucippe and Klitophon* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1955). Pace Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and Its Hellenistic Environment* (WUNT 2.75; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 316, who states, “In the case of early Christian glossolalia I have argued that no convincing parallels whatsoever have been found within the traditions of Graeco-Roman religion, as they were known in the environment of the New Testament, whether it be at the level of terminology, phenomena or concept.”

A high valuation of tongues, particularly the tongues of angels, has sometimes been explained by the idea of a “communal mysticism”⁴² associated with first-century BCE worshippers at Qumran, who seem to have understood themselves as Jews who participated in angelic song and even worshipped in the presence of angels, a “liturgical communion”⁴³ evidenced in the *Hodayot* and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice.⁴⁴ It is

⁴² Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (Harvard Semitic Series 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 19; she suggests a 13-week liturgical cycle in the first part of the year, which draws the congregation into “quasi-mystical” experience through this song cycle. One of the underlying questions here is the pre-history of Merkabah mysticism; see Peter Schäfer, ed., “Communion with the Angels: Qumran and the Origins of Jewish Mysticism,” in *Wege mystischer Gotteserfahrung. Mystical Approaches to God: Judentum, Christentum und Islam. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Berlin: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2009), 37–66. Annette Yoshiko Reed (*Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020], 250–52) sees Jewish literature of the Hellenistic period as an “incubator” for later Jewish ideas of demons and angels, focusing on the perhaps second-century BCE Book of Jubilees for evidence of this and of the development of a “ritual theory” in antiquity. On the question of what language the angels speak, see John C. Poirier’s *The Tongues of Angels: The Concept of Angelic Languages in Classical Jewish and Christian Texts* (WUNT 2.287; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), esp. 47–56 on 1 Cor. 13:1; see also Minets, *Slow Fall*, 183–84.

⁴³ Schäfer, “Communion with the Angels: Qumran and the Origins of Jewish Mysticism,” 40, 48, 64. “The Qumran community conceives itself as a community of priests . . . who live in absolute cultic purity the members of the community regard themselves as being united with the angels In the *Hodayot* and related texts, emphasis is put on the liturgical communion with the angels, a major strand in the Qumran literature. There, the Qumran sectaries, when performing their privileged task of praising God, join in with the praise of the angels in heaven. Although the possibility cannot be excluded that they envisage the angels as being present among them during their worship, it is more likely that they regard themselves as standing together with the angels and intermingling with them in heaven” (p. 64). Later texts debate angelic language at the level of consonants and vowels: Birger Pearson (“Theurgic Tendencies,” *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, eds. Rich T. Wallis and Jay Bregman [Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern 6; Albany: SUNY Press, 1992], 266) cites *Marsanes* (NHC X,1), and then offers his analysis: “‘And [the] consonants exist with the vowels, and individually they are commanded and they submit (*hypotassein*). They constitute the nomenclature (*onomasia*) [of] the angels. And [the] consonants are self-existent, [and] as they are changed <they> submit to (*hypotassein*) the hidden gods by means of beat and pitch and silence and impulse.’ (30, 3–18) What appears to be said here, though, is that certain combinations of vowels and consonants, properly intoned, bring various gods and angels into subjection (even if the vowels, etc., are ‘subject to’ the gods and angels).”

⁴⁴ See e.g. IQHa XI19–23 (from the Thanksgiving Hymns or *Hodayot*), quoted in Schäfer, “Communion with the Angels,” 38, which presents themes of unity (*yahad*), spirit, community, and knowledge that have significant overlaps with concerns in 1 Corinthians. Janelle Peters (“Creation, Angels, and Gender in Paul, Philo, and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Open Theology* 7.1 [2021]: 248) suggests the significance of 4QInstruction to an understanding of gender, temple, creation, and angels in 1 Corinthians, but does not

difficult to trace lines of genealogical influence from Judea to Achaia, from Qumran to the community of *ethnē* (that is, the Gentiles, the nations) at Corinth who seek to affiliate with Christ and with Jews or *Ioudaioi*. Yet, this idea of angelic voice and song may have been part of the Corinthian context, part of their ritual understanding of their *ekklēsia* or assembly as otherwise possibility. Again, there is no easy contemporaneous evidence to contextualize the mention of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians.

SPEECH, VOICE, AND *PNEUMA*

Both at Qumran and at Corinth, as well as in oratorical and literary sources, experimentation with language and aesthetics was occurring. There was some sort of scat, some sort of improvisational voicing. As James I. Porter states in a discussion of Aristotle:

At its most extreme, focusing so intently on speech and writing as aesthetic phenomena worked to suspend considerations of logical structure, meaning, content, and morals altogether, clearing the way for a different kind of apprehension, one that depended upon an irrational grasp of the perceived phenomena of language, through the ear (*hē alogos aisthēsis*). The voice here was a continuum of breath, palpable and enjoyable per se.⁴⁵

Aristotle might not be immediately relevant to 1 Corinthians – why would this fourth-century BCE elite philosopher be? But the discourse of voice and aesthetics is folded forward into philosophical and practical oratorical discussions of the first century CE which were part of the milieu of the Corinthians and of Paul and Sosthenes. Dionysius of Halicarnassus's *On Composition* in the first century CE engages with technical precision in the topic of “speech and writing as aesthetic phenomena” and *pneuma* or breath. He stands within a larger movement in the Augustan period, in which writers were interested in what was *hyp-sos*, high or sublime, with relation to rhetoric.⁴⁶ Dionysius's discussion of

specify the mechanisms of intellectual exchange and implies that Paul uses ideas such as those in 4QInstruction to support women's authority. Minets sees a fourth-century CE decline in the association of glossolalia with angelic tongues (*Slow Fall of Babel*, 177).

⁴⁵ Porter, “Rhetoric, Aesthetics, and the Voice,” 101.

⁴⁶ Casper de Jonge has argued that Dionysius should be understood as part of this larger conversation on the sublime, and God or divinities and their sublimity, a conversation most associated with Longinus (“Dionysius and Longinus on the Sublime. Rhetoric and Religious Language,” *AJP* 133.2 [2012]: 271–300). On the sublime and nineteenth-century European discussions of aesthetics, see Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, 1–56.

composition and its performance tilts us toward a synesthetic ritual that includes management of gender and the mechanisms of the human body and *pneuma* producing speech. Composition in its “beautiful and attractive unified effect” (*De comp.* 6)⁴⁷ must guard against an arrangement of words that can be “precious, degenerate, effeminate” (*De comp.* 4).⁴⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus’s *synthesis* (“putting together” or “composition”) is lush with a vocabulary of aesthetics, focusing on and differentiating attractiveness (*hēdonē*) and beauty (*to kalon*). Its stated purpose is to give young people direction, to teach them so that they are not to utter “whatever word has sprung to an ill-timed tongue nor to put together at random any chance combinations, but to select words which are both pure and refined and to arrange them in a combination which unites grace and dignity” (*De comp.* 1).⁴⁹ Yet the little book does so much more, revealing judgments regarding what is rough or problematic in language and how this too can be used to aesthetic effect.

Dionysius begins with the Homeric passage in which Odysseus stays in the swineherd’s hut. Its lowly theme and vocabulary allow Dionysius to demonstrate that what is rough and everyday can be composed to “allure and enchant the ear, and rank second to no poetry whatsoever, even the most attractive of all” (*De comp.* 3).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ καλὴν καὶ ἡδεῖαν. . . συζυγίαν. All Greek and translations of Dionysius, unless otherwise noted, are from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Critical Essays, Volume II: On Literary Composition. Dinarchus. Letters to Ammaeus and Pompeius* (trans. Stephen Usher; LCL 466; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), here 54–55.

⁴⁸ μικρόκομψον, ἀγεννές, μαλθακόν.

⁴⁹ Trans. Usher, LCL 466, pp. 16–17; εἰ μέλλουσι μὴ πᾶν ὅ τι κεν ἐπ’ ἀκαιρίαν γλώσσαν ἔπος ἔλθῃ λέγειν μηδ’ εἰκῇ συνθήσειν τὰ προστυχόντα ἀλλήλοις, ἀλλ’ ἐκλογῇ τε χρῆσσεσθαι καθαρῶν ὅμα καὶ γενναίων ὀνομάτων καὶ συνθήσει ταῦτα κοσμήσειν μεμιγμένον ἐχούσῃ τῷ σεμνῷ τὸ ἡδύ. Dionysius used to be thought an author whose primary utility lay in the preservation of earlier sources: Casper C. de Jonge, *Between Grammar and Rhetoric: Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Language, Linguistics and Literature* (Mnemosyne Supplements 301; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 3–6.

⁵⁰ Trans. Usher, LCL 466, pp. 28–29; μὲν ἐπάγεται καὶ κηλεῖ τὰς ἀκοᾷς ποιημάτων τε τῶν πάνυ ἡδίστων οὐδενὸς ἥττω μοῖραν ἔχει. On Homeric style and Longinus, Porter writes (*The Sublime in Antiquity*, 148): “Homer’s interest, Longinus says, is in the ‘most savage aspects’ of these storms (τὰ χαλεπώτατα, 10.3), though these, too, are further kairiōtata (10.1). Kairiōtata is a rich and ambivalent term. On the one hand it designates moments of near-mortal wounding and close brushes with death. . . . [Longinus writes:] ‘Homer always selects (ἐκλαμβάνει) the most savage [or ‘terrifying’] aspects’ (10.3).” David Konstan (“Beauty,” in *Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*, eds. Pierre Destrée and Penelope Murray [Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015], 371) brings together *synthesis* and human symmetry, alongside language of magic and aesthetics (*kallos*): “But the major treatises on style, for example by Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Hermogenes of Tarsus, make it clear that stylistic beauty resides in the combination or *synthesis* of the words,

The whole passage is woven together from the most commonplace, humble words, such as might have come readily to the tongue of a farmer, seaman or artisan, or anyone else who takes no trouble to speak well. Indeed, if the metre is broken up, these very same lines will appear ordinary and unworthy of admiration What alternative, therefore, is left but to attribute the beauty of the style to the composition? (*De comp.* 3)⁵¹

Dionysius is not the only ancient literary critic to note this; Longinus too thinks (in James Porter's words) that "Homer does violence to language, nearly crushing the words to the point of obliterating their function."⁵² Curses, too, contain commonplace vocabulary and words that crush, both in their sound and in their content; they are aesthetically and emotionally powerful. Dionysius also goes on to explain that arrangement and meter have power to change "the structure, the colors, the customs, the feelings, and the entirety of poetics" (*De comp.* 37).⁵³ Dionysius's analysis is synesthetic; the customary and affective – *ta ethē*, *ta pathē* – are entangled with the formal and the colorful.⁵⁴

Dionysius's *On composition* creates a taxonomy of kinds of composition and appropriate styles, demonstrating how these work in both poetry and prose, and arguing that the human voice should be understood in light of song and music (*De comp.* 11). In this he participates in the broader discussion of and debate over the three (or more) styles: "the sublime (*megaloprepeia*), the middle (*glaphuros* or *apheleia*), and the low (*tapeinos*)."⁵⁵ Yet Dionysius, even in his discussions of what is disruptive to what is pleasant or beautiful (e.g. *De comp.* 11), hints at the *power* of disruption, the aesthetics of the rough.

and in fact relate such harmonious composition to the symmetry of the human form. . . . Speeches, after all, were imagined as exercising a quasi-magical power over their audiences, an ability to overcome reason not by the strict logic of their arguments but by their sonorousness and related stylistic effects." See also David Konstan, *Beauty: The Fortunes of an Ancient Greek Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), esp. 144–60 on the comparison of the beauty of the human form and the beauty of speech.

⁵¹ Trans. Usher, LCL 466, pp. 28–29; διὰ γὰρ τῶν εὐτελεστάτων καὶ ταπεινοτάτων ὀνομάτων πέπλεκται πᾶσα ἡ λέξις, οἷς ἂν καὶ γεωργὸς καὶ θαλαττοργὸς καὶ χειροτέχνης καὶ πᾶς ὁ μηδεμίαν ὥραν τοῦ λέγειν εὖ ποιούμενος ἐξ ἐτοίμου λαβὼν ἐχρήσατο. λυθέντος γοῦν τοῦ μέτρου φασὶα φανήσεται τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἄλλα . . . τί οὖν λείπεται μὴ οὐχὶ τὴν σύνθεσιν τοῦ κάλλους τῆς ἐρμηνείας αἰτιάσθαι.

⁵² Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, 153.

⁵³ My translation. τὰ σχήματα, τὰ χρώματα, τὰ ἦθη, τὰ πάθη, τὴν ὅλην τῶν ποιημάτων

⁵⁴ Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, 3–7; De Jonge, "Dionysius and Longinus on the Sublime," 271–300.

⁵⁵ Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, 14.

In Dionysius's work, what is pleasant or beautiful in speech is intertwined with gender and timbre. The gendered prejudices of Dionysius, who worries about degenerate and effeminate speech, might remind us of 1 Cor. 14:33a–36, which argues for women's silence in the *ekklēsia* or 1 Corinthians 11's work to restrict women's speech in prayer and prophecy. This intertwining of gender and speech is particularly clear in stories about the "double-natured and male-female" (*diphuēs... kai androthēlus*) orator Favorinus made in the city of Corinth.⁵⁶ As Maud Gleason detailed in her *Making Men*, Favorinus and Paul both present themselves as engaged in self-transformation.⁵⁷ Favorinus is characterized by his opponent Polemo as flaccid, moist, slack, with "a voice resembling the voice of women and slim lips."⁵⁸ Philostratus describes him this way: "he tuned his tongue a bit freely (*aneimenōs*), but also learnedly (*sophōs*) and pleasantly (*potimōs*)" (*Vit. soph.* I.20).⁵⁹ In both cases you hear the aesthetic evaluation: Polemo points to the flaccid, too movement-filled body; Philostratus uses ambiguous adverbs like *aneimenōs*, "freely" or "carelessly;" contrasted with the *sophōs*, such terminology insults those who were considered smooth talkers, who offered a trickling flow (*potimōs*) of words. Such rhetors could convince you of anything if you weren't careful.

⁵⁶ Philostratus *Vit. soph.* I.16. The conversation about sexual practices and sexual identities in antiquity has advanced considerably since the usual translation of *androthēlus* as "hermaphrodite." See e.g. Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Gleason, "Deportment as Language: Physiognomy and the Semiotics," in *Making Men*, 55–81; and Gillian Townsley, *The Straight Mind in Corinth: Queer Readings across 1 Corinthians 11:2–16* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017); Marchal, *Appalling Bodies*, esp. 29–65; see also p. 206 nn. 9–10 below.

⁵⁷ Gleason, *Making Men*, 17; Cavan Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles": *Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 36–44. Maud Gleason (*Making Men*, 83) offers an analysis of Dio Chrysostom's First Tarsian oration: "Suppose an entire community were struck by the following peculiar affliction: all the males suddenly acquired women's voices and no one, whether boy or adult, was able to say anything in manly fashion. Would that not seem unbearable – worse, indeed, than any plague?" [Dio *Or.* 33.38.] Yet even this, he argues, would be easier to bear than the present situation. "The Tarsian snort is worse than men speaking with women's voices because it is the sort of sound that belongs to gender indeterminates (*androgynoi*). Indeed, it befits the castrated!"

⁵⁸ Translation in Robert Hoyland, "A New Edition and Translation of the Leiden Polemon," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, ed. Simon Swain (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 377 (Leiden Polemon A20).

⁵⁹ My translation. "Ἡρμοσταὶ δὲ τὴν γλῶτταν ἀνεμένως μὲν, σοφῶς δὲ καὶ ποτῖμως. ἐλέγετο δὲ σὺν εὐροῖα σχεδιάσαι.

Sexual identity and voice are intertwined. The conflict between Favorinus and Polemo is a well-known example of the connection between the regulation of speech and the regulation of gender norms. Both 1 Corinthian's discussion of wo/men's speech and ancient discussions regarding Favorinus "aim to prescribe certain embodied practices as natural. The need to cite, repeat, and even imitate the arguments made in this text indicate their continuing instability, the possibilities for claims about nature to function in ways besides naturalization," in Joseph Marchal's words. (Incorrect) speech can signal the confusion of gender roles.⁶⁰

In the invective against Favorinus, gender trouble is compounded with hints of incantation and magic. Philostratus states:

When he delivered discourses in Rome, the interest in them was universal, so much so that even those in his audience who did not understand the Greek language shared in the pleasure that he gave; for he fascinated even them by the tones of his voice, by his expressive glance and the rhythm of his speech. They were also enchanted by the epilogue of his orations, which they called "The Ode," though I call it ostentatious. . . (*Vit. soph.* I.20–21)⁶¹

⁶⁰ Marchal, *Appalling Bodies*, 34, who also engages Judith Butler's theories regarding gender and performativity. Gleason (*Making Men*, 68) notes that Dio Chrysostom, in his first Tarsian oration, writes: "For you must not think that the notes of songs or pipes and lyre reveal sometimes masculinity (*to andreion*), sometimes femininity (*to thēlu*), but that movements and actions do not vary according to sex and afford no clue to it" (33.52). Dio called effeminate mannerisms *symbola* because masculine deportment and grooming habits constituted a system of social communication. According to Clement of Alexandria, one man is entitled to 'read' another's grooming habits in the manner of a physiognomist. The details he observes function as oracular signs to reveal unseen behavior: 'Just like a physiognomist, he can divine from their appearance that they are adulterers and effeminates, who go hunting for both kinds of sex. . . .' (*Paidagogos*, 3.15.2)."

⁶¹ Διαλεγόμενου δὲ αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν Ῥώμην μεστὰ ἦν σπουδῆς πάντα, καὶ γὰρ δὴ καὶ ὅσοι τῆς Ἑλλήνων φωνῆς ἀξύνετοι ἦσαν, οὐδὲ τούτοις ἄφ' ἡδονῆς ἢ ἀκρόασις ἦν, ἀλλὰ κάκεινους ἔθελγε τῇ τε ἡχῇ τοῦ φθέγματος καὶ τῷ σημαίνοντι τοῦ βλέμματος καὶ τῷ 492 ῥυθμῷ τῆς γλώττης. ἔθελγε δὲ αὐτοὺς τοῦ λόγου καὶ τὸ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν, ὃ ἐκείνοι μὲν ᾠδὴν ἐκάλουν, ἐγὼ δὲ φιλοτιμίαν. . . Philostratus, Eunapius. *Lives of the Sophists*. Eunapius: *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists* (trans. Wilmer C. Wright; LCL 134; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 27–28. Gleason goes on to suggest the incantatory power of Favorinus's rhetoric (*Making Men*, 19): "Then Favorinus announces, 'I wish therefore to address him [a statue of himself] as if he were a sensate being. 'O silent image of my eloquence, are you not plain to see?' The sonorous cadences of the Greek must have had a sensational incantatory effect in performance: *O logōn emōn sigēlon eidōlon, ou phainē?*" She refers to M. Goggin, "Rhythm in the Prose of Favorinus," *Yale Classical Studies* 12 (1951): 149–201, esp. 153–55.

A tongue so pleasurable that it sounded like song: the Greek words *ēchē tou phthegmatos* (“tones of his voice”) are more often applied to inarticulate sound, to bird song or animal noises, than to human speech. The passage includes enchantment; the verb *thelgein* (“fascinated”) is often applied to the making of spells. While Philostratus simultaneously praises and critiques, Polemo directly accuses Favorinus of magic:

He had learnt the Greek language and its discourse by virtue of speaking a great deal, and he was called a sophist. . . . He was also a deceitful magician, and would swindle, telling people that he could give life and bring death, and thereby he would dupe a group of people until the crowds of women and men around him increased. He would tell the men that he had the power to compel women to come to them, and likewise the men to the women. He would corroborate that by his words about the occult. He was a leader in evil and a teacher of it. He would collect kinds of fatal poisons. . . .⁶²

Polemo's *Physiognomy*, at least as it comes to us through the Arabic, offers a Favorinus who is a magician and cheat, hawking not only his words but also ritual objects and goods: charms of compulsion (often called erotic charms) and *pharmaka*.⁶³

In writings about ancient rhetoric, it is the rhetorically adept, able, masculinized body that produces the best sorts of sound and that cannot be accused of deceit or magic. Even this privileged body, however, must operate within the peculiarities of sound and its concatenation into language. As we learned in the interlude, Dionysius talks about the beauty of the seven vowels and how they are “produced from the windpipe, which resounds to the breath” (*De comp.* 14) with the tongue at rest. The vowels are measured by breath: the long vowels (Η Ω) and sometimes the ancipital vowels (Α Ι Υ) “take an extended and continuous column of breath (*tonaulon tou pneumatos*), while the short vowels [Ε Ο] and those which are pronounced short are uttered abruptly, with one burst of breath and only a brief movement of the windpipe” (*De comp.* 14).⁶⁴ Most powerful and

⁶² Hoyland, “A New Edition and Translation of the Leiden Polemon,” 379. Similar invective is found in heresiological texts; Christians criticized other Christians, using polemical language laced with accusations of magic and gender deviance.

⁶³ See Gleason, *Making Men*, 17: “We are reminded of Polemo’s claim that Favorinus was actually an erotic magician, whose spells could compel sexual desire at will. This eunuch’s sexuality is his rhetoric. If the Corinthians had willingly exposed their wives and children to the latter, how can they fairly criticize him for the former? Especially since Corinth is of all cities the most favored of Aphrodite: *epaphroditotatē* (34). Favorinus is slyly calling the kettle black.”

⁶⁴ *De comp.* 14, LCL 466, pp. 94–95. παρά τῆς ἀρτηρίας συνηχοῦσης τῷ πνεύματι. . . . πλὴν τὰ μὲν μακρὰ καὶ τῶν διχρόνων ἃ μακρῶς λέγεται τεταμένον λαμβάνει καὶ διηνεκῇ τὸν αὐλὸν

attractive are long vowels and long-uttered common vowels because they do not “arrest the flow of the breath” (*De comp.* 14).⁶⁵

Yet even Dionysius, in his discussion of the “austere style,” knows that ugliness has its uses – its own aesthetics. He uses the master-aesthete Homer as his example, providing poetic lines that give evidence:

Now when Homer, the poet with the most voices of all, wishes to portray the freshness of a comely countenance and a beauty that brings delight, you will find him using the finest of the vowels and the softest of the semivowels, and not crowding his syllables with voiceless letters, nor destroying the flow of sound by juxtaposing words which are hard to pronounce. He will make the arrangement of the letters sound gentle, and make it flow through the ear without offending it. . . . But when he is introducing a scene that is pitiable, frightening or august, he will not employ the finest of the vowels, but will take <the most unpleasant-sounding and> those of the fricatives and the voiceless consonants that are the most difficult to pronounce and crowd his syllables with these. . . . (*De comp.* 16)⁶⁶

For each of these insights, Dionysius gives exegetical evidence from the dactylic hexameter of Homer’s lines. For example, he writes:

When men are being dashed against rocks, and he is portraying the noise and their pitiable fate, he will dwell on the most unpleasant and ill-sounding letters, nowhere attempting to make the arrangement smooth or attractive:

τοῦ πνεύματος, τὰ δὲ βραχέα ἢ βραχέως λεγόμενα ἐξ ἀποκοπῆς τε καὶ μιᾷ πληγῇ πνεύματος καὶ τῆς ἁρτηρίας ἐπὶ βραχὺ κινηθείσης ἐκφέρεται. *Ton aulon tou pneumatos* could also be translated a bit more fancifully as “the flute of the spirit”; that is, the phrase has musical resonance and the term *pneuma* reminds us of concerns in 1 Corinthians about spirit and *pneumatika*. See longer quotation in the Interlude, p. 139.

⁶⁵ *De comp.* 14, LCL 466, pp. 94–97. ὅτι πολὺν ἡχέεται χρόνον καὶ τὸν τοῦ πνεύματος οὐκ ἀποκόπτει τόνον. For example, Dionysius states that some semivowels (*hemiphōnōn*) which are doubled are “are ampler than the others and seem nearer to perfect letters” (*De comp.* 14, LCL 466, pp. 98–99, ἐπειδὴ μείζονά ἐστι τῶν ἐτέρων καὶ μᾶλλον ἐγγίζειν δοκεῖ τοῖς τελείοις καὶ μᾶλλον ἐγγίζειν δοκεῖ τοῖς τελείοις).

⁶⁶ LCL 466, pp. 116–117. ὁ δὲ πολυφωνότατος ἀπάντων ποιητῶν Ὅμηρος, ὅταν μὲν ὦραν ὄψεως εὐμόρφου καὶ κάλλους ἡδονῆς ἐπαγωγὸν ἐπιδείξασθαι βούληται, τῶν τε φωνηέντων τοῖς κρατίστοις χρήσεται καὶ τῶν ἡμιφώνων τοῖς μαλακωτάτοις, καὶ οὐ καταπικνύνει τοῖς ἀφώνοις τὰς συλλαβὰς οὐδὲ συγκόψει τοὺς ἤχους παρατιθεὶς ἀλλήλοις τὰ δυσέκφορα, πρᾶξιαν δὲ τινα ποιήσει τὴν ἁρμονίαν τῶν γραμμάτων καὶ ρέουσιν ἀλύτως διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς. . . . ὅταν δ’ οἰκτρὰν ἢ φοβερὰν ἢ ἀγέρωχον ὄψιν εἰσάγῃ, τῶν τε φωνηέντων οὐ τὰ κράτιστα θήσει ἀλλὰ <τὰ δυσηχέστατα, καὶ> τῶν ψοφοειδῶν ἢ ἀφώνων τὰ δυσεκφορώτατα λήψεται καὶ καταπικνύνει τούτοις τὰς συλλαβὰς.

A pair of them he snatched and dashed, like puppies on the ground.
 Their brains flowed freely on the floor and incarnadined the rocks. (*De comp.* 16)⁶⁷

The unpleasant and the ugly do their own aesthetic work: letters, syllables, and rhythms can bring the hearer into violence and war. Homer is the most multi-voiced (*polyphōnotatos*), as Dionysius puts it.

Dionysius's discussion brings us to new sensitivity to 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians contains a preponderance of language of *pneuma*, or spirit; tongues are in fact one of the *pneumatika* or spiritual things or spiritual gifts at stake, particularly in 1 Corinthians 11–14. I want to pause here on the topic of breath or spirit, *pneuma*.⁶⁸ The term should be understood not in relation to later Christian ideas regarding a singular Holy Spirit, but in relation to contemporaneous ideas regarding spirits and *daimones*. 1 Corinthians not only centrally treats spirit and spiritual things (*pneuma* and *pneumatika*), but also refers to *daimones* four times within two verses (10:20–21), the only use of *daimōn* terminology in the undisputed letters of Paul and his co-writers. Giovanni Bazzana, Jennifer Eyl, and J. Z. Smith, among others, have contextualized 1 Corinthians within contemporaneous practices of spirit-possession cults and/or ancestral cults.⁶⁹ Others have understood *pneuma* in relation to Stoic philosophical ideas of material spirit and medical ideas of a *pneuma* which infuses the blood and aerates the pores.⁷⁰ As Gleason puts it,

⁶⁷ LCL 466, pp. 118–19. ἀραττομένων δὲ περὶ πέτρας ἀνθρώπων ψόφον τε καὶ μόνον οἰκτρὸν ἐπιδεικνύμενος ἐπὶ τῶν ἀηδεστῶν τε καὶ κακοφωνοτάτων χρονιεῖ γραμμάτων οὐδαμῇ λεαίνων τὴν κατασκευὴν οὐδὲ ἡδύνων·

σὺν τε δύω μάρψας ὥστε σκύλακας προτὶ γαῖῃ
 κόπτ· ἐκ δ' ἐγκέφαλος χαμάδις ῥέει, δεῦε δὲ
 γαῖαν.

⁶⁸ Note that while the word *pnoë* often denotes breath, Dionysius uses *pneuma* as well to denote breath, or that which is pushed through the trachea to produce sound.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, “Re: Corinthians,” in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 340–61. There is no place in this chapter for a detailed discussion of *pneuma*, a very important term in 1 Corinthians, esp. chaps. 1–4, indicating that Paul participates in a conversation dominated by Corinthian interest in *pneuma*. Scholars have contextualized this *pneuma* in spirit possession (e.g., Bazzana, *Having the Spirit of Christ*), or divination (Eyl, *Signs and Wonders*), or Stoic philosophical engagements (e.g., Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], esp. 8–38). For a study of *pneuma* and its importance in producing charismatic Catholic Christian bodies in Brazil via “Jesus aerobics,” see Maria José de Abreu, *The Charismatic Gymnasium: Breath, Media, and Religious Revivalism in Contemporary Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

⁷⁰ Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 39–74.

Though medical sects differed in the ways they conceptualized the factors that maintained or disrupted this well-balanced bodily constitution, they took for granted the importance of *pneuma* and the existence of humors. *Pneuma*, drawn in by the breath and also by the pores, supports the body's vital heat. As an animating principle, it is far more than just 'air.' It is the vital principle associated with the soul, with semen, and with the higher forms of intelligence.⁷¹

While scholars have attended to *pneuma*'s significance to possession phenomena, medical literature, and philosophical literature as contexts for the interpretation of 1 Corinthians, the significance of *pneuma* for speech itself has not been highlighted. In this technical section of Dionysius's treatise, details regarding the windpipe, breath (*pneuma*), the mouth, the teeth indicate a focus on the aesthetic value of letters or *grammata* as these emerge from the human body's performance of these sonics.

This interest in the body and its sounds, the breath and its power, and the aesthetics of clash and ugliness is not found in Dionysius alone, or in concerns about literature alone. Antyllus (embedded within the later writings of Oribasius) writes a medical treatise in the second century CE, which additionally shows awareness of status and class. The treatise recommends vocal exercises (Greek: *anaphōnēsis*, Latin: *declamatio*) as healthful.⁷² The best exercise is the declamation of epic verse, then iambs, third elegy, fourth lyric poetry. Such exercises assume that the educated sufferer will have memorized some of these materials: "but let the one who is not ignorant of *paideia* vocalize what s/he has memorized, also what is considered refined, also such things as have many transformations between both extreme smoothness and extreme roughness" (Oribasius 6.9).⁷³ Note the aesthetic qualities; "refined" or *glaphuros* is one of the three well-known categories of style which Demosthenes, Quintilian, Longinus, and others discuss.⁷⁴ Antyllus medically prescribes vocal transitions between the smooth and the rough.

⁷¹ Gleason, *Making Men*, 85.

⁷² Gleason, *Making Men*, 88. Antyllus's treatise is embedded within a fourth-century CE compilation of Oribasius (6.7–9).

⁷³ ἀναφωνεῖτω δ' ὁ μὲν οὐκ ἀπειρος παιδείας ἃ μέμνηται, καὶ ἃ δοκεῖ γλαφυρὰ εἶναι, καὶ ὅσα πολλὰς μεταβολὰς ἔχει λειότητός τε καὶ τραχύτητος. My translation; Greek edition is Charles Daremberg, *Oeuvres d'Oribase: texte grec, en grande partie inédit, collationné sur les manuscrits* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière & fils, 1851), 451. See also discussion at Gleason, *Making Men*, 87–89.

⁷⁴ Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, 14; see also Gleason, *Making Men*, 89 n. 40. Konstan ("Beauty," 378) explains a longer history of debate and demonstrates how gender and gendered invective is bound up in aesthetic debates: "Quintilian, indeed, says that those

This medical prescription of oratorical or rhetorical vocalization for all sorts of problems, including digestion, relies on theories of the body that intersect with theories of rhetoric and composition. Another of Oribasius's sources (6.10) claims that these vocal declamations provide "sure health and longevity": "By *pneuma* every *phōnē* [voice] comes to be controlled and molded according to inhalation and exhalation" (6.10).⁷⁵ It is the *pneuma* that produces the good or bad (*aretas kai kakias*) qualities of the voice, even as it is important that "the tongue, the palate, the teeth, the lips" are actively harmonious together and that the *pneuma* diffuses throughout "the thorax and stomach and the *poroi* of the entire flesh" (6.10).⁷⁶

These medical sources reveal that speaking and reading are understood to be bodily activities which require *askēseis* or exercises and which produce health.⁷⁷ If this breathy obsession with vocal gymnastics seems odd to us, it evidently wasn't in antiquity. The topic of the voice and

speakers who put the choice of words ahead of content do so, as they imagine, for the sake of beauty (decor), but in fact this kind of transparent and gaudy elocution, like women's clothing, feminizes whatever is clothed in such attire (*Institutio oratoria* 8. pr.18–20); prettiness in oratory risks sounding like harlotry." On discussions of style in antiquity, see also Porter (*The Sublime in Antiquity*, 246–51), who explains that Demetrius discusses four forms of style: "four part system of styles (χαρακτήρες): plain (ἰσχυρός), grand (μεγαλοπρεπής), elegant or charming (γλαφθρός), forceful (δεινός)" (p. 249). The latter, *to deinon*, has special resonances with some curses, in its use of vehemence, shock, and fear.

⁷⁵ ὑπὸ πνεύματος γίνεται πᾶσα φωνή κατ' ἀναπνοὴν καὶ ἐκπνοὴν ταμειομένου καὶ τυπωθέντος. My translation; ed. Daremberg, *Oeuvres d'Oribase*, 452–53. Oribasius's source is unnamed and cannot be dated.

⁷⁶ ἐπεὶ τοίνυν ἡ εἰς ἡμᾶς ὁλκή τοῦ πνεύματος διασπασμένου τοῦ τε θώρακος καὶ τῆς κοιλίας καὶ τῶν καθ' ὅλην τὴν σάρκα πόρων γίνεται. My translation; ed. Daremberg, *Oeuvres d'Oribase*, 456. See 6.10.10–11 on the voices of women, children, eunuchs; see also discussion in Gleason, *Making Men*, 90. On pores and *pneuma* in antiquity, see Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 17–18. On the pores and *pneuma* and health and spiritual well-being, see the discussion of the Byzantine techniques of prayer and the physical exercises promulgated by bodybuilder and priest Marcelo Rossi in Sao Paulo, Brazil (de Abreu, *Charismatic Gymnasium*, 109–27). This multi-media propagation of pneumatic spirituality, formed in part as the Roman Catholic church competes with Protestant forms of Pentecostalism for Christian followers in Brazil, falls short of the use of glossolalia (see pp. 120–22). Steroid-taking Padre Marcelo is characterized by de Abreu as aiming at an identity as "Saint Paul on steroids" (p. 111). De Abreu's chapter "The Aerobics of Jesus" discusses the significance of goosebumps as evidencing the *pneuma* (see esp. p. 110 on the significance of skin). Pores and *pneuma* are linked both in the medical literature of antiquity and in instantiations of pneumatic Christianity in twenty-first century CE Brazil, perhaps genealogically transmitted through engagement with fourth-century and following Christian theological writings regarding *askēseis* and *hesychiasm* (p. 109).

⁷⁷ Gleason, *Making Men*, 90.

breath occurs not only in Dionysius as he writes about composition or in Oribasius who, via his sources, studies health. Plutarch too discusses healthful experimentation with the voice, which should include “gentle massage to diffuse to the extremities the *pneuma* ingested during vocal exercises.”⁷⁸ The medical writer Soranus, it seems, indicated that vocal exercises could be flexibly prescribed, each script attuned to the status differences of the sufferer, who should have an audience during their vocal exercise (*anaphōnēsis*): “If the patient is unacquainted with literature, give him problems appropriate to his particular skill: agricultural problems for a farmer, navigational problems for a sea captain. And if he is without any skill whatsoever, give him questions on commonplace matters, or let him play checkers.”⁷⁹ Gleason explicitly connects these vocal exercises with ritual practices:

The idea of vocal exercise being therapeutic for both body and soul, as it were, may appear less startling if we recall the importance of the voice in magical and religious practice. The intoning of the seven Greek vowel sounds was ubiquitous in magical ritual; under a paranoid emperor, a person caught chanting the vowels in the public baths to soothe a stomach complaint might find himself accused of treason. Orphic and Pythagorean convictions about the power of music in the soul and in the cosmos encouraged some men to believe that attempts to reproduce the music of the spheres with the lyre and with the voice could assist the soul. . .⁸⁰

If it is impossible to talk about speech and voice without talking about *pneuma* and the appropriate exercises for the diffusion of *pneuma*, it is also impossible to talk about speech and *phōnē* without thinking about gender. There are rules to these vocal exercises, which, produced through *pneuma*, should include high notes but not too often; the lower register is more aesthetically pleasing.⁸¹ Women’s speech is often characterized as chatter (*lalein*) rather than talk (*legein*) and Musonius Rufus, advocating women’s philosophical education, argues against those who say that women who attend philosophical talks might become too bold, trying themselves to declaim and to talk like sophists (Musonius Rufus 3.6).⁸²

⁷⁸ Gleason, *Making Men*, 92, discussing Plutarch *Mor.* 130A–F.

⁷⁹ Found in a Latin translation of a now-lost second century CE treatise of Soranus: Caelius Aurelianus, *On Chronic Diseases* 1.162–65, in Gleason, *Making Men*, 93.

⁸⁰ Gleason, *Making Men*, 93.

⁸¹ Although not if that register is forced. Gleason, *Making Men*, 91–92.

⁸² Musonius Rufus 3.6: “But, by Zeus, some say that women who associate with philosophers are generally headstrong and brash, when they abandon their house-keeping and go around in public with men and practice arguments, act like sophists, and analyze syllogisms” (trans. Cynthia King: Musonius Rufus, *Musonius Rufus: Lectures and Sayings* [United States: CreateSpace, 2011], 29). Gleason, *Making Men*,

Elite, educated forms of speech might be dangerously contagious and inappropriate for women; low forms of speech, including those of women and foreigners and those of “low character,” could be dangerous for men.⁸³ Yet what was so confusing was that men with higher voices, or liquid tones, or even sing-song, could be so vocally attractive. Favorinus, labelled as male-female (*androthulē*), was a case in point.⁸⁴ Women’s speech was trivialized, yet speaking like a woman was paradoxically attractive. We know that women’s speech in prophecy in the Corinthian community was subject to some regulation; they are required to wear veils, according to chapter 11, and in 1 Cor. 14:34–35, women are relegated to silence in the *ekklēsia*.

1 Corinthians ranks *charismata* or gifts: “And God has appointed in the assembly first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28).⁸⁵ Speaking in tongues, *glōssais lalousin*, is ranked last,⁸⁶ and 1 Cor. 13:1 relegates both human and angelic tongues – and, presumably, the knowledge to which they are attached – to nothing, compared to love. This ranking has aesthetic overtones. Glossolalia can make your neighbors think that you rave (1 Cor. 14:22–23). 1 Corinthians 14 explains:

7 It is the same way with lifeless instruments that produce sound, such as the flute or the lyre. If they do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know the flute-playing or the lyre-playing? What is being played? 8 And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? 9 So also yourselves: if in a tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is being said? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are doubtless many different kinds of sounds in the cosmos, and nothing is without sound. 11 If then I do not know the meaning of a sound, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.⁸⁷

98–99; see also Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles* (BZNW 164; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009).

⁸³ Gleason, *Making Men*, 100. ⁸⁴ Gleason, *Making Men*, 101.

⁸⁵ Καὶ οὗς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήμψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν.

⁸⁶ See Laura Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (HTS 52; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 61–94 and “1 Corinthians,” in *The Letters and Legacy of Paul: Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition*, eds. Margaret Aymer et al. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2016), 456–59.

⁸⁷ 7 ὅμως τὰ ἄψυχα φωνὴν δίδόντα, εἴτε αὐλὸς εἴτε κιθάρα, ἐὰν διαστολὴν τοῖς φθόγγοις μὴ δῶ, πῶς γνωσθήσεται τὸ αὐλούμενον ἢ τὸ κιθαριζόμενον; 8 καὶ γὰρ ἐὰν ἀδηλον σάλπιγξ φωνὴν δῶ, τίς παρασκευάζεται εἰς πόλεμον; 9 οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς διὰ τῆς γλώσσης ἐὰν μὴ εὖσημον λόγον δῶτε,

Concerns about tongues, prophecy, and *pneumatika* (spiritual things) at the *ekklēsia* at Corinth developed in the midst of debates about women's speech (1 Corinthians 11) and about *pneuma* or spirit and whether the Corinthians had attained to the status of "spiritual people" (1 Corinthians 1–4).⁸⁸ But these concerns about tongues also draw from aesthetics: the intelligibility and utility of articulate sound, as well as the acknowledgement of the cosmos's many different sounds or voices. Patricia Cox Miller connects the authority of speaking in tongues and the unruly outbreaks of vowels that we find in texts like the *Eighth Book of Moses*, which is included among the Greek magical papyri:

Writing to his unruly congregation in Corinth, some of whom felt that their utopia was not only not inaccessible but fully present, Paul felt compelled to warn them about the dangers of the spiritual language that they were speaking. The kingdom was showing itself in Corinthian worship in the form of glossolalia, that speaking "in the tongues of angels" which the "swarms" of alphabetical combinations we have just seen attempt to represent in writing.⁸⁹

Even as I disagree with Cox Miller's characterization of the Corinthian assembly as Paul's or as unruly, she beautifully connects Corinthian glossolalia with contemporaneous linguistic experimentation.

STUTTERING AND TONGUES

People in antiquity were experiencing and debating the mechanics and aesthetics of speech. In 1 Cor.inthians 12:28 tongues or *glōssai* are evidently downgraded, listed last among the *charismata* or spiritual gifts; 1 Corinthians 14 even points to *glōssai* as potentially dangerous. While Acts 2 seems to mold the phenomenon of 1 Corinthians into something more palatable, using the term *heteroglossia* and describing a scene in

πῶς γνωσθήσεται τὸ λαλούμενον; ἔσεσθε γὰρ εἰς ἀέρα λαλοῦντες. 10 τοσαῦτα εἰ τυχὸι γένη φωνῶν εἰσιν ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ οὐδὲν ἄφωνον· 11 ἐὰν οὖν μὴ εἰδῶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς φωνῆς, ἔσομαι τῷ λαλοῦντι βάρβαρος καὶ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ βάρβαρος.

⁸⁸ See Ekaputra Tupamahu, "I Don't Want to Hear Your Language!," *White Social Imagination and the Demography of Roman Corinth*, *The Bible and Critical Theory* 16.1 (2020): 64–91, on multilingualism and struggles with a dominant language, esp. at p. 79; see also idem, *Contesting Languages: Heteroglossia and the Politics of Language in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

⁸⁹ Patricia Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 484.

which people hear their own language(s) as apostles speak,⁹⁰ Paul and Sosthenes, in the earlier text of 1 Corinthians, are unclear about precisely what's going on linguistically. They offer judgments: this glossolalia needs interpretation (12:10; 14:5, 13), can make your neighbors think you are mad (14:23), and is lowly among the *charismata* (12:28), even as it is still sufficiently important that Paul boasts that he speaks in tongues more than anyone (14:18).

We cannot know what sounds were being produced at Corinth, or fully reconstruct what is at stake in the controversy over *glōssai*. But we can point to debates about sound and articulation in antiquity and also to the implicit aesthetic judgments of tongues in some strands of New Testament scholarship. Implicit and explicit ideas of aesthetics have shaped scholars' interpretations of tongues or *glōssai* in 1 Corinthians.

The idea of tongues and language as both stumbling block and intimate, breath-filled possibility is found among scholars of biblical studies not only in the study of 1 Corinthians, but also as a larger way of considering the field today: Who is supported in fluid speech; who is made to stutter or rendered silent? Vincent Wimbush, commenting on the strictures of biblical studies, has questioned whether the minoritized student in the elite university might be provided with "excellent training in biblical exegesis, hereby rendering him forever mute or a stutterer."⁹¹ Elizabeth Castelli summarizes Wimbush: "The seminary cultivates either aphasia or apologetics, the university, a halting stuttering. In the face of the silence, of stammering, or of the deceptively flowing speech of apologists, Wimbush invokes a different discursive tradition – that of signifying." Signifying is a term particularly associated with African American traditions of literary interpretation and intertextual engagement; this "signifying implies fluidity, improvisation, virtuosity, and a refined sense of context and relationship. It depends upon the cultural values of hybridity, *bricolage*, *métissage*."⁹² Wimbush, like M. NourbeSe Philip, diagnoses the conditions of power under which language halts or flourishes.

⁹⁰ On the ongoing power of this image among glossic communities, see also Keri Day, *Notes of a Native Daughter: Testifying in Theological Language* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021).

⁹¹ Vincent L. Wimbush, ed., "Introduction: Reading Darkness, Reading Scriptures," in *African Americans and the Bible* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 12.

⁹² Elizabeth Castelli, "Ultimately, It's Not a Change of Color, but a Whole Change-of-Subject-Kind of Thing" in *African Americans and the Bible*, 849. See also Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); see also discussion of Wimbush on pp. 96–97 above.

Ekaputra Tupamahu's approach to 1 Corinthians' mention of *glōssa* and of glossolalia is also sensitive to the conditions of power that limit or promote language. Speaking in tongues at Roman Corinth, as critiqued in 1 Corinthians 12–14, “probably points to the ritual performed by some Corinthian immigrants (particularly second-generation immigrants) ‘in their native, homeland language’ in order to communicate with ‘the ancestral spirits.’”⁹³ Paul misunderstood these native languages and identified them as glossolalia:⁹⁴ “Corinthian immigrants who became the followers of Jesus would likely gather to speak and pray in their native languages. Paul perceives this multilingual and heteroglossic (1 Cor. 14:21) phenomenon as something that is disorderly, chaotic, and useless for the church” rather than understanding the mother tongue as a “home-land” and even “ultimate resting place.”⁹⁵

⁹³ Tupamahu, “I Don’t Want to Hear Your Language,” 79. See also a similar ancient argument regarding native tongues found in Epiphanius’ *Panarion* I.III.42:

Scholion 13 and 21. Marcion has erroneously added the words, ‘on the Law’s account,’ <after> ‘Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding.’

Elenchus 13 and 21. Thus the languages too are by the gift of the Spirit. But what sort of languages does the apostle mean? <He says, ‘languages in the church,’> to show <those who> preened themselves on the sounds of Hebrew, which are Well and wisely diversified in every expression, in various complex ways – on the pretentious kind of Greek, moreover, the speaking of Attic, Aeolic, and Doric – <that God does not permit just one language in church, as some of the people <supposed> who had stirred up the alarms and factions among the Corinthians, to whom the Epistle was being sent. And yet Paul agreed that both using the Hebrew expressions and teaching the Law is <a gift> of the Spirit. . .

... Therefore languages are from a grace of the Spirit. Of what kind does the Apostle speak? He knew how not only the different Hebrew sounds, and manifold expressions in every single word with skills adorned with eloquence, but also the proud language of the Greeks; some who boast the ability to speak Attic, Aeolic, and being able to utter the language of the Dorics, of whom had caused the disturbances, and factions within the Corinthians, to which the Epistle was dispatched. . . And he confessed the gift which is having the ability to proclaim [the oracles] with the Hebrew words and also teaching the Law to be a spiritual endowment. And he agreed that it is a spiritual grace to proclaim and to teach the Law in the Hebrew words.

The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Book I (Sects 1–16) (trans. Frank Williams; 2nd ed., Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 349–50. On the inefficacy of ritual language and names of the gods when these are translated from one language to another, see Celsus in Origen *Contra Celsum* 5.45. Regarding “magic” and linguistically confusing practices, see also so-called Hippolytus *Refutatio* 4.28.

⁹⁴ Tupamahu, “I Don’t Want to Hear Your Language!” 85, engaging with J. Z. Smith, “Re: Corinthians,” 17–34.

⁹⁵ Tupamahu, “I Don’t Want to Hear Your Language!” 85, drawing on Derrida and Dufourmantelle.

Unlike Tupamahu, I do not think we can know what phenomena are marked by Paul and Sosthenes's use of the phrase "kinds of tongues," and I do not think that these tongues were solely other known human languages. The larger cultural context of Roman Corinth, to be sure, preferred Greek and Latin. Epigraphic evidence indicates that in first-century CE Roman Corinth, Greek was largely used for graffiti and unofficial inscriptions; Latin for monumental.⁹⁶ By the second century, language use was shifting. Bradley Bitner adduces, for example, an inscription of an official rescript of the second century CE that contains thirty-one lines in Greek and only one line in Latin. Bitner argues from epigraphic evidence of mixed language use that "even in the Corinth of Hadrian's day the colony cultivated a 'Roman' profile and discourse without abandoning either the Greek language or aspects of Greek culture."⁹⁷ Nonetheless, Tupamahu's analysis (like Philip's poem above) brings into play language, empire, and power, reminding us that linguistic expressions can serve as resistance, or that a given language can be imposed as a stricture.

Stutter can denote a barrier to freedom in speech and thought that leads to silence, as Wimbush suggested. Yet it can also signal the possibility of a creative utterance that exceeds what is considered normal language, and which even points up the limits or peculiarities of that which we call normal. I want us to hold both possibilities together: A stutter can shiver a person into silence, as JJJJJerome Ellis writes in the poem I have used as epigraph for this chapter, and a stutter can also push toward alternative forms of language, as Ellis's own poetry and performance embodies. As Darcey Steinke writes about her stutter, "In those earliest years my relationship to language was uncomplicated: I assumed my voice was more like a bird's or a squirrel's than my playmates' . . . I imagined. . . I might be able to converse with wild creatures . . . and forge friendships based on interspecies intimacy." She mentions years of therapy in which she was asked to repeat a word over and over (she mentions "lob-ster – lob-ster – lob-ster – lob-ster"; I hear M. NourbeSe Philip's "lan/lan/language"). Steinke comes to a conclusion: "Finally I get it: Stuttering is a violent incantation that can break open normal conversation. What

⁹⁶ Benjamin Millis, "The Social and Ethnic Origins of the Colonists in Early Roman Corinth," *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*, eds. Steven J. Friesen et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 13–36.

⁹⁷ Bradley J. Bitner, "Mixed-Language Inscribing at Roman Corinth," in *The First Urban Churches*, vol. 2: *Roman Corinth*, 199.

happens in that breach is up to the stutterer and her listener.”⁹⁸ Or, as Deleuze writes, the stutter can upbraid the grammaticality of language “when the stuttering no longer affects preexisting words, but, rather, itself ushers in the words that it affects; in this case, the words do not exist independently of the stutter, which selects and links them together. It is no longer the individual who stutters in his speech, it is the writer who stutters in the language system (*langue*).” This is “an affective and intensive language (*langage*).”⁹⁹ As Deleuze and Guattari say, “forming grammatically correct sentences is for the normal individual the prerequisite for any submission to social laws. No one is supposed to be ignorant of grammaticality; those who are belong in special institutions. The unity of language is fundamentally political.”¹⁰⁰

What exactly *glōssai* are in 1 Corinthians is unclear, but they are somehow not normal speech. They are plural. According to Deleuze’s logic, they therefore stand against some sort of unity and the “political.” Tongues have already been ranked last among gifts or *charismata* (1 Cor. 12:28). The subtle critique of this practice and the logic of eroding the importance of *glōssai* continues in the letter. 1 Corinthians 13 begins: “If I speak in the tongues of humans and of angels, but do not have love, I am resonating bronze or a clanging cymbal.”¹⁰¹ The emphasis upon love – this passage, after all, is a favorite at Christian weddings in the United States – works to suppress tongues, which in the larger context of 1 Corinthians are understood as a manifestation of *pneuma* or spirit. Even if Paul boasts that he speaks in tongues more than anyone else, he simultaneously calls into question the significance of *glōssai*: “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you; nevertheless, in assembly I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor. 14:18–19).¹⁰²

The library shelves of articles and commentaries on 1 Cor. 13:1 suggest a good deal of anxiety about glossolalia in ancient Corinth, but also

⁹⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/06/opinion/reading-writing-stuttering.html?searchResultPosition=8>. “My Stutter Made Me a Better Writer.” Accessed February 17, 2021.

⁹⁹ Deleuze, “He Stuttered,” in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, eds. and trans. Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 1994), 23.

¹⁰⁰ *A Thousand Plateaus*, 101, cited in Christa Albrecht-Crane, “Style, Stutter,” in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. Charles J. Stivale (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005), 123.

¹⁰¹ Ἐάν ταις γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, γέγονα χαλκὸς ἤχων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον.

¹⁰² 18 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ, πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶ· 19 ἀλλ’ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ θέλω πέντε λόγους τῷ νοί μου λαλῆσαι, ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους κατηχήσω, ἡ μυρίου λόγους ἐν γλώσσῃ.

reveal worries on the part of interpreters regarding whether this “scripture” matches the interpreter’s own aesthetics. One article begins: “With the emergence and growth of charismatic Christianity during the last century, the essence and place of glossolalia in the early church has become an increasingly important area of biblical interpretation.” The article uses historical-critical method and explicitly claims to “consciously [avoid] the production of anachronistic interpretations of the texts through associations with phenomena from our time or analogies to texts from other cultures and religions.”¹⁰³ This interpretive move bars some explicitly contemporary insights, such as those of the charismatic Christianity to which the article refers, even as it renders invisible other forms of contemporary interpretation, including the article’s own. The article’s arguments imitate 1 Corinthians (following the injunction to “imitate me,” 1 Cor. 11:1), minimizing tongues and arguing that they were not a significant or widespread phenomenon.¹⁰⁴

Aesthetic concerns are also revealed in debates over the translation of this passage: “I have become *chalkos ēchōn ē kymbalon alalazon*,” or, as the New Revised Standard Version offers, “I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” With the phrase *kymbalon alalazon* we have a firm musical resonance and a cognate in the form of the English word “cymbal,” although scholars still debate the exact look of this instrument – castanets? a thin metal strip to be struck?¹⁰⁵ The modifying adjective *alalazon* has special force, onomatopoetically reverberating with near ululation or cry.¹⁰⁶ The phrase brings the hearer not only to practices of tongues that span humans or angels, but also to acoustic strategies and to instruments that vibrate. 1 Cor. 13:1 demotes the practice of tongues and prophecy in favor of love. Who could disagree with love?

¹⁰³ John-Christian Eurell, “The Nature of Pauline Glossolalia and Its Early Reception,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 72.2 (2019): 182.

¹⁰⁴ The article concludes: “Although it is not possible to discern exactly what Paul means here, it appears that he is not referring to unintelligible ecstatic utterances, but rather to real languages not previously known to the speaker that can be interpreted by someone with the gift of interpreting tongues” (Eurell, “The Nature of Pauline Glossolalia,” 183). The article argues for a tongues-free Christianity and erases glossolalia from antiquity, e.g., by stating that the longer ending of Mark and Irenaeus may “speak of glossolalia as a legitimate expression of apostolic Christianity,” but do not suggest “that the writer had personal acquaintance with the phenomenon.”

¹⁰⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1037.

¹⁰⁶ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1037.

But the formulation occludes the fact that the Corinthians's *charismata* or "gifts" are downgraded, by means of a sonic argument.

Analyzing 1 Cor. 13:1b ("I am resonating bronze or a clanging cymbal"),¹⁰⁷ one interpreter presses heavily on the *ē* between the phrases, usually translated "or," arguing that the verse should instead be translated: "I have become only a resonating acoustic jar rather than a flourish of cymbals."¹⁰⁸ This judgment is in part informed by aesthetics. He explains: "the interpretation of κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον as discordant cacophony is inconsistent with the discriminating tastes of antiquity." The phrase regarding the cymbal instead denotes an aesthetically acceptable cry of enthusiasm; thus, Paul states that in speaking in tongues without love, he is merely a mechanism, as in a theater, of a bronze vessel used to catch voices and magnify them, like an ancient microphone.¹⁰⁹ Another interpreter responds that wisdom, rhetoric, and speech – significant terms throughout 1 Corinthians – were elements prized by "Graeco-Roman converts" who would have been "unlikely to regard the crash of cymbals as the height of their ambition."¹¹⁰ Modern interpreters engage in a strange scholarly battle: a fight over the sounds of cymbals. But what underlies this fight is an aesthetic struggle over what sounds Paul or Greco-Roman "converts" preferred. Often, *sub rosa*, this is a discussion of what kinds of sound should be preferred in Christian communities today.

¹⁰⁷ γέγονα χαλκός ἢ χῶν ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον.

¹⁰⁸ Todd K. Sanders, "A New Approach to 1 Corinthians 13.1," *NTS* 36 (1990): 614–18, esp. at 618.

¹⁰⁹ William Harris and William Klein argue that the curious phrase χαλκός ἢ χῶν does not refer to an instrument, rebutting the arguments of those who think of the phrase as alluding to gongs associated with so-called pagan worship, or myths of the clanging metal used by the *kouretes* to distract from Zeus's birth. (William Harris, "'Sounding Brass' and Hellenistic Technology," *BAR* 8.1 [1982]; supported and developed in William Klein, "Noisy Gong or Acoustic Vase? A Note on 1 Corinthians 13.1," *NTS* 32.2 [1986]: 286–89.) They argue that the phrase invokes Vitruvius's puzzling reference to bronze vessels tucked into aediculae in odeia or theaters to enhance acoustics (*De arch.* 5.1–3). The vessel is called "echea," ηχέα, literally "echoers" in Greek. Thus χαλκός ἢ χῶν refers to a "Hellenistic technology," in the words of Harris; note, however, that no archaeological evidence of such vessels has been found. Stefan Hagel, *Ancient Greek Music: A New Technical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 251–55, seeks to reconstruct how the resonators would have worked.

¹¹⁰ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1038. As discussed in Chapter 4, Iamblichus in the third century CE indicates no apparent anxiety about the sound of cymbals, but instead shows the variety of strong responses, from frenzied to therapeutic, that musical instruments can evoke (Iamblichus, *De myst.* III.9).

Take, for example, a commentary on 1 Corinthians 13 which reads:

but to build the rhetorical focus of a carefully designed didactic poem on an introductory contrast between acoustic bronze and reverberating cymbals, even celebratory, festal, ‘good’ cymbals, hardly accords with the rhetorical and lyric weight of all the other images and contrasts.¹¹¹

The characterization of 1 Corinthians 13 as a “carefully designed didactic poem” is an aesthetic claim, rather than something demonstrated through analysis of Greek meter or language.¹¹² The scare-quotes of “‘good’ cymbals” indicates a weighing of value: Does resonating bronze sound *good* to people? And to what sort of people? The commentator elevates 1 Corinthians 13 as having “rhetorical and lyrical weight,” while implying that whatever sounds are evoked by the phrase “noisy gongs or a clashing cymbal” are not beautiful. The passage continues to draw on aesthetic norms, stating that what is impressive in one context is “torture” in another: “When the Queen opens the Church of England General Synod in Westminster Abbey, one’s spirit may soar with the decibels of the organ’s thunder, while the same level of decibels would for some be sheer torture coming from a local amateur music group.” This joke carries aesthetic preferences: The organ of Westminster Abbey, thundering under the queen and vibrating the mitres of bishops, is presented as the apex of a soaring aesthetics – an aesthetics of elitism, of crown and church hierarchy, compared to the local and amateur.¹¹³ Commentators’ attention to these few words reveals their attempts to grasp the lost sonic experiences of antiquity. But these interpretations also reveal commentators’ present-day aesthetic prejudices and the theological-ideological anxieties that attend 1 Corinthians.

¹¹¹ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1038.

¹¹² Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1038. On 1 Corinthians 13 as poetry, including metrical analysis and comparisons with Pindar and other quite ancient Greek poets, see e.g., F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, “St. Paul’s Hymn of Love (1 Cor. xiii),” *Theology* 26.152 (1933): 63–75; see also Michael Peppard, “‘Poetry’, ‘Hymns’ and ‘Traditional Material’ in New Testament Epistles or How to Do Things with Indentations,” *JSNT* 30.3 (2008): 319–42, for a critique of New Testament scholars’ tendencies to create poems and hymns where there may have been none.

¹¹³ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1038–39. Thiselton also writes: “Empty, noisy reverberations go on and on. In Yorkshire idiom in the north of England, they are ‘now’t but wind and rattle’” (p. 1038). This comment establishes as normative Paul’s perspective that tongues are an inferior *charisma* or gift, and it offers an aesthetic judgment at two levels: at the level of beauty or euphony, and at the level of sense perception, namely, hearing. Aesthetics undergird contemporary analyses of tongues or *glōssai* in 1 Corinthians.

How might we read – hear – 1 Corinthians 13:1 differently?¹¹⁴ Its differentiation between human and angelic tongues is received in a context in which Latin is the primary and official epigraphical language of Corinth and the frequent use of *l.* on inscriptions to indicate the Latin *libertus* or *liberta*: both a boast (freed) and a mark of social, economic, and political degradation (formerly enslaved), in this Roman colony established by freedpersons. I suggest that we place this passage within the language play and discussions of language, voice, resonance, beauty, and ugliness that were going on more broadly in antiquity, as we have learned from the Interlude of this book. In doing so, we can never completely ex(or)cise contemporary aesthetic prejudices, but at least we can engage more clearly with ancient aesthetic preferences and debates.

An incantation on a *defixio*, a hint of tongues in 1 Corinthians, instructions regarding the sound passing the teeth as the rhetor speaks: these can fruitfully be seen as fragments of sound (chant, voice, poetry, song) or as stray evidence of it. As Sarah Nooter and Shane Butler write, evidence from Mediterranean antiquity indicates that sound was everywhere – cacophonous in the insulae, ringing through the heavenly spheres.¹¹⁵ Sean Gurd trawls ancient literature for a range of sounds from the belly to the streetscape;¹¹⁶ Shane Butler asks us to consider whether we can overcome our mental divide between the “linguistic voice, which writing has long recorded, and the extralinguistic voice, which had to wait for the phonograph.” He points out that “centuries of literary texts are filled with – and at least partially defined by – phonic features that cannot be reduced to a function that is, strictly speaking, linguistic.”¹¹⁷ They are part of a growing crowd of scholars studying sound in antiquity. Pauline LeVen’s *Music and Metamorphosis* and her writing on the “erogenous ear” point not only to ancient language and sound but also to its impacts: “the power of sounds is not a function of language itself,

¹¹⁴ There are different interpretive possibilities within New Testament studies; even in the 1970s Krister Stendahl, in conversation with charismatic Christians, discussed glossolalia as “high-voltage religion” (“The New Testament Evidence,” in *The Charismatic Movement*, ed. Michael P. Hamilton [Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975], 56); see also idem, “The Charismatic Movement and the New Testament,” in *What the Spirit is Saying to the Churches*, ed. Theodore Runyon (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1975), 17–28.

¹¹⁵ Shane Butler and Sarah Nooter, eds., “Introduction: Sounding Hearing,” in *Sound and the Ancient Senses* (London: Routledge, 2019), 2.

¹¹⁶ Sean Alexander Gurd, *Dissonance: Auditory Aesthetics in Ancient Greece* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 1–4.

¹¹⁷ Shane Butler, *The Ancient Phonograph* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 13.

and the power of poetry or special language does not reside ... in the stoicheia of the language, but in the attunement of the ear, ... in its willingness and desire to be played with.”¹¹⁸ Thomas Denecker traces early Christian ideas about whether voice and writing are the same thing, about the impossibility of expressing ideas about God in language, and about the way in which the human body is shaped by God for the purpose of hearing as well as speaking: the human as instrument, ears like cymbals and tongue like plectrum.¹¹⁹ James I. Porter, speaking of Pythagoras as depicted by Iamblichus, points to the possibility of a blur between voice and word: “The emergence of the voice in the guise of disembodied logos represents the triumph of the voice as an aesthetic phenomenon in its own right, its liberation from the constraints of sight, though not from the body per se. The voice when it is heard has a body of its own: it has pitches, melodiousness, timbre, rhythms, and other euphonic qualities.”¹²⁰ Bissera Pentcheva (among others) has attempted to reconstruct the sonics of Hagia Sophia and scholars have attended to the songs of writers like Romanos.¹²¹ David Frankfurter has pointed to song and lullaby as missing frameworks for our analysis of so-called magical materials.¹²² He, as well as Henk Versnel and Esther Eidinow and others, seek in their study of ancient “magic” to uncover ritual and poetics: not

¹¹⁸ Pauline LeVen, “The Erogenous Ear,” in *Sound and the Ancient Senses*, eds. Shane Butler and Sarah Nooter (New York: Routledge, 2018), 230. See also her *Music and Metamorphosis in Greco-Roman Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

¹¹⁹ Tim Denecker, *Ideas on Language in Early Latin Christianity: From Tertullian to Isidore of Seville* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 49. Denecker notes that “the author of the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones* (in Rufinus’s translation) at 8.29.3–4 praises the functionality of the parts of the human body as it was shaped by the divine *artifex*. In doing so, he refers to the ears, which were shaped as cymbals in order to amplify the ‘reverberated sound of the received word’ and thus to transmit it to the heart. The author subsequently mentions the tongue, which is shaped in such a way ‘that it performs the task of a plectrum (*plectri reddat officium*) for speaking, by being beaten against the teeth (*illisa dentibus*)’. A very similar description occurs in Jerome’s *Ep.* 108.24.1.”

¹²⁰ Porter, “Rhetoric, Aesthetics, and the Voice,” 93.

¹²¹ Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia: Sound, Space, and Spirit in Byzantium* (State College: Penn State University Press, 2017). Note that the accuracy of these reconstructions is debated. See also Georgia Frank, “Singing Mary: The Annunciation and Nativity in Romanos the Melode,” in *The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*, eds. T. Arentzen and M. Cunningham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 170–79; Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Song and Memory: Biblical Women in Syriac Tradition* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), e.g., 16–17.

¹²² David Frankfurter, “Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken Word,” in *GSAM*, 616.

the scratched words on a *defixio* or curse tablet alone, but also how that object would have been used – the chant, the song, the gesture.¹²³

Such scholars remind us to keep our ears open (!) for implicit and explicit aesthetic norms around sound and hearing both in antiquity and in our present-day assessments. So, to think more about 1 Corinthians's clash of cymbals, about the tongues of humans and of angels, about tongues that might make outsiders think you are mad, I turn to local evidence of *voces magicae*.

VOCES MAGICAE IN ROMAN CORINTH

So-called magical texts, among other practices and literatures in antiquity, indicate linguistically, sonically non-normative elements such as aphasia, stuttering, and speaking in tongues. Such unusual forms of language may also extend to the process of writing itself: they may include retrograde writing (writing a word backward), crafting a palindrome, writing a Greek text in Latin letters. Such unusual practices may include writing with the “wrong” (left) hand, or writing in a pattern, producing “an intentional and puzzling palimpsest,”¹²⁴ or writing letters that *look* like a known language (*charaktēres*) but are not.¹²⁵

As we learned in the Interlude, scholars have given a name to a phenomenon we don't fully understand: *voces magicae*, magical voices, which are often embedded within curses and amulets. This longstanding practice, from the second millennium BCE to today, includes streams of known letters which make up no clear words or meaning. As William Brashear explains, especially preferred was “the alphabetic sequence

¹²³ Versnel, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm,” 106–58; Esther Eidinow, “Testing the Oracle?” in *Ancient Divination and Experience*, eds. Lindsay G. Driediger-Murphy and eadem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 44–67; Frankfurter, “Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken Word,” in *GSAM*, esp. 615–16; on incantation, see Collins, *Ancient Magic*, 104–31.

¹²⁴ Ronald S. Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions* (Corinth XVIII.6; Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2013), 91 (catalog no. 1118), a curse against Secunda Postumia, dated to pre-70 CE.

¹²⁵ Richard Gordon, “Charaktēres between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-invention,” in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, eds. V. Dasen and J.-M. Spieser (Florence: SISMEL/Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 253–300; Kirsten Dzwiza, *Schriftverwendung in antiker Ritualpraxis: anhand der griechischen, demotischen und koptischen Sammelschriften des 1. – 7. Jahrhunderts* (Ph.D. diss., Erfurt University, 2013). Daniel James Waller, “Curious Characters, Invented Scripts, and ... Charlatans? ‘Pseudo-Scripts’ in the Mesopotamian Magic Bowls,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 78.1 (2019): 119–39.

αηλιουω, but also single vowels or two or three in various permutations which fill whole lines on gems and papyri. The soft and sonorous repetition of these vowel sequences must have had an indeed enchanting effect on the hopeful client. Each vowel's association with a planet, a musical tone and an angel increased its magical efficacy."¹²⁶ Other *voces* were found in "interminable and wholly unpronounceable clusters of consonants. Their effect was heightened by smacking the lips (ποππυσμός) or by hissing (συριγμός)."¹²⁷ These effects, Brashear hints, operated according to some understandings of rhythm and rhyme, of poetics: "the magician produced strings of sing-song words whose only structural principles seem to be certain tendencies to homoioteleuton, homoiarcton and general rhyme and rhythm."¹²⁸ Some *voces magicae* were palindromes, even up to sixty letters long. Others may have been isopsephic – concealing numerical codes – or "have been secret names, code names, for certain divinities."¹²⁹

The use of *voces magicae* may add to the esoteric authority of the ritual practitioner.¹³⁰ Certainly, such effervescence in language had social effects and even could fuel power and authority. But the use of *voces magicae* cannot be reduced to an authorizing function. *Voces magicae*

¹²⁶ William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," ANRW II.18.5 (1995): 3432, working from a binary framework devised by Campbell Bonner. The six or seven "Ephesia grammata" are sometimes categorized among *voces magicae*. These words have more recently been analyzed by Alberto Bernabé as "part of one or several ἐπωδαί" which "were originally all meaningful words," which, in the ancient "preference for phonic play over semantic meaning" turns these words into *voces magicae* ("The Ephesia Grammata: The Genesis of a Magical Formula," in *The Getty Hexameters: Poetry, Magic, and Mystery in Ancient Selinous*, eds. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 93); see Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri," 3430.

¹²⁷ Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri," 3431. On the late first-early second-century text from which this comes, Nichomachus's *Harmonikon Enchiridion*, and whether this passage is a later insertion, see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 184.

¹²⁸ Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri," 3433.

¹²⁹ Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri," 3434. Previous scholars thought that some *voces magicae* could be explained by references to the Hebrew or Aramaic; see pp. 3435–56 on the history of scholarship.

¹³⁰ Richard Gordon, "The Healing Event in Greco-Roman Folk Medicine," in *Ancient Medicine in its Socio-cultural Context, Volume 2: Papers Read at the Congress Held at Leiden University, 13–15 April 1992*, eds. H. F. J. Horstmanshoff et al. (Clio Medica 28; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 371–72, quotation on 371: "In the full or explicit type of charm the *voces magicae*, if present, are one among several means of marking the special status of the utterance, designating the power relation which the charm sets up between practitioner and object." See Versnel's engagement with Gordon in "The Poetics of the Magical Charm," 142–43.

also engaged and demonstrated a range of theological and aesthetic strategies, which included either violence or play – the upending of normal communicative efforts, on the one hand, and some idea of transcendence, on the other.¹³¹ *Voces magicae* are best understood as one among other linguistically effervescent or experimental modes: glossolalia in 1 Corinthians, philosophical texts like the musings on language we find in Plato's *Cratylus*, and writings in the Nag Hammadi codices that discuss language or that break apart into vowels. As Patricia Cox Miller has observed, "The alphabet speaks a divine language, and it does so in a radically generative, metaphoric way, each letter calling up, but never pinning down, the enigmatic nature of reality, the word of God." This idea of "the bewitchment of language itself" was paired in antiquity with a practice of breaking language apart. Cox Miller continues: "Shattered in this way, the alphabet was 'the body of truth,' 'the figure of the element,' 'the character of the letter,' and it was emblazoned on the body of the human being as well as in the cosmic spheres."¹³²

In this, Cox Miller, with her focus on glossolalia in antiquity, resonates with de Certeau's characterization of glossolalia "vocal utopia" attained in an "abjection of meaning" which "expresses nothing" and exists "within the bounds of an illusion."¹³³ Recall too Nicholas Harkness's ethnographic analysis of glossolalia in South Korea and his interest in "how the immersive, overwhelming semiotic effects of glossolalia and cacophony impose limits on speech that, together, undermine 'normal' linguistic functions while intensifying the very act of communication itself." We can also recall Crawley's idea of "Script otherwise, minoritarian speech."¹³⁴ Harkness points to glossolalia as "a generative, enhanced form of language that exceeds the limits (as extreme boundary) of linguistic functionality."¹³⁵

¹³¹ Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm," 145; he uses the important essay of Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense." Cox Miller states, for example: "Magical writing takes the form of ordinary writing by using its letters and so is faithful to it, but it betrays that writing by its nonsensical invisible inscription on the soul. Yet it betrays the invisible inscription as well by writing it in actual letters! Magical language is thus thoroughly paradoxical, betraying and safeguarding with every vowel" (p. 490).

¹³² Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," 500–1.

¹³³ Certeau, "Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias," quotations at 30 ("abjection of meaning"); 29 ("expresses nothing," "within the bounds of an illusion").

¹³⁴ Harkness, *Glossolalia*, 40; Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 198–99. See pp. 149–50 above.

¹³⁵ Harkness, *Glossolalia*, 40. See also Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 72: "In late antiquity what seems to have happened is that the referential function of language/art lost some of its preeminence; signifier asserts itself at the expense of signified. In the arts this means a

The ancient discussion of alternative language, too, was sometimes framed as a transcending of language.¹³⁶ At other times, such practices were mocked, often with a hot brew of ethnic invective. Plutarch, for example, presents “superstition” (*deisidaimonia*) in ethnic terms, referring to “Greeks from barbarians finding evil ways”; that is, Greeks corrupted by barbarians.¹³⁷ He writes:

Those who thought it good to preserve customary music urged harpists to sing with a just mouth; and we think it right to pray to the gods with the mouth straight and just, and not to inspect the tongue within the guts [of sacrificial offerings] to see that they are straight and right, and by twisting and defiling one’s own tongue with strange expressions and words barbarian, to shame and transgress the divine and ancestral worth of our religion. (*De superstitione* 3)¹³⁸

Plutarch riffs on the mouth – and the tongue. One should not have to bother to evaluate the tongue of a sacrificed beast for its straightness (*orthos*) and right (*dikaios*), so too one shouldn’t employ strange or out of place expressions and barbarian words (*atopois onomasi kai rhemasi*

vagueness in the outline and interrelationships of plastic form; in literature it means a tendency for constituents to break loose from syntactic structure and to ‘wander,’ demanding attention disproportionate to or at odds with their logical role in the economy of the sentence.”

¹³⁶ Versnel, “Poetics of Magical Charms,” 145.

¹³⁷ Plutarch *De superstitione* (Mor. 166B), echoing a phrase also found in Euripides’s *The Trojan Women*, 764. Plutarch, *Moralia, Volume II: How to Profit by One’s Enemies. On Having Many Friends. Chance. Virtue and Vice. Letter of Condolence to Apollonius. Advice About Keeping Well. Advice to Bride and Groom. The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men. Superstition* (trans. Frank Cole Babbitt; LCL 222; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 461. In the second century, Celsus (according to Origen) polemically associates alternative sound or language with magic: “Then after that he [Celsus] says: ‘Having brandished these threats they then go on to add incomprehensible, incoherent, and utterly obscure utterances, the meaning of which no intelligent person could discover; for they are meaningless and nonsensical, and give a chance for any fool or sorcerer (ἀνοήτω δὲ ἢ γόητι) to take the words in whatever sense he likes.’” Origen *Contra Celsum* 7.9, translation by Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 402–3.

¹³⁸ Plutarch, *Mor.* 165F–166A; my translation; δικαίῳ τῷ στόματι τοὺς κιθαρῳδοὺς ἐκέλευον ᾄδειν οἱ τὴν νόμιμον μουσικὴν σφάζειν δοκοῦντες· ἡμεῖς δὲ τοῖς θεοῖς ἀξιοῦμεν ὀρθῶ τῷ στόματι καὶ δικαίῳ προσεύχεσθαι, καὶ μὴ τὴν ἐπὶ τῶν σπλάγχχνων μὲν γλῶτταν εἰ καθαρὰ καὶ ὀρθῇ σκοπεῖν, τὴν δ’ ἐαυτῶν διαστρέφοντας καὶ μολύνοντας ἀτόποις ὀνόμασι καὶ ῥήμασι βαρβαρικοῖς κατασχύνειν καὶ παρανομεῖν τὸ θεῖον καὶ πάτριον ἀξίωμα τῆς εὐσεβείας. (LCL 22, p. 460.) Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 26.9.6–9) polemically discusses those who invoke the barbarian names of archons. See Pearson, “Theurgic Tendencies,” 258. Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology* (trans. Arthur Goldhammer; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009) recounts the long history of the debate regarding what language God spoke; see also Minets, *The Slow Fall of Babel*.

barbarikois). Amid controversies over music in antiquity, Plutarch points to the justness of the mouth, to the preserving or saving (*sōzein*) of certain customary forms of music, and to the dangers of twisting and defiling the tongue. The tongue, both of a sacrificial victim and of the human who speaks in ritual, can be literally “out of place” or the racialized barbarian tongue, or it can be straight and right or just.

What is a straight tongue and what a defiled sacrifice? What is considered eloquent speech and what a stutter? What is considered a barbaric tongue and what angelic? What is at stake with the tongue in antiquity? If we think with M. NourbeSe Philip and others about how empire and power operate through language and speech, we can see that some forms of language, as they fall apart and come together, resist a linguistic or even comprehensible status quo. Curses with *voces magicae* and a Corinthian letter that contains the odd phrase “tongues of humans and angels” represent alternatives not just to normal language, but also to normative language: that is, to the way that official or standard language can constrain and discipline. Such routing of standard language has its own ethical complexities.

To understand better both the “kinds of tongues” mentioned in 1 Corinthians and a curse from the Acrocorinth that employs *voces magicae*, we should consider the aesthetics of language alongside the aesthetics (including the materiality) of ritual objects from antiquity, no matter how ugly they to us seem to be: rolled up lead, pierced through with nails, scratched letters, odd phrasings (see Introduction, Figure 0.1). These aesthetics would have included not only the ritual objects themselves, but also a sonic world lost to us. Numerous curse tablets and the recipes for spells include the term *epaoidē*, or incantation, which reminds us that such words were spoken or sung or chanted aloud.¹³⁹ So too, in 1 Corinthians we find sound, including tongues and song: “When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation” (1 Cor. 14:26 NRSV). At the same time, we have already seen the letter’s attempts to downgrade tongues as a form of sound, and an attempt to limit women’s speech in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:33b–35).

Pauline LeVen’s emphasis on reception – that is, not on the intention of the musician (human, insect, animal, or God) but on its effects on the hearer – may not emerge from feminist theory or critical race approaches,

¹³⁹ See Chapter 4.

but it works well with these interpretive approaches. As Amy Richlin has argued, “in looking for women, ‘when they are fragmentary, read fragmentation. Get off the beaten path to look for them’” and “don’t take no for an answer. Argue with silence.”¹⁴⁰ My interest in ancient theories of speech and sound is funded by this optimistic feminist historical approach regarding what we can glean from scarce historical data, sources that usually are not interested in the lives, speech, rituals, or work of women and the enslaved, of the marginalized or the low status. My lines of investigation emerge not from abstract questions about the problematics of language or a mere interest in (mere) rhetoric, but from a commitment to thinking about how language worked in ways that were perceived as liberative and oppressive – no matter the strangeness (to us) of the ritual, whether it was speaking in tongues or using streams of Greek letters which we now call *voces magicae* or even symbols whose pronunciation and meaning are unknown, called *charaktēres*. We find an effervescence of language and signs, a creativity that moves from numbers to design to vowels to letters in an unknown language. How did these folk think, and play, with language? And how could alternative forms of language function to restrict or limit another’s possibility?

We cannot know for certain if the Corinthians in Christ were familiar with *voces magicae*, but we know they were familiar with curses, which often had *voces* embedded within them. They found one within the letter of Paul and Sosthenes itself. Chapter 5 contains a curse which hands over to Satan a man who is with his stepmother.¹⁴¹ The curse alludes to curses in Deuteronomy, prohibitions in Leviticus, and it was also comprehensible for the hearer because of curse practices in Roman Corinth.¹⁴² Even 1 Corinthians 6, with its concern about where one takes one’s disputes

¹⁴⁰ Amy Richlin, *Arguments with Silence: Writing the History of Roman Women* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 11–12, as cited in Marchal, *After the Corinthian Women Prophets*, 3.

¹⁴¹ See Laura Salah Nasrallah, “Judgment, Justice, and Destruction: *Defixiones* and 1 Corinthians,” *JBL* 140.2 (2021): 347–67; Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Function of ‘Excommunication’ in Paul,” *JBL* 73.1/2 (1980): 251–63; Fotopoulos, “Paul’s Curse,” 275–309. The curse statement of 1 Cor. 5:3–5 is conducted “in the name of Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:4a: ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ) and in stories found in the Acts of the Apostles. Benedict H. M. Kent, “Curses in Acts: Hearing the Apostles’ Words of Judgment Alongside ‘Magical’ Spell Texts,” *JSNT* 39.4 (2017): 412–40.

¹⁴² Versnel’s insight into the “poetics of magical texts” can be enhanced by Edouard Glissant’s idea of poetics in his *Poetics of Relation*, especially as explained in Mayra Rivera Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 3. See p. 124 above.

over inheritance, uses a phrase often associated with curses or power “in the name of” (in this case, Jesus). 1 Cor. 16:22 states, “Let anyone be cursed who does not love the Lord. *Marana tha*,” retaining the Aramaic in the phrase “May our Lord come.” The Aramaic may function as a *vox magica* in this cursing injunction.¹⁴³

This empire-wide use of *voces magicae* is also found locally at Corinth in the Roman period. Eighteen curse tablets from Corinth, seventeen in Greek and one in Latin, postdate the writing of 1 Corinthians by perhaps a century. These were discovered *in situ* at the Acrocorinth in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. They were placed within what archaeologists have named the “Building of the Tablets” on the sanctuary’s lower terrace,¹⁴⁴ near four bases of fieldstone and fragmentary tiles which lay in an unevenly-spaced row from east to west and were perhaps used as altars, in a layer of dirt mixed with the residue of burnt materials.¹⁴⁵ A nailed-together double *defixio* (Introduction, Figure 0.1; Stroud nos. 125, 126) dating to the second or third century CE was found there, aimed against a garland weaver named Karpimē Babbia, as we read in the Introduction. Another was also directed against her (Stroud no. 124).¹⁴⁶ This low-status woman is immortalized through these curses, which nonetheless barely allow us to glimpse her as a character in the story of ancient ritual practices.

¹⁴³ Fotopoulos, “Paul’s Curse,” 275–309.

¹⁴⁴ Nancy Bookidis and Ronald S. Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: Topography and Architecture* (Corinth XVIII.3; Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997), 277; Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 151. The Corinthian Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore was in use from the Hellenistic period until the end of the fourth century CE, with earlier remains attested. The Hellenistic building housed a dining complex; by the first Roman phase of the sanctuary, fill covered the dining couches. Bookidis and Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: Topography and Architecture*, chap. 1; regarding the destruction of the upper terrace in late antiquity, p. 352, *passim*; regarding a late second-/early third-century mosaic mentioning a priestess Chara and a benefactor Octavius Agathopous, see pp. 362–69 and Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, catalogue no. 14. *Defixiones* have been found at other sanctuaries associated with Demeter and Kore (Bookidis and Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: Topography and Architecture*, 285–86).

¹⁴⁵ Bookidis and Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: Topography and Architecture*, 277–91. *Defixiones* from other sites may have been placed in fire deliberately, but this does not seem to have been the case for the Corinthian *defixiones*.

¹⁴⁶ Bookidis and Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: Topography and Architecture*, 287.

The double-curse offers a complex literary structure:

(no. 125) I entrust and consign Karpimē Babbia, weaver of garlands, to the Fates who exact justice, so that they may punish her acts of insolence, to Hermes of the Underworld, to Earth, and to the children of Earth, so that they may overcome and completely destroy her soul and heart and her mind and the wits of Karpimē Babbia, weaver of garlands. I adjure you and I implore you and I pray to you, Hermes of the Underworld, that the mighty names of Ananke, Nebezapadaieisen [.]geibebeohera, make me fertile

(no. 126) that the mighty name, the one carrying compulsion, which is not named recklessly unless in dire necessity, Eupher, mighty name, make me fertile and destroy Karpimē Babbia, weaver of garlands, from her head to her footprints with monthly destruction.¹⁴⁷

The double *defixio* reveals a “poetics of magical formulas.”¹⁴⁸ The curse begins with two verbs commonly used “in lead tablets, especially prayers for justice” (*parathitomai kai katathitomai*).¹⁴⁹ These do not name the

¹⁴⁷ Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 105–7.

(No. 125) παραθίτομα[ι] καὶ καταθί[το]μα[ι] Καρπί-
μην Βαβίαν στεφανηπλόκον Μοίραις Π-
ραξιδικαῖς ὅπως ἐγδεῖκ[η]σιν τὰς ὕβρ[ι]εις,
Ἑρμῇ Χθονίῳ, Γῇ, Γῆς παισίν, [θ]ῶς κατεργά-
σων<τ>αὶ καὶ διεργάσωνται ψ[υ]χὴν αὐτῆς κα-
ὶ καρδίαν καὶ νοῦ<ν> αὐτῆς [καὶ] φρένες ὅ
Καρπίμης Βαβίας σ<τ>εφανη[π]λόκου. ὀρκίζ-
ω σε καὶ ἐναρῶμαί σε καὶ ἐνεύχομαί σ-
<σ>οι, Ἑρμῇ Χθόνιε, τὰ μέγала vacat 0.05 m
ὁ[νύ]ματα τῆς Ἀνάγκης NEBEZAT
(No. 126) ΑΔΑΙΕΙΣΕΝ[.]ΓΕΙΒΕΒΗΩΗΕΡΑ κάρτισαί
με, τὸ μέγα θν[υ]μα τὸ ἐπάνανκον, ὃ οὐκ εὐ-
χερῶς ὀνυμάζεται, ἂν μὴ ἐπὶ μεγάλας ἀν-
ανκαίαι<ς>, ΕΥΦΕΡ, μέγα θνυμα, κ<άρ>πισταί με κα-
ὶ κατέργασσαι Καρπίμην Βαβίαν στεφ[α]-
νηπλόκον ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς μέχρι ἰχνέων
ἰ<ς> ἐπιμήν<ι>ον κατέργασ[ι]αν. vacat 0.064 m.

¹⁴⁸ Versnel, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm,” 140, 152; he also cites Cox Miller to suggest that so-called magical texts “transcend not only writing but speech itself (145–56). See also Jessica L. Lamont, “Early Greek Incantations in Late Roman Jerusalem: Kyrilla’s Judicial Case,” *ZPE* 209 (2019): 43–53 and her analysis of four words from Hom. *Od.* 22.383–6 used in a fourth-century BCE Athenian curse in “A New Commercial Curse Tablet from Classical Athens,” *ZPE* 196 (2015): 172–73; Lindsay Watson, *Arae: The Curse Poetry of Antiquity* (Leeds: Cairns, 1991); Frankfurter, “Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken World,” in *GSAM*, 620.

¹⁴⁹ Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 108, cites multiple authorities, including Henk Versnel, who is also in conversation with Stroud; see H. S. Versnel, “Prayers for Justice, East and West: New Finds and Publications since 1990,” in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, eds. Francisco Marco Simón and Richard Gordon

actor but present him or her¹⁵⁰ in the first-person singular. The name and occupation of the object of this action are given: Karpimē Babia, garland weaver. The speaker deposits and consigns Karpimē Babbia to the *Moirai Praxidikai*, the Fates who exact justice. The purpose or hoped-for result of this action is stated: that they might punish or perhaps prove, demonstrate, or display (her) “acts of insolence.”¹⁵¹ The double *defixio* returns to consign her to chthonic Hermes,¹⁵² Earth, and Earth’s children. It states again the hoped-for result that these figures should “overcome and completely destroy her soul and her heart and her mind and the wits of Karpimē Babbia, garland weaver.” The curse twice uses the verb destroy, *ergazomai*, in a poetic move of repetition and a crescendo of intensification of a verb by means of its prefixes. These last lines use polysyndeton – the repetition of the *kai*, leading to a “rhythmic prose.”¹⁵³

We can imagine a long breath drawn, then the next sentence begins¹⁵⁴ with a strong first-person voice, addressing Hermes Chthonius: “I make you swear and I adjure you and I pray to you.” The verbs decrescendo

(Leiden: Brill, 2005), 338. This section also indicates Versnel’s problematic binary taxonomy of prayers for justice versus binding curses.

¹⁵⁰ Stroud (*The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 108) speculated that the commissioner of the curse was female; certainly, we know of women who cursed, as for example in the thirteen *defixiones* from the late Hellenistic Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Knidos, which were exclusively by women. Lydia Matthews and Irene Salvo discuss these curses, arguing that women’s cursing is a system of revenge seeking within “socially acceptable roles and practices” (“Cursing-Prayers and Female Vengeance in the Ancient Greek World,” in *Revenge and Gender in Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, eds. Lesel Dawson and Fiona McHardy [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018], 141, see 144–50 on Knidos).

¹⁵¹ Stroud, influenced by Versnel’s work on justice, prefers to see this as an itacism and reconstructs ἐγδεικ[ήσ]ωσι instead of ἐγδεικ[νύ]ωσι (Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 109, commentary on line 3), but the verb ἐνδεικνυμι also has legal connotations.

¹⁵² Lamont, “A New Commercial Curse Tablet from Classical Athens,” 164: “Hermes was the deity most commonly invoked on curse tablets, under a wide range of epithets, including ‘Chthonios.’”

¹⁵³ Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 110. For a more ancient example and helpful discussion of poetics, see Lamont, “A New Commercial Curse,” esp. 165. The idea of the destruction of the soul, heart, mind, and wits of Karpimē Babbia finds an echo in 1 Cor. 5:5 (παράδουναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾶ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου), even if the *defixio* offers no attendant healing or salvation. See Nasrallah, “Judgment, Justice, and Destruction,” esp. 361–62.

¹⁵⁴ Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 111: “lines 9–13: Here the second section of the judicial prayer is introduced.”

from near command to intimate plea.¹⁵⁵ The tablet then proceeds, calling on the great names (*onomata*) of Anankē, the goddess Necessity, and then bursting into twenty-nine letters, *voces magicae* which perhaps make up these great names. The theme of names (*onomata*) recurs thrice more, in lines 12 (*to onuma to epanankon* – “the name carrying compulsion”), 13 (*onumazetai* – “which is not named easily”), and 14 (*mega onuma*, which seems to be Eupher). The *defixio* intertwines its repetition of the word *onoma* with repetition of the root *anagk-* (lines 10, 12, and 13–14: *Anankē* [presumably the name of the goddess], *epanankon*, and *anankaiai*<*s*>).

The petitioner gives another command (line 11): “Make me fruitful” (*karpisai me*), an imperative repeated at line 14 and conjoined there with a balancing curse for Karpimē Babbia. The curse’s end twice uses *katargeō/katergasia*: “destroy Karpimē Babbia, garland weaver, from head until footprints by means of monthly destruction.”¹⁵⁶ The imperative point of the spell is also a repeated pun: *karpisai me*: make *me* fruitful, destroy the fruitfulness of Karpimē Babbia. (The Greek word for fruit is *karpos*.) The use of the word “fruitful” alongside the phrase “monthly destruction” hints at some sort of reproductive envy or competition.¹⁵⁷ The curse is punctuated at the beginning, middle, and end by the name of its recipient (lines 1–2, 7, 14). Given the prominence of the Bab(b)ia family in Corinth, known from monumental inscriptions – they dedicated a fountain on the forum, for example – we can wonder if

¹⁵⁵ Archaeologist Ronald Stroud pictures this plea voiced out loud in the Building of the Tablets amid the fragrant haze of incense burned on a *thymiaterion*, also found in the complex. Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 111: The triplet [of the verbs] . . . in virtual isocolon, with each verb followed by an enclitic, may echo an oral chant as in a prayer or a hymn, perhaps one that was chanted in Room 7 of the Building of the Tablets with lamps burning and incense from the thymiateria filling the air in this very confined space.”

¹⁵⁶ See also Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 123, “and (?) she will be destroyed from this day today – I beg (?) – sinews – underworld – herself –” and the two curses against Maxima Pontia, both of which use the word *katergasia* (nos. 130, 131).

¹⁵⁷ Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 114. It is possible that because the woman’s work is mentioned that this *defixio* should be understood in the context of commercial competition; see Esther Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk Among the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 154. The name of the victim’s mother or the occupation of the victim are frequently attested to pinpoint the identity of the curse’s target, as we saw with the curse against Babylas discussed on p. 109 above.

Karpimē¹⁵⁸ is a personal name or a code to refer to a specific woman who is considered fruitful, from the *oikos* of Babbuius. Given her low-status work as garland weaver, perhaps this Karpimē is the nickname of an enslaved woman: the fruitful one.

Karpimē Babbia is named as a garland weaver. As you may recall from the Introduction to this book, Plutarch, a roughly contemporaneous writer, discusses proper rhetorical style and in doing so calls women garland weavers both too much (perhaps, in the American vernacular, “extra”) and empty – *to polu kai kenon*. He dismisses them as people who “cull flower-clusters and the fragrance of leaves, stringing and plaiting them pleasantly enough – but a short-lived and fruitless work.”¹⁵⁹ Plutarch uses the image of the *stephanēplokos* several times to critique fruitless or ephemeral work, using the wilting garlands as a metaphor for unsuccessful oratory, compared to the strong, masculine work of good speeches.¹⁶⁰

In discussing the curse, I have so far skipped its *voces magicae*: “Nebezapadaieisen[.]geibebeohera” and “eupher.” We could easily pass over these letters as nonsense. Yet aesthetic considerations of *defixiones* should extend to what we might consider unusual (non-normative) linguistic elements we often find in so-called magical texts: vowel streams, *voces magicae*, or *charaktēres*.¹⁶¹ These linguistic elements, largely incomprehensible to us, offer an alternative mode of thinking about

¹⁵⁸ Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions*, 109, mentions that the name Karpimē is attested for both free and enslaved women.

¹⁵⁹ Plutarch, *De aud. = Mor.* 41F text and translation in Plutarch, *Moralia, Volume I: The Education of Children. How the Young Man Should Study Poetry. On Listening to Lectures. How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend. How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue* (trans. Frank Cole Babbitt; LCL 197; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 224–25. Διὸ δεῖ τὸ πολὺ καὶ κενὸν ἀφαιροῦντα τῆς λέξεως αὐτὸν διώκειν τὸν καρπὸν καὶ μιμεῖσθαι μὴ τὰς στεφανηπλόκους ἀλλὰ τὰς μελίττας. αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐπιούσαι τὰ ἀνθηρὰ καὶ εὐώδη τῶν φύλλων συνείρουσι καὶ διαπλέκουσιν ἡδὺ μὲν ἐφήμερον δὲ καὶ ἄκαρπον ἔργον· One ought therefore to strip off the superfluity and inanity from the style, and to seek after the fruit itself, imitating not women that make garlands, but the bees. For those women, culling flower-clusters and sweet-scented leaves, intertwine and plait them, and produce something which is pleasant enough, but short-lived and fruitless.

¹⁶⁰ Plutarch, *Quaest. conviv.* 3 = *Mor.* 645F; *Praec. gr. reip.* = *Mor.* 802E.

¹⁶¹ Gordon, “Charaktēres,” 253–300. For *charaktēres* on nails, see Gabriella Bevilacqua, “Chiodi Magici,” *Archeologia Classica* 52 (2001): 129–50. Panagiota Sarischouli, “A Glossary of Voces Magicae: Some Further Thoughts” (presentation at a conference titled “Incantatory Words: Greek and Egyptian Languages in the Magical Papyri,” University of Chicago Center in Paris, September 28, 2021) seeks to develop an online Voces Magicae Glossary (VMG).

language – an alternative poetics, on the one hand, and letters as having visual impact, on the other, as we have seen in the Interlude.

If we begin with objects like *defixiones*, amulets, and recipe books rather than elite philosophical texts like Plato's *Cratylus* or Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, we may end with a new understanding of ancient theories of language and how it works – of its material and immaterial efficacies.¹⁶² Ancient writers acknowledge that the sublime can be found in multiple genres and phrasings: it is not a matter of style “but the logic of the expression, the forces it sets in motion, its dynamism and energy, and the ideas and images it conjures up in the mind of a beholder.”¹⁶³ Longinus argues that “we will be able to produce the sublime if we can always manage to select the most timely of the materials to hand and then can form them like a single body through their combination with one with another” (10.1).¹⁶⁴ He discusses Sappho's “technical virtuosity and skill”:

For instance, Sappho takes each of the symptoms that occur in erotic madnesses from their symptoms in real life. Where does she demonstrate her excellence? She is skillful at selecting the most extreme and intense details and at binding them together. . . . Do you not admire the way she brings everything together – mind and body, hearing and tongue, eyes and skin? She seems to have lost them all, and to be looking for them as though they were external to her. . . . She is, all at once and like a contradiction in terms, cold and burning, raving (ἀλογιστεῖ) and sane, frightened, and just short of death, with the result that it is not one single emotion that appears (φαίνεται) to have gripped her, but a congeries (σύνοδος) of emotions. Lovers experience all this; Sappho's achievement of excellence, as I have said, lies in her selection and combination of the most striking details. (10.3)¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² See LeVen, “The Erogenous Ear,” 212–32; James I. Porter, “Language as a System in Ancient Rhetoric and Grammar,” in *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language*, ed. Egbert J. Bakker (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), 512–23.

¹⁶³ Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, 12.

¹⁶⁴ ἔξ ἀνάγκης γένοιτ' ἂν ἡμῖν ὕψους αἴτιον τὸ τῶν ἐμφορομένων ἐκλέγειν αἰεὶ τὰ καιριώτατα καὶ ταῦτα τῇ πρὸς ἄλληλα ἐπισυνθέσει καθάπερ ἔν τι σῶμα ποιεῖν δύνασθαι. As cited in Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, 119; I have slightly modified the translation.

¹⁶⁵ οἷον ἡ Σαπφῶ τὰ συμβαίνοντα ταῖς ἐρωτικαῖς μανίαις παθήματα ἐκ τῶν παρεπομένων καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας αὐτῆς ἐκάστοτε λαμβάνει. ποῦ δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἀποδείκνυται; ὅτι τὰ ἄκρα αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπερτεταμένα δεινὰ καὶ ἐκλέξει καὶ εἰς ἄλληλα συνδῆσαι. . . . οὐ θαυμάζεις ὥς ὑπὸ τὸ αὐτὸ τὴν ψυχὴν τὸ σῶμα, τὰς ἀκοὰς τὴν γλῶσσαν, τὰς ὄψεις τὴν χροάν, πάνθ' ὥς ἀλλότρια διοιχόμενα ἐπιζητέῃ, καὶ καθ' ὑπεναντιώσεις ἅμα ψύχεται καίεται, ἀλογιστεῖ φρονεῖ τῇ γάρ τοι φοβεῖται τῇ παρ' ὀλίγον τέθηκεν ἵνα μὴ ἔν τι περὶ αὐτὴν πάθος φαίνεται, παθῶν δὲ σύνοδος; πάντα μὲν τοιαῦτα γίνεται περὶ τοὺς ἐρῶντας, ἡ λῆψις δ' ὥς ἔφην τῶν ἄκρων καὶ ἡ εἰς ταῦτ' συναίρεσις ἀπειργάσατο τὴν ἐξοχήν. As cited in Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, 119–20. Greek ed. D. A. Russell, “Longinus” *On the Sublime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 1–56.

Longinus's analysis of Sappho's poetry brings together the language of binding (*sundēsai*) and of madness, sanity, and a synod of emotions. As Porter puts it, "Sublimity in each case arises out of the rubble of aphasia; emotions triumph over rational utterance; the reader exhausts herself in an attempt to construe meaning where there is only blinding, shattering, fragmentation, and amazement."¹⁶⁶

Voces magicae, such as the one found in Roman Corinth within a curse against Karpimē Babbia, are an important context for understanding *glōssai* in 1 Corinthians. This curse tablet or the larger phenomenon of *voces magicae* does not explain or fix the meaning of 1 Corinthians's discussion of *genē glōssōn* or "kinds of tongues": I am not positivistically arguing that the phrase "kinds of tongues" for Paul and Sosthenes, writers, or for those who first heard this letter written aloud in assembly, evoked only one meaning. But the phenomenon of such letter streams is one piece of evidence within a larger context of ancient play with and theorizing about sound and language. In the case of ancient Corinth, transgressive linguistic practices occurred at different sites: the one at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth, the other among Christ-followers likely somewhere in the lower city, folk who lacked a sanctuary or temenos for their practices. Despite their differences, both the curse tablet and 1 Corinthians remain as data for ritual practices that involved play with language.

GALEN ON LANGUAGE'S *HAMARTIA*

Voces magicae and glossolalia, as linguistic phenomena, occur contemporaneously with theorizations of composition and rhetoric: the smoothness of speech, beauty and sound in human language, the mouth and resonance. In the curse against Karpimē Babbia we find a theory of language put into practice: an incantation to be said, *voces magicae* likely to be uttered, the object to be left at one of the bases in what archaeologists have called the "Building of the Tablets" within the precinct of Demeter and Kore at the Acrocorinth. From the slight reference to "tongues of humans and of angels" in 1 Corinthians, and in the letter's evident allergy to speaking in tongues, we can reconstruct that some ritually effective, historically disappeared transgressive language was occurring among Corinthian Christ-followers.

¹⁶⁶ Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity*, 120.

This chapter paused with Dionysius's *On composition* and its ideas of the effectiveness of simple and even ugly words; its ideas of the breath moving through the body to produce beautiful vowel sounds. We have paused with Favorinus the orator and the fascination and denigration of his curiously gendered body. We have paused with Karpimē Babbia and her monthly destruction, thought to be brought about in part by letter streams that are unintelligible in Greek. These sources helped us to understand a larger context for interest in speech and tongues in 1 Corinthians. Invective against Favorinus demonstrated that people in antiquity were concerned about the magical power of a public speaker, and how that enchantment might inhere in what was seen to be gender deviance – a concern Paul and Sosthenes expressed, however unclearly, with their interest in women being veiled while praying and prophesying. Dionysius, concerned among others of his time with what was *hypsos*, high or sublime, in rhetoric, offered a long form discourse that helps us to extrapolate to the aesthetics of “kinds of tongues” (*genē glōssōn*) or curse tablets. These tongues, in a ritual context, likely deliberately played across the frictive and the commonplace, along with the smooth and the beautiful, to produce a particular aesthetic.¹⁶⁷ In the curse we found perhaps a scat – a trace of experimentation with sound and language that is unintelligible to humans, or perhaps supra-intelligible, with a sonic impact upon the practitioners and an expectation of daimonic and divine response.

The philosophical problem of language's ambiguity had been debated before Plato and made famous in his *Cratylus*. Centuries later, Galen's “On Fallacies Due to Language” not only demonstrates the remarkable scope of a Greek author whom we usually associate with medicine, but also shows Galen's work in ancient philosophy of language. It is a major resource regarding Stoic teachings concerning ambiguity in language.¹⁶⁸ The terms Galen uses to talk about the ambiguities and problems of language are moral. “Vice,” “fallacies,” “fraud” (Galen, *De capt.* 2.90):¹⁶⁹ among the

¹⁶⁷ See Porter, “Language as a System in Ancient Rhetoric and Grammar,” 5.

¹⁶⁸ Robert Blair Edlow, *Galen on Language and Ambiguity* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), xi–xii.

¹⁶⁹ Galen, *De capt.* 2.90; trans. Edlow, *Galen*, 92: “[A]ll the fallacies due to language necessarily result from vice of language. For it is by holding fast to this [namely, to vice in language] as to a first principle that the sophists deceive those who are less experienced in these matters and who do not perceive the fraud. If we wish to determine accurately how many fallacies result from language, we must determine how many vices in language there are. This will be fully seen when it has been determined whether the virtue of language is one or more than one.” These moral terms also reflect the language of Galen's sources.

attendant Greek terms, *kakia* points to evil; *sophismata* refer to artifices or contentious argumentations; *hamartia*, of course, in Christian texts is translated “sin” and in Galen is perhaps best translated “flaw.” The fundamental question for Galen is whether language is fulfilling the role that suits it and its true function: signifying (*sēmainein*). Just like a knife is made for cutting, language too is made for something: for giving a sign, a marker, for clarifying.¹⁷⁰

Despite or because of Galen’s commitment to language that works with precision in its signifying function, his treatise is full of examples of language’s transgressions and ambiguities. It engages with Plato’s *Cratylus* and with Aristotle, as Galen declares that some virtues of language are accidental and non-essential. Language can be corrupted; there can be infelicities (“such as elliptical utterance, prolixity, or redundancy”) but it is only “obscurity or ambiguity” that leads to what he terms a “vice of language.” Galen turns to Aristotle’s taxonomy and defines a sentence as a “combination of names.” He notes that when something can “signify either of two things,” ambiguity results. Something simple can cause this problem: *oros*, marked by a rough breathing, means boundary; *oros*, with a smooth breathing, means hill. These are simple problems which sophists, Galen says, use to create specious arguments (*De capt.* 3).¹⁷¹ Galen also addresses other problems of ambiguity. *Scripta continua*, the ancient practice of writing without breaks for words or marks for sentences or phrases, can create confusion: that is, a set of letters, differently divided, can mean different things: ΑΥΛΗΤΡΙΣΠΕΣΟΥΣΑ can mean “the flute-girl having fallen” or “the court having fallen three times,” as Galen explains.

Galen’s attention to Stoic definitions of language’s ambiguities materializes an elite, complex debate on how language works – not the register of the person cursing Karpimē Babbia or of one of the Corinthian wo/men who prophesied. But the realities of language’s so-called vice can also be exploited as word play or as mystifying element on a curse tablet. For example, *voces magicae* deliberately obfuscate and obscure normal human realms of language for a ritual purpose. The use of vowels in recipes for ritual opens up voice and sound to a deliberately breath-filled mode of embodied utterance that has no evident purpose of

¹⁷⁰ Edlow, *Galen*, 92 n.12.

¹⁷¹ There can even be a violence to their wordplay: “Hence Aristotle said, ‘[we mean different things] by the same words and sentences.’ For some words and sentences are the same, but the sophists do violence to the form [by imposing unintended meanings]” (*De capt.* 3). Edlow, *Galen*, 102.

communication in normal human realms. Perhaps *voces magicae* also provide a context for what was going on with “kinds of tongues,” *genē glōssōn*, at the assembly in Christ in Roman Corinth. What Galen would label a *hamartia* or flaw, what he would bin as *asapheia* or ambiguity, what he would moralize as *kakia* or the vice or evil of language use: these are poetic modes deployed in *defixiones* to short-circuit normal modes of communication. These act, in Patricia Cox Miller’s words, “in praise of nonsense.” But they are precisely *not* nonsense, insofar as *voces magicae* both work as signs and were likely vocalized in ritual. While Galen is committed to language that signifies with precision, curse tablets adopt multiple forms of signs: strings of known letters that make no sense to us but sometimes sound vaguely like the names of gods; *charaktēres* that are signs that have no evident human alphabetical meaning; vowel sequences that sustain the breath but would be puzzling to Galen’s commitment to signification. Curse tablets precisely use the “faults” of language to do their own work at the border of human and non-human comprehensibility. Perhaps so too “kinds of tongues” at Corinth.

CONCLUSIONS

Theorization of language and sound does not happen only among elites, instantiated in treatises, but also among those of lower status. It does not only happen in the philosophical conversation in the villa garden, but also in the everyday rituals of the making of curse tablets. And ancient ritual is more than words on the printed page of an edition. Ancient ritual involved air pushed through the trachea, the scratching of letters onto a surface, lead or papyrus that is folded or rolled, the sound – whatever that sound was – of tongues.

I have offered a historical reconstruction of the possibility and probability that the Corinthians wo/men prophets engaged in a widespread contemporaneous and also local ritual practice of speaking in tongues, which scholars label *voces magicae*. By this historical precision I intend to point to larger issues. First, ideas about and practices of the aesthetics of language extend past the trained rhetor of antiquity. Second, as we saw in M. NourbeSe Philip’s poem and in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, speech and the tongue are inextricably linked to gendered and raced bodies, and the body’s possibilities and limits of tongue and teeth define the aesthetic possibilities of glossolalia. Third, the *pneuma* discussed in 1 Corinthians should not be indexed only to *ruah* or to Holy Spirit or to Stoic ideas of

material spirit or to ideas of exorcized spirits, but also should include the idea of *pneuma* as breath that produces the beauty or harshness of vocalizations. Concomitantly, some forms of speech effervesce past the dolorous language of the colonizer. Finally, our scholarly approaches to ancient texts are inextricably wound up with our racialized and gendered aesthetics. The fields of New Testament and the Classics have their own racial and racist inheritances, which inflect their implicit and explicit definitions of beauty.

We do not know what the “kinds of tongues” (*genē glōssōn*) (1 Cor. 12:10) among Corinthian Christ-followers sounded like. We can only partially reconstruct what we will never fully have: the sounds of antiquity. We cannot know fully how *glōssai* sounded at Corinth; we know that even a half century later, tongues sometimes rationalized as heteroglossia, as speaking in other languages. By the time that *glōssai* are again interpreted at Azusa Street in Los Angeles in the early twentieth century, they function to bridge (however briefly) racial barriers, as Black and white came together to worship, speaking in tongues, as Keri Day has reminded us.

Yet we can understand more about these ancient “kinds of tongues” if we investigate them alongside contemporaneous *vores magicæ*, on the one hand, and, on the other, discussions of rhetoric composition, and the role of the human body – trachea, mouth, breath – in producing beautiful and ugly speech. Writers of antiquity thought that tongues and *vores magicæ* could lead either to the transcendence of language or to something barbarous. By attending to these ancient aesthetic evaluations, as well as to modern scholarly anxiety about the cacophony of glossolalia, we can come to an understanding of speaking in tongues as an aesthetic choice and operation of power, as well as a *pneuma*-driven force through the body. The Corinthian wo/men who prophesied and who had gifts of tongues engaged in speech in a context which had gendered ideas of language and its performance, discussions of the mechanics of speech and the tongue and *pneuma* (breath, spirit), and concerns about the aesthetics of language and how the tongue is tied to and tied by power. Language need not lead to l/anguish. There are other, intimate uses of the tongue and of tongues that exceed the strictures of normal speech and language.

Incantation

Sound and Song as Curse, Cure, and Gospel

Clement of Alexandria's *Protreptikos* or *Exhortation to the Greeks*, written in the late second century, begins with an elaborate story of a song that lures fish, and a cicada that jumps up to fill in for the broken string of a lyre, scraping away with perfect pitch. I have long thought this was odd. The ancient genre of protreptic offered a kind of professional calling card, an introduction to speakers' cultural sophistication, the strength of their argument and teaching, and a demonstration of their ability to argue for the superior form of philosophy-theology.¹ If you're about to show your intellectual significance, to one-up other teachers of Greek philosophy-theology in beautiful Greek prose, why begin with sound and song and a perky cicada?

This chapter brings us to the enduring power of song and incantation in antiquity. "Bring to perfection this perfect incantation," states a curse from late antique Jerusalem, borrowing a phrase that vamps its way from Aristophanes in classical Greece through to the fourth century CE, when someone deposited a curse in a large Roman structure located to the south of the Temple Mount and the southern edge of the Tyropoean Valley.²

¹ Marco Rizzi, "Protreptic and Rhetoric: Clement of Alexandria," in *When Wisdom Calls: Philosophical Protreptic in Antiquity*, eds. Olga Alieva et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 335–48.

² The "villa" is ca. 2,000 sq. meters. Doron Ben Ami, Yana Tchekhanovets, and Robert Walter Daniel, "A Juridical Curse from a Roman Mansion in the City of David," *ZPE* 186 (2013): 227–36; explicated further, including a topographical photograph, in Jessica Lamont, "Early Greek Incantations in Late Roman Jerusalem: Kyrilla's Judicial Curse," *ZPE* 209 (2019): 43–53.

Tumbled down from a second story of the villa during an earthquake, to lie atop other remains, was a lead *defixio*.³ In it, a woman named Kyrilla curses Iennys so that he cannot “speak and enact opposition” to her, presumably in a court of law.⁴ Its last lines – or what is comprehensible to us of these lines – invoke the goddess Persephone and refer to a “perfect incantation” before they evolve into *charaktēres* and *voces magicae* – that is, symbols and Greek lettering which we can’t (yet?) make sense of:

Lady Phersephoneia, bring to perfection
 this perfect incantation! [*charaktēres*]
 [*charakēres* and *voces magicae*] ne euēia
 [. .]aē ēaō Iaōth Iabōth Ia[ō]th Iabōch amabōth Iabōch
 Πότνια Φερσεφόνεια, τέλει
 [τ]ελέαν ἐπασιδήν. [*six charaktēres*]
 [. .] [*eight charaktēres*] νε ευηια
 [. .]ση ηαω Ιαωθ Ιαβωθ Ια
 [ω]θ Ιαβωχ αμαβωθ Ιαβωχ⁵

“Bring to perfection this perfect incantation,” with its nice use of polyptoton, or repetition of a word in a different case and thus repetition of sound (*telei telean*), uses a phrase that echoes from Aristophanes in the fifth century BCE, repeats in the perhaps Augustan-period Philinna papyrus (PGM XX.1–4), earworms its way into later incantations, and resounds to this fourth century CE curse and perhaps beyond.⁶ What is

³ IAA B.81885. Ben Ami et al., “A Juridical Curse from a Roman Mansion,” 227–28. For the categorization of *defixiones* as “prayers for justice” see H. S. Versnel, “Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers,” in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, eds. Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60–106.

⁴ Lamont, “Early Greek Incantations,” 44. Lamont offers slight emendations to the *editio principio* of Ben Ami et al. and gives this translation of the complete *defixio*: “Come to me, chthonic daimon under the earth, Abrasax, ruler and binder! Come, Hecate, trifurcated queen, Ereschigal! Come to me, king Pluto, by your great name, Yesemmigadon! Come to me, chthonic Gaia and chthonic Hermes and Pluto and queen Persephone! I strike and strike down and nail down – of Iennys, whom the womb bore – the tongue, the eyes, the wrath, the ire, the anger, the delaying, the opposition, so that he may in no way oppose, so that he may in no way speak or enact opposition to Kyrilla, whom the womb bore . . . but rather that Iennys, whom the womb bore, be subject to her. Lady Phersephoneia, bring to perfection this perfect incantation! (magical signs and letters) ne euēia [. .]aē ēaō Iaōth Iabōth Ia[ō]th Iabōch amabōth Iabōch.”

⁵ Lines 20–24. Ben Ami et al., “A Juridical Curse from a Roman Mansion,” 232; Lamont, “Early Greek Incantations,” 44–46.

⁶ Lamont has shown that “variants of this hexametric coda . . . are well attested in magical papyri from late Hellenistic and early imperial Egypt,” and that in those texts the term *epōidē* or incantation “almost always refers to hexameter verse” (“Early Greek

this “aesthetics of the fragment,”⁷ found in a dactylic hemistich? How and why could such a phrase endure? Such is the power of song and incantation in the ancient Mediterranean world.

If we do not study incantation, we miss a good deal of what constituted religion and ritual practices in Mediterranean antiquity, including among ancient Christians. This last chapter of the book seeks to reorient our aesthetic, philosophical, and ethical frameworks for the study of religion in the ancient Mediterranean world by exploring incantation and song. And the boundaries between song, incantation, and speech blurred in antiquity, even as they do in many contemporary contexts.⁸ Philostratus, in the *Lives of the Sophists*, recounted the story of an orator rebuking a student for speaking as if they were singing (*Vit. soph.* 1.20 [Isaeus]). Dio mocks something similar in his invective against the Alexandrians:

They all sing now, both public speakers and sophists, and everything is done through song. If someone were to pass a court of justice, they could not easily decide whether a drinking-party was in progress or whether justice was being determined; and if there is a sophist's lecture-room nearby, it will not be easy to distinguish the lecture. It seems to me, from now, those proceeding into the gymnasium will exercise with the

Incantations,” 46); see also Christopher Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres from Homer to Theocritus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), esp. 147. The precise date of the Philinna papyrus or the now fragmentary “book” of hexametrical charms which it represents does not matter to my argument, since Lamont adduces early and widespread use of this phrase. She, following Preisendanz, Henrichs, and Maas, argues for the Augustan period (Lamont, “Early Greek Incantations,” 46 nn. 11–12); P. Maas (“The Philinna Papyrus,” *JHS* 62 [1942]: 33, 38) noted that Grenfell and Hunt dated the text to the first century BCE based on paleographical analysis, while Wilamowitz stated that it could not be earlier than the Hellenistic period. David Frankfurter (“Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions,” in *GSAM*, 8) dates the Philinna papyrus to the third or fourth century CE and situates it in a context of Egyptian ritual experts.

⁷ Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 42; on the fragment, see also Braxton Shelley, *An Eternal Pitch: Bishop G. E. Patterson, Broadcast Religion, and the Afterlives of Ecstasy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2023), on broadcast ensemble and the logic of the prayer cloth.

⁸ Note that for the pre-classical and classical period too it is unknown “whether the Greeks were singing, chanting, or simply speaking when they performed [dactylic hexameter]” (Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 19); Verena Schulz, “The Music of the Words in Roman Rhetoric,” in *A Companion to Ancient Greek and Roman Music*, eds. Tosca A. C. Lynch and Eleonora Rocconi (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 365, 368: “Quintilian highly honors music and the Greek musical traditions (e.g., Pythagoras, Plato) and considers its knowledge essential for the orator, arguing that music and rhetoric are based on similar formal elements” (p. 365). On contemporary contexts, see p. 214 below.

accompaniment of a tune, and [with the accompaniment of the tune] they will heal those who are sick. For those who discourse concerning the art [of medicine] even now sing to you. (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 32.68)⁹

The boundary between speech and song was porous. Sing-songiness could tilt one dangerously towards femininity and foreignness, those qualities which perhaps evoked in elite males both desire and disgust, to borrow a phrase from postcolonial criticisms.¹⁰

These songs were not mere background soundtracks, enhancing the smoky ambience of the ancient world. Some music was considered philosophically-theologically effective, ritually powerful, and aligned with the cosmic spheres. The treatise *De musica*, which circulated under Plutarch's name, even links music and the human voice to the gods:

⁹ My trans.; Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 31–36 (trans. J. W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby; LCL 358; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 238–39: ὥς γὰρ ὁρώσι τὴν σπουδὴν ὑμῶν τὴν περὶ τοῦτο καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, πάντες δὴ ἄδουσι καὶ ῥήτορες καὶ σοφισταί, καὶ πάντα περαίνεται δι' ᾧδης ὥστ', εἴ τις παρῖοι δικαστήριον, οὐκ ἂν γνοίη ῥαδίως πότερον ἔνδον πίνουσιν ἢ δικάζονται· κἀν σοφιστοῦ δὲ οἶκημα πλησίον ἦ, οὐκ ἔσται γινῶναι τὴν διατριβὴν. δοκεῖ δέ μοι, καὶ ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ προϊόντες ἤδη γυμνάσσονται πρὸς μέλος καὶ τοὺς κάμνοντας ἴσονται. περὶ γὰρ τῆς τέχνης καὶ νῦν ὑμῖν διαλέγονται ἄδοντες. This is a common topos; see also Quintilian *Inst.* 1.10.31–32: “Nevertheless, I think I ought to state more plainly that I do not recommend the effeminate music of the modern stage, emasculated by indecent rhythms, which has done so much to destroy any manly strength we still had left, but rather the music to which the praises of brave men were sung, and which brave men themselves used to sing. Nor do I advise the psaltery and the spadix, instruments which not even respectable girls should handle, but rather a knowledge of the principles that possess such power to arouse or sedate the emotions.” *apertius tamen profitendum puto non hanc a me praecipi quae nunc in scaenis effeminata et impudicis modis fracta non ex parte minima si quid in nobis virilis roboris manebat excidit, sed qua laudes fortium caneantur quaque ipsi fortes caneant: nec psalteria et spadicas, etiam virginibus probis recusanda, sed cognitionem rationis, quae ad movendos leniendosque affectus plurimum valet.* Translation and Latin from Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Volume I: Books 1–2* (ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell; LCL 124; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 228–29.

¹⁰ See pp. 174–75 above. This phenomenon inspired the invention of new phrases, such as Cicero's “*cantus obscurior*, ‘a more concealed sort of singing’ (*Orat.* 57), which allows for modulations of the voice (*vocis flexiones*)” (Schulz, “The Music,” 368). See also Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), e.g., xix, 107. See further Schulz, “The Music of the Words in Roman Rhetoric,” 368: “Quintilian criticizes singing as the worst mistake of contemporary orators (*Inst.* 11.3.57–60): he follows Cicero (*Inst.* 11.3.58), who had reproached the singing (*paene canticum*) of Phrygian and Carian orators in their epilogues (*Orat.* 57). Latin rhetorical texts thus agree in connecting this sort of singing with several spheres and concepts that were regarded as unworthy of the Roman orator and should be excluded from the definition of the orator as a severe politician. This practice was associated with the artistry of singers, the foreignness of Asian orators, and femininity (Connolly 2007).”

... let's see what second science, coming after grammar, is concerned with the voice (*phōnē*). I take it to be music. For it is pious and urgent for humans to sing hymns to the gods, who have gifted humans alone with articulate voice. Even Homer signified this in the passage where he says:

All day long they propitiated the god with song and dance,
beautifully incanting a paean to Apollo, these young Achaians,
singing and dancing to the one who works from afar, and he listened
in gladness.

Come then, you votaries of music...¹¹

Incantations and song, given by the gods, could harm – as in Kyrilla's curse against Iennys – but could also heal; incantation was understood to be a *pharmakon* – a drug that could bring benefit or harm.¹² Long after Pythagoras lived, Iamblichus in the late third- or early-fourth century CE would create a kind of gospel about him, recalling the community that developed around the philosopher: “They also used incantations for some illnesses. And they believed that music contributed greatly to health if someone used it in proper ways. They also used selected verses of Homer and Hesiod for the improvement of the soul” (*De vit. Pythag.* 29).¹³ The

¹¹ ... ἴδωμεν τίς μετὰ ταύτην δευτέρα πρέπουσα φωνῇ ἐπιστήμη. οἶμαι δὲ ὅτι μουσική· ὑμνεῖν γὰρ εὐσεβὲς καὶ προηγούμενον ἀνθρώποις τοὺς χαρισμένους αὐτοῖς μόνοις τὴν ἑναρθρον φωνὴν θεοῦς· τοῦτο δὲ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἐπεσημήνατο ἐν οἷς λέγει

Εοὶ δὲ πανήμεριοι μολπῇ θεὸν ἰλάσκοντο
καλὸν αἰδόντες παιήονα, κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν,
μέλποντες ἐκάεργον· ὁ δὲ φρένα τέρπετ'
ἀκούων. ἄγε δὴ, ὦ μουσικῆς θιασῶται... (*Il.* 1.473–74).

Greek from Plutarch, *Moralia*, Volume XIV: *That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible. Reply to Colotes in Defence of the Other Philosophers*. Is “Live Unknown” a Wise Precept? On Music (trans. Benedict Einarson, Phillip H. De Lacy; LCL 428; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 354. The Homeric translation is slightly revised via Richmond Lattimore's *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 70. Pseudo-Plutarch's *De musica* likely dates to the Antonine period and borrows not only Plutarch's name but also elements of his prose. Egert Pöhlmann, “Ps. Plutarch, *De Musica*: A History of Oral Tradition of Ancient Greek Music,” *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 99.3 (2011): 14–15. Following the work of Andrew Barker, I also refer to this treatise as Plutarchian. In an early sixth-century CE codex, it was collected alongside Ptolemy's *Harmonies* and Porphyry's *Commentary on Ptolemy*. Older collections of Plutarch's writings do not contain the text. The argument that one's own area of study is essential to the understanding of all other disciplines is a common one in antiquity (and among Humanities departments today); for example, Polybius does this for history and Vitruvius for architecture.

¹² Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 127–28.

¹³ Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* (trans. John M. Dillon and Jackson Hershbell; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), section 164: χρῆσθαι δὲ καὶ ταῖς ἐπωδαῖς πρὸς ἕνια τῶν ἀρρωστημάτων. ὑπελάμβανον δὲ καὶ τὴν μουσικὴν μεγάλην συμβάλλεσθαι πρὸς ὑγείαν, ἃν τις αὐτῇ χρῆται κατὰ τοὺς προσήκοντας τρόπους, ἐχρώντο δὲ καὶ Ὅμηρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου λέξεσι

human voice in incantation or song could heal illness, especially emotional illness.¹⁴ As we saw in Chapter 1, incantation could serve as both cure and prophylactic for anger, including the legal rage about which the curse of Sotērianos, in Amathous, Cyprus, was so concerned.¹⁵

In both Kyrilla's curse against Iennys and Iamblichus's discussion of Pythagorean community, some ancient scrap of poetics – Aristophanes, Hesiod, and especially Homeric phrases¹⁶ – is embedded in the sound. Such scraps were used pharmaceutically, philosophically, and theologically. These texts, of course, were known through prestigious scholarship such as the commentarial tradition in Alexandria and through the perhaps sung recital of poetic texts, particularly Homeric epic, in public competitions between rhapsodists.¹⁷ Song and incantation were central to cultic

διειλεγμέναις πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν ψυχῆς. Unless otherwise noted, translations are Dillon and Hershbell and Greek edition is U. Klein (post L. Deubner), *Iamblichi de vita Pythagorica liber* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1937). Regarding the emotional, see e.g., Aristides Quintilianus *De mus.* 1.12: "Compositions differ in the following ways: in genus (enharmonic, chromatic or diatonic), in *systema* (*hypatoeides*, *mesoeides* or *netoeides*), in *tonos* (for example Dorian or Phrygian), in *style* (nomic, dithyrambic), in *character* (for instance we call one through which we arouse mournful emotions 'depressing', one through which we lift up the spirit 'exalting', and one through which we bring the soul round to peacefulness 'intermediate'). These are called 'characters' because it is primarily through them that conditions of the soul are diagnosed and put right." Trans. Andrew Barker, *Greek Musical Writings*, vol. 2: *Harmonic and Acoustic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 432–34. See also Robyn Faith Walsh, *The Origins of Early Christian Literature: Contextualizing the New Testament Within Greco-Roman Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 32, 159.

¹⁴ Schulz, "The Music," 367.

¹⁵ See esp. pp. 51–62 above; see also Faraone's chapter "Helen's *Pharmakon* as Disguised Incantation," *Hexametrical Genre*, esp. 127–35.

¹⁶ Regarding Homeric verse as song tradition, see Milman Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-making: I. Homer and Homeric Style," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 41 (1930): 73–147, and "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-making: II. The Homeric Language as the Language of Oral Poetry," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 43 (1932): 1–50; Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Gregory Nagy, *Poetry as Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and pp. 220–21 below.

¹⁷ Anne Gangloff ("Rhapsodes and Rhapsodic Contests in the Imperial Period," in *Homer in Performance: Rhapsodes, Narrators, and Characters*, eds. Jonathan Ready and Christos Tsagalis [Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018], 130) defines rhapsodes this way: "traditional rhapsodes, although occasionally accompanied by a musician, specialized in the vocal performance of poetic texts that could be 'sung' without musical accompaniment." These "were associated with the epics of Homer" (p. 130). See also Pseudo-Plutarch *De musica*, which repeatedly refers to the connection between song and recitation of Homer, e.g., "After dedicating themselves to the gods in any way they wished, performers proceeded at once to the poetry of Homer or other authors, as is clear from the preludes of Terpander" (*De mus.* 6; trans. Barker, 1.211). Homeric epic

and cultural life and seeped their way into multiple locations. The work of song and incantation was debated by those of high status in musicological texts – that is, technical treatises on music.¹⁸ It was slammed in the rhetorical output of elite male performance, prescribed in a hagiographical text about a great philosopher who used song to heal and to save, and hinted at in *defixiones*. If we can cup our ear to the historical wall, to puzzle out the faint strains of antiquity, what we hear in this variety of sources is an “aesthetic religious labor” that funds this song tradition.¹⁹

“Bring to perfection this perfect incantation!” echoes the fourth-century curse from Jerusalem. What is the cause of this repetition of Homeric incantations or a bit of Aristophanes or the like? Why splice this into the soundtrack of antiquity? These repetitions are a bit surprising for me as a historian. Many of us have gently curbed students from starting an essay with “throughout time and space...” or “throughout history...” so I flinch when I say to you *For more than one thousand years, from a stage in Athens to a monumental villa in Jerusalem, people said “bring to perfection this perfect incantation” or No matter if you were in Egypt or in Bath, England, or lived in the fourth century BCE or the fourth century CE, you might make a curse from lead, theorizing its materiality as dead and cold, or Evidence from the Roman period to the Middle Ages indicates the use of Homeric phrases in ritual.*²⁰

“Bring to perfection this perfect incantation.” I don’t want to argue that this was a universal jingle. I want to give an explanation of this

itself draws from earlier ritual poetic traditions. As Christopher Faraone states, “it is more likely that the composers of these Homeric hymns knew and embedded local cult hymns from Delos, Crisa, or Eleusis into their own Panhellenic narratives” (*Hexametrical Genres*, 17).

¹⁸ For an excellent Anglophone technical book on music in antiquity, see M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992). Sources for ancient Greek music – musicological (technical), general, and music itself – are delineated on pp. 4–8; see also idem and Egert Pöhlmann, *Documents of Ancient Greek Music: The Extant Melodies and Fragments Edited and Transcribed With Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001). Especially on pitch and musical notation, see Stefan Hagel, *Ancient Greek Music: A New Technical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Focusing on women’s ritual work, Judith Casselberry writes of the “aesthetic” of this “aesthetic labor,” calling to mind both beauty and sense perception: *The Labor of Faith: Gender and Power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), esp. 170. See Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 1–20 on connection of hexameter and ritual.

²⁰ On the persistence of this phrase, see again Lamont, “Early Greek Incantations,” 46; on lead/materiality, see e.g., Jessica Lamont, “Cold and Worthless: The Role of Lead in Curse Tablets,” *TAPA* 151. 1 (2021): 35–68; on Homeric verse, see Derek Collins, “The Magic of Homeric Verses,” *CP* 103. 3 (2008): 211–36.

repetition of incantatory phrases that isn't phenomenological and that does not argue that there is some fundamental human attraction to and experience of certain rhythms and rhymes. Rather, incantations are effective phrases of power variously deployed in different contexts. They are not universal, but precise, repeated fragments thought to be effective in various ways and in various places and in various times. Difference matters; a character in the Plutarchian *De musica* states: "There are many discordant views (*diaphōnia*) among those who have written on the subject [of ancient music]." ²¹ Yet even this diversity reveals a commonality to sound, incantation, and song. The Greek term *diaphōnia* signals not only disagreement but in its very root (*phōnē*) points to voice – that high human ability – and the sound of multi-vocality. ²²

"Bring to perfection this perfect incantation." This fragmentary redeployment of song must have significance. It was thought to be an important auditory scrap worth collaging into a later ritual, an echo over the centuries that might make a historian, intent on precision and difference rooted in time and place and community, nervous. Yet while we see continuity, it certainly isn't stasis: it's a redeployment of fragments, each calibrated for effects in its own new context. It is an aesthetic that deliberately was varied and complex (*poikilia*). As Patricia Cox Miller puts it,

One aspect of the material turn in late antiquity was the development of an aesthetics that emphasized the visual and tactile immediacy of the part – a piece of bone, a single mosaic tile, a word in a poem – at the expense of the whole.

²¹ (Pseudo-) Plutarch *Mor.* 1131F; trans. Barker, 1.206–7. The passage in the Plutarchian *De musica* begins: "Most of the Platonists and the best of the Peripatetics felt it important to write both about ancient music and about music's degeneration in their own times; and all the most cultivated experts in the sciences of grammar and harmonics have also given it a great deal of attention." τῶν τε γὰρ Πλατωνικῶν οἱ πλείστοι καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ Περιπάτου φιλοσόφων οἱ ἀριστοὶ περὶ τε τῆς ἀρχαίας μουσικῆς συντάξαι ἐσπούδασαν καὶ περὶ τῆς παρ' αὐτοῖς γεγεννημένης παραφθορᾶς· ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ γραμματικῶν καὶ ἀρμονικῶν οἱ ἐπ' ἄκρον παιδείας ἑλληκαότες πολλὴν σπουδὴν περὶ τοῦτο πεποιήνται· πολλὴ γοῦν ἡ τῶν συντεταχότων διαφωνία. Greek from Plutarch, *Moralia*, Volume XIV: *That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible. Reply to Colotes in Defence of the Other Philosophers. Is "Live Unknown" a Wise Precept? On Music* (trans. Benedict Einarson; LCL 428; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 357.

²² Shane Butler (*The Ancient Phonograph* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016], 12) notes "that the Greek word [*phōnē*] means both 'speech' and 'voice.' If the former meaning makes even the most pedestrian alphabetic texts at least notionally phonographic, in the sense that they inscribe something that has been or could be spoken, the latter leads to conclusions that are far less clear. What did it mean to seek to write the *voice* long before Edison, in faraway Greece and Rome?" See also Pauline A. LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis in Greco-Roman Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 94.

In literature and art, compositional techniques such as juxtaposition and repetition were used precisely to highlight fragments rather than wholes. By virtue of these techniques, such fragments became “things” in the sense conveyed by Bill Brown’s “thing theory,” in which objects took on surplus value and stood out against their contexts as magnets of attraction.²³

This aesthetics was aimed at inclusion and recalculation, studding prose and poetry and the very sound-world around you with bits of the past.²⁴ It might even be a cross-temporal vamp.²⁵

THE VAMP

It’s not surprising to have someone from the second or third century CE quoting Homer or Plato or a range of “canonical” writers. It’s not unusual to find a second- or third-century writer deeply engaged in intertexts and citations from classical and Hellenist Athens. This is what we expect in the context of the so-called Second Sophistic, an educational and cultural trend that looked to the Attic dialect of Greek of the classical period and the texts of Plato, Demosthenes, and others, as the authoritative basis for writing and speech among elites in the Roman period.²⁶ The educational systems of antiquity even included the performance of speeches as if one’s body were a kind of medium for a past writer or could enter an ancient scene. Students were assigned to orate as

²³ Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 42.

²⁴ On variety or *poikilia* as an aesthetic in Clement, particularly in the *Stromata* and *Paidagogos*, see J. M. F. Heath, *Clement of Alexandria and the Shaping of Christian Literary Practice: Miscellany and the Transformation of Greco-Roman Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 329–75, esp. at 330. For assessment of this crucial term in an earlier period, see Pauline A. LeVen, “The Colors of Sound: *Poikilia* and Its Aesthetic Contexts,” *Greek and Roman Musical Studies* 1.1 (2013): 229–42.

²⁵ Braxton D. Shelley, “Analyzing Gospel,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72.1 (2019): 181–243; idem, *Healing for the Soul: Richard Smallwood, the Vamp, and the Gospel Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

²⁶ Examples of such books include Tim Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and idem, *Beyond the Second Sophistic: Adventures in Greek Postclassicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Kendra Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians. Greek Culture in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Demosthenes or to write as if they were in the midst of an event told in the *Iliad*.²⁷

The phenomenon of poetic repetition, of a fossilization of a past poetic moment into a curse tablet, is found not only in the lead tablet from Roman Jerusalem and its echoing of Aristophanes, but also in the frequent deployment of Homeric phrases in curses and incantations. Poetics and the song tradition are useful components within the larger machinery of these ritual objects. They are widgets that were thought to have *worked*. They did so because of ancient perceptions and valuations of the power – an aesthetic power in the sense of beauty and rhythm, and an aesthetic power in the sense of sense perception – of song and spoken word. These were not citational practices but ritual ones.²⁸

Song in antiquity, the slide between speech and song, and the repetition of sounds are helpfully elucidated by Braxton Shelley's analysis of the vamp. Concerned with the music of the Black Church, and the musicianship and preaching of Richard Smallwood in particular, Shelley writes, "Transcendence takes sonic form, not through escape, but through imbrication: motion back and forth between the space-time of scripture and the moment of performance."²⁹ Ancient scripturalizations, whether of what we call biblical texts, or of a scrap of Homeric verse, or a bit of ritual text that makes its way into Aristophanes and a *defixio*, echo in multiple instantiations. They are performed in ritual and move people for ill or for good toward some dissolution of boundaries between human beings and other beings, such as *daimōnes* and gods. Transcendence and the "space-time of scripture and the moment of performance" are useful tools to understand incantation in antiquity.

²⁷ Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 228: "Exercises of impersonation required a student to expand on the verbal reaction of a certain mythological or literary figure in a given situation, thus engaging, for instance, not only Phoenix upbraiding Achilles, Achilles on the verge of being killed because of Polyxena, or a Greek woman meeting Helen in Greece, but also Callimachus's Triopas confronting Erysichthon, Hesiod inspired by the Muses, or even, in the fourth century and in a Christian milieu, Cain and Abel at the moment of the slaying." She also explains, "Though tragedy, particularly Euripides and the Medea, started to inspire students who composed exercises of impersonation (*ēthopoiiai*), Homer never lost his grip on the practitioner of rhetoric" (p. 226). See her ch. 8, "Learning to Fly: Rhetoric and Imitation," 220–44. In a later period, Christians would take up the echt-Homeric form of hexameters, but not in scraps embedded within their prose, but in full-length epics, such as the work of fifth-century CE Nonnus of Panopolis, who wrote epic cycles in dactylic hexameter about both Dionysus and Jesus (rewriting the Gospel of John).

²⁸ Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 1–20. ²⁹ Shelley, *Healing for the Soul*, 169.

Shelley explains that the vamp is a “repetitive musical cycle” which, [t]hrough its combination of reiteration and intensification, . . . turns song lyrics into something. . . potent. As it generates emotive and physical intensity, the vamp helps believers access an embodied experience of the invisible, moving between this world and another in their musical practice of faith. The vamp, then, is a musical, cultural, and religious interface, which gives vent to a system of belief, performance, and reception that I call the Gospel Imagination. In the Gospel Imagination, the vamp offers proof that musical sound can turn spiritual power into a physical reality – a divine presence in human bodies. This sonic escalation fuels traffic between the seen world and another, bringing believers into contact with a host of scenes from scripture, and with the divine, too.³⁰

The vamp repeats and intensifies; it is also theurgic, “turn[ing] spiritual power into a physical reality.”

Let me admit to differences between Shelley’s vamp and ancient incantatory practices. The ancient vamp does not always occur within the only one song or curse or text; the repetition can occur within one time period or cross-temporally. I adopt and extend Shelley’s definition of the vamp and analysis of its power.³¹ In addition, for Shelley’s analysis and for his subjects of research, the vamp is tied to the “Gospel Imagination” manifest in Black Church song traditions, linked to the tradition of “the musicality of Black preaching.” My sources from Mediterranean antiquity sometimes claim attachment to the *evangelion* or good news, sometimes are far distant from the Christ movement in their development of the vamp, and in any case differ from Shelley’s articulation of the vamp as engine for a “Gospel Imagination.” Yet, there are similarities.

³⁰ Shelley, *Healing for the Soul*, vii–viii. See also his discussion of the history of the term: Shelley cites Boyer’s definition of the vamp: “an old technique used throughout African American cultural expression in song, dance, drumming, and storytelling; repetition is used to get the message across and to fire collective intensity”; the vamp can also be defined as “climactic musical cycles” (p. 20). Some practitioners of these forms of worship explicitly connected their practices to first-century Christianity. As Shelley writes, drawing on the work of Jerma A. Jackson’s *Singing in My Soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age*: “At the turn of the 20th century, in the early decades of the renewal movements that gave rise to the Holiness and Holiness-Pentecostal reformations, which would later be called ‘the Sanctified Church,’ ministers like Charles Harrison Mason and Charles Price Jones (and countless parishioners) came to believe that the emotive physicality of the ‘old time religion’ bore important resemblances to the behavior of 1st-century Christians” (p. 22).

³¹ The idea of cross-temporal fragments and their repetitive power is found more fully in Braxton Shelley, *An Eternal Pitch: Bishop G. E. Patterson, Broadcast Religion, and the Afterlives of Ecstasy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2023). I am grateful to the author for allowing me to read portions of the manuscript pre-publication.

In antiquity and today, the lines between song, poetry, and spoken word are sometimes hard to distinguish.³² This blurred phenomenon of speech and song finds a parallel in the transformations of other binaries: Shelley argues that “the gospel song alchemizes the materiality of sound into the substance of faith,” opening the possibility of a “transcendent moment through space and time.”³³ The materiality of the moment is found not only in the sound – its resonant reverberations in air, eardrum, and body – but also in its effects to produce faith. Herein lies the “alchemy”: a transformation in individuals as they stand in community. This is a metaphysical proposition of alteration, effected by repeated sound.

Unfolding his story of twentieth-century Black voices, Shelley asks: “How does musical sound acquire an interworldly efficacy?” Black song and the musicality of preaching traversed “centuries of practice,” deliberately folding in earlier tradition. And it involved repetition:

through its repetition of short musical fragments, the vamp draws attention to the kinds of striking alterations that are the stuff of the gospel tradition. The vamp is a vehicle of musical transformation. And as it reiterates the same material, the vamp invites precisely the kind of conversations from which musical and ritual efficacy spring.³⁴

The efficacy of the vamp occurs within a process that Shelley calls “tuning up,” a “musical escalation” that is also “a sonic threshold, a point of musical inflection where lecture [gives] way to sermon”³⁵ or the sermon to song. The vamp is a mechanism folded within these moments of tuning up, which Shelley carefully exegetes with the ears and mind of a music scholar who can name the exact key progression. The vamp is a significant part of a sonic machine, harnessing voice and piano and organ and other musical elements, that leads to otherworldly possibility and to space for full breath for Black communities.³⁶ So too in antiquity, the musical and the ritual are intertwined and even through the fragment – necessarily through a repeated fragment – function together in community practice.

Readers may be rightly caught up in the power of Shelley’s analysis, only to remember that I, instead, introduced this chapter with a resonant

³² Shelley draws the term “musicality of black preaching” from William Turner (*Healing for the Soul*, 28); see also Martin, *Preaching on Wax*, 2, 6, passim: “chanted folk sermon.”

³³ Shelley, *Healing for the Soul*, 7. ³⁴ Shelley, *Healing for the Soul*, 24; see also 16.

³⁵ Shelley, *Healing for the Soul*, 26.

³⁶ Shelley here is in conversation with Ashon Crawley’s idea of the aesthetics of Blackpentecostalism as space of resistance and freedom (*Healing for the Soul*, 29–31); see discussion e.g. at p. 9 above of Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

curse and a grandstander like Clement of Alexandria, who had his own “gospel imagination” and was also competing on the stage of the so-called Second Sophistic to demonstrate his learning and cultural sophistication – the sheen of the educated, *paideia*-filled man. Cursing a competitor may not strike us as transcendent. I make no claim that either ancient curses or Clement’s *Protreptikos* achieve the aesthetic sublimity or the materialization of faith that Shelley argues for in his *Healing the Soul*. Sometimes the ancient materials, whether ritual objects or literary texts, harness sound and materiality for what we might consider the good; sometimes for ill.

I use the vamp as a theoretical framework for ancient texts and their interest in song and in incantation, even those historical fragments that are less than sublime or used for less than sublime ends. While the ancient sources we investigate do not necessarily repeat certain phrases, certain rhythms, certain incantations over and over in one performance,³⁷ their cumulative repetition over centuries and broad spaces indicates that folk think that they were effective tools, a sonic cue so that spirits or gods, human agency, and object could together thin ontological barriers and effect something transcendent. These sounds and songs are aesthetic works and simultaneously intervention of power – power of one human over another, power to invite the *daimones* and gods to be involved, power to connect the human and the non-human.

And while I focus on Shelley’s vamp as a theoretical framework to consider objects from antiquity, it is worth pausing and contextualizing his book within a larger conversation that investigates twentieth- and twenty-first century sonics and issues of power. Alexander Weheliye’s *Phonographies* emphasizes the connection between music and technology – the *technē* or mechanism by which the music sounds. He is also aware of the connections between sound and recording and power and resistance to domination: for example, how both Ralph Ellison and Duke Ellington might use a particular rhythm or beat in a larger project of critiquing white supremacy.³⁸ That is, sounds themselves may

³⁷ Although plenty of *defixiones* do display repetitions; one such repetition that we find often within a *defixio* and used diachronically is ἡδὴ ἡδὴ ταχύ ταχύ.

³⁸ Alexander Weheliye’s *Phonographies* focuses on a twentieth-century “indexing of music and orality,” which is helpful for our consideration of antiquity, in which “orality” (at least in New Testament Studies) has largely gone out of fashion since the 1990s or been used as a weak device to presume some form of invisible (insonic?) evidence about pure and authentic traditions held by the earliest Christ-followers. Weheliye discusses this in relation to “the aesthetic projections of major black authors such as W. E. B. Du Bois,

be oriented toward resistance and justice, toward a critiquing of injustice. Moreover, what sounds are preserved, and at what quality, are a matter of structures of power and privilege, or the justice and injustice that plays out in the historical record in its privileging of some materials over others.

Shelley's and Weheliye's emphases on the overlaps between technology and sound open new and different possibilities for the study of the late ancient Mediterranean world. We don't have wax cylinders; we don't have turntables; we don't even have low-resolution recordings of many church services; we certainly don't have a Roman Walkman, if the reader even remembers the Walkman.³⁹ Moreover, given our disciplinary histories, our studies of music tend to be fragmented – early Christian hymns are investigated here, incantation there, ancient theories of music elsewhere.⁴⁰ Yet, a text like the *Protreptikos* and the topic of “hymn” should

Ralph Ellison, James Weldon Johnson, Paule Marshall, and Toni Morrison.” Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 8. See also Lerone Martin, *Preaching on Wax: The Phonograph and the Shaping of Modern African American Religion* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), e.g. 2, which demonstrates how technological limits (double-sided 78 rpm records) came to constrain (or to provide the context for) James M. Gates's gospel preaching.

³⁹ Note, however, that we could look at the replicability of certain aspects of ritual practice in light of questions of the history of sound reproduction – a *pre-modern*, non-“mechanical” history of sound reproduction. I think of this in relation to Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 6: “As Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and countless other writers have argued, the problem of mechanical reproduction is central to understanding the changing shape of communication in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For them, the compelling problem of sound's reproducibility, like the reproduction of images, was its seeming abstraction from the social world even as it was manifested more dynamically within it.”

⁴⁰ One exception, by Matthew Gordley, focuses on “didactic hymnody, carefully defined, [as] a recognizable and widespread phenomenon in Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian traditions of antiquity.” His study, which ends in the second century CE, both brings together a vast range of data – Plato, references to song in the Hebrew Bible, the *hodayot* of Qumran, materials on song scattered in the New Testament, the Odes of Solomon, so-called gnostic hymns – and nonetheless separates these into different chapters, thus working against his own book's purpose to bring together these diverse manifestations of a larger phenomenon of hymn. Matthew E. Gordley, *Teaching Through Song in Antiquity: Didactic Hymnody Among Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 2. Mid-twentieth-century scholars of Christian hymns were confident that they could employ their form-critical scalpels to investigate early Christian texts and peel away literary redaction from the oral nugget. More recent scholars are more sober and note the panoply of terminology that arises at least in the texts of the New Testament – psalm, ode, hymn, even “spiritual songs” (Col. 3:16) – and the difficulty of using such materials for an immediate reconstruction of communal practices or the texts of hymns; see Clemens Leonhard and Hermut Löhr, eds., *Literature or Liturgy? Early Christian Hymns and Prayers in Their Literary and*

be pulled out of the realm of only Christian liturgical-theological studies and put into the context of the larger socio-political world of antiquity, heard on the turntables alongside a half-line of Aristophanes or a scrap of incantation. In fact, we'll later see that Homeric verses are sampled in ancient Christian writings, as in Julius Africanus's *Kestoi*.

Some recent studies of ancient music seek to hear antiquity. Pauline LeVen's *Music and Metamorphosis* models how to trace multiple voices in antiquity – human, insect, animal: how to make sense of a girl begging the gods to turn her into a bird to increase her musicality, how it is that the dry cicada can scratch a song that's beautiful.⁴¹ Sean Gurd fills our ears with cacophony, taking as his data texts from the “classics” of ancient Greece and their traces of sound. Shane Butler's *The Ancient Phonograph*, trying to “write the *voice* long before Edison, in faraway Greece and Rome,” finds that from “ancient material soon emerged competing vocalities that were both collective and irreducible.” Bissera Pentcheva tries to reconstruct the sonics of Hagia Sophia.⁴²

Liturgical Context in Antiquity (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). Many try to wend their way between the psalmic/song practices of the community associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls and the traditions of Greek hymnody, fueled in part by anxieties regarding how Christians are or are not like others, regarding what inheritances one might find if early Christian hymnody were DNA-tested for Greek or Jew, about the uniqueness of Christianity (e.g., Gordley, *Teaching Through Song in Antiquity*, 5–7) and the history of scholarship in Charles H. Cosgrove, *An Ancient Christian Hymn with Musical Notation. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1786: Text and Commentary* (Studien und Texte zum Antike und Christentum 65; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), e.g., 6–9, 11. These anxieties are produced by the problematic hermetic binning of Christians, Jews, and “pagans” into separate Tupperware containers, and a long lineage of argument and anxiety over the essence of Christianity, stretching back to e.g. Ludwig Feuerbach's 1843 *The Essence of Christianity* and Adolf von Harnack's 1901 *What Is Christianity? Lectures Delivered in the University of Berlin During the Winter Term 1899–1900* and published in English translation by Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901).

⁴¹ LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis*, esp. 52–78.

⁴² Sean Alexander Gurd, *Dissonance: Auditory Aesthetics in Ancient Greece* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 1–4; Butler, *The Ancient Phonograph*, 12, 18; Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia: Sound, Space, and Spirit in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017). Note that the accuracy of her reconstructions is debated; what's important here is her work to engage in this reconstruction and the complexity of the team-building necessary for such an effort. My chapter is not interested in tracing the earliest Christian liturgies or constructing an elaborate taxonomy of hymns – although, among ancient writers, see for example Menander Rhetor's taxonomy of eight types of hymns (*Ars Rhet.* 1.1–9). This taxonomizing is often a practice of contemporary scholarship, as found in the discussions in Leonhard and Löhr, eds., *Literature or Liturgy*; Ljuba Merlina Bortolani's classification of magical hymns vs. other kinds of hymns, or Egyptian “indigenous” hymnic elements vs. Greek,

All the sound we have lost. All that scholars try to reconstruct. There is a poignancy to the work. Amid this academic labor, I argue that an incantation on a *defixio*, scraps of a hymn on a papyrus, an instruction regarding chant in a recipe or script: these can fruitfully be seen as part of a reduplicative effort to *preserve* sound and chant or can be understood as stray evidence of it – the windblown, winding black-gray tape of the disintegrating cassettes of antiquity.⁴³ “Bring to perfection this perfect incantation,” chanted down the centuries, is a sonic repetition helpfully explained in terms of Shelley’s explanation of the vamp and in terms of his idea of “tuning up”: a repeated attempt to find the right key, to hit the notes that allow for some transcending of the boundaries between human and divine and some material transformation in the present.

Part of the problem of historical reconstruction of song and incantation is that some of these materials, variously defined as magical or divinatory, not only experienced the usual decay of historical materials over time, but were aggressively destroyed. The incantations and songs of antiquity were often understood as dangerously magical or divinatory; they are therefore statistically predisposed to loss.⁴⁴ The deposit of the curse happened through rituals difficult to reconstruct, which included song and incantation. These are likely the everyday materials of the less than elite.⁴⁵ They sometimes represent quests for justice that work at cross purposes to officially sanctioned judicial systems. They sometimes reveal linguistic transgressions that indicate language and vocalizations that transcend normal speech. We are also missing parts of the mechanism to play them – that is, the technology of understanding how sound

in her *Magical Hymns from Roman Egypt: A Study of Greek and Egyptian Traditions of Divinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), esp. 1–3, 13–15; or I. Petrovic, “Hymns in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*,” in *Hymnic Narrative and the Narratology of Greek Hymns*, eds. Andrew Faulkner and Owen Hodkinson (Mnemosyne Supp. 384; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 244–67.

⁴³ See Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 2, on the “possibility of sound reproduction” (emphasis his); Sterne’s project about how “sound, hearing, and listening are foundational to modern modes of knowledge, culture, and social organization” dovetails with my questions regarding how we could determine the same in antiquity.

⁴⁴ See John Chrysostom’s story on p. 30 above.

⁴⁵ The work of feminist, womanist, and queer biblical interpreters provides models for reconstructing the lives of women and the less than elite. See e.g. Arminta Fox, *Paul Decentered: Reading 2 Corinthians with the Corinthian Women* (Lanham: Lexington/Fortress, 2020); Angela Parker, “One Womanist’s View of Racial Reconciliation in Galatians,” *JFSR* 34.2 (2018): 23–40; Joseph Marchal, “The Usefulness of an Onesimus: The Sexual Use of Slaves and Paul’s Letter to Philemon,” *JBL* 130. 4 (2011): 749–70.

worked in antiquity. We don't have a word in English: I keep reaching for "invisible" to talk about the loss of antiquity's soundscapes, reinforcing the old complaint that, among the senses, we privilege the ocular. It's hard to hear antiquity, despite all we know from literary sources of its clang and clatter.⁴⁶ Yet we can listen for its "sonic flickers."⁴⁷

HOMER AND THE LOMAXES: APPROPRIATING SONGS

Folk in antiquity were reaching for the sublime, or at least debating it in elite circles: Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the writer we call Longinus provide evidence of this, as we learned in Chapter 3.⁴⁸ Folk in antiquity were also engaged in musicological fights, trying to make sense of the innovations and transgressions of musicians over the centuries. First- to third-century writings on music provide evidence of writers organizing ways of thinking about music and sound. These writers engaged in and produced a normative conversation that evoked the taxonomies and practices of musicians and philosophers long dead, from Plato to Aristoxenus and beyond.

These writers may have been the Lomaxes of their day. John Lomax, with his son Alan, traveled to the American South in the early twentieth century and recorded Black song traditions, particularly at the Mississippi State Penitentiary or Parchman Farm, as the incarcerated sang them. He was then listed as author, and he and his heirs financially benefit(ed) from that music; John Lomax's son Alan established the Association for Cultural Equity as part of the family's larger self-presentation of making accessible the world's folk traditions.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Gurd, *Dissonance*, 1–4 on the perpetual loudness of antiquity and the rich semantics of sound. But was it quiet at night, as Gurd suggests? See Shane Butler's review of Gurd's *Dissonance* in *CR* 68.1 (2018): 256–58. Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 3–5 on the "heady audacity to the claim that vision is the social chart of modernity" (p. 3).

⁴⁷ Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 17.

⁴⁸ For the idea of the sublime (*hypsos*), see discussion of this concept and the analysis of James I. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), on pp. 164–65, 199 above.

⁴⁹ <https://switchedonpop.com/episodes/rosie?rq=prison>; Jess, *Leadbelly*. <https://www.culturalequity.org/ace/about-ace>. I am grateful to Jennifer Quigley, who mentioned the Lomaxes to me and encouraged me to consider the appropriation of ancient song traditions. On the complexities of settler-colonialism and the attempt to preserve musical instruments and sound, see Samuel J. Redman, *Prophets and Ghosts: The Story of Salvage Anthropology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), esp. 1–8.

Contemporaneous to the Lomaxes's recordings in the 1930s was a song-inspired conversation in the Classics: the idea that Homer was part of a trans-temporal epic song tradition. Milman Parry's 1928 doctoral dissertation studied Homeric diction, and he then traveled with Albert Lord to Yugoslavia to analyze the living song traditions of epic poet-singers there. Parry and Lord emphasized the oral and the sung, and consistency and variation; "each song was a multiform of a notional song that never existed in any single 'original' form."⁵⁰ Each iteration was "composed anew every time in performance," according to the metrical rules of the song-poem. Homeric epic was recognized as part of a long, communal song tradition which incorporated stable elements and variation.⁵¹

Parry and Lord's work on Homer converges with the Lomaxes's work on American folk songs. Poet Carl Sandburg, publishing an anthology of folk music which included songs collected by Lomax, spoke about "a Homeric quality about the cowboy's profanity and vulgarity that pleases rather than repulses." "Its words are blunt, direct, odorous, plain and made-to-hand, having the sound to some American ears that the Greek language of Homer had for the Greeks of that time."⁵² The early twentieth century brought tremendous insights that emphasized voice and variation to Homeric verse and song traditions of antiquity. These insights about Homeric verse emerged within a larger discourse of folkloric song, one that reverberated with ideas regarding aesthetics – the beauty and pleasure of "profanity and vulgarity" or the "blunt, direct, odorous, plain and made-to-hand" – phrases that may remind us of Dionysius of Halicarnassus's analysis of the blunt beauty of Homeric verse found in something as base as a swineherd.⁵³

The Lomaxes at Parchment Farm, taking the songs of the incarcerated and materially profiting from them, remind us that the ancient writers

⁵⁰ Casey Dué and Gregory Nagy, "Milman Parry," in *The Cambridge Guide to Homer*, ed. Corinne Ondine Pache (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 592; on the idea of a performance tradition rather than individual authors, and the link between these performance traditions and ritual, see Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 1–20.

⁵¹ Consider the tradition from Albert Lord's *Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960) to Gregory Nagy's *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). More recently, see also Stefan Hagel, *Ancient Greek Music: A New Technical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), although his attempts to reconstruct melody are debated.

⁵² Carl Sandburg, *American Songbag* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1928), 285, 297; he attributes the phrase "Homeric quality" to Lomax. See also www.culturalequity.org/alan-lomax/friends/ledbetter/chronology.

⁵³ See pp. 165–66 above.

who survive to us and who wrote about music and sound studded their prose with the thoughts and works of others whose voices and music recede from our view. These elite writers wrote among and were influenced by musicians, performers, lullaby-singers.⁵⁴ In the imbalance of justice, song traditions are taken, displayed, and then attributed to those of higher status whose writings survive. We lack data about those of low status who produced and sang and played the music of antiquity, yet we can read these flickers of sound.

CLEMENT AND THE NEW SONG

To make sense of why an incantation might repeat across time and space, we have to draw the lens out to the larger topic of sound and song and its ancient terminology. The lexicon of song includes *phōnē*, “voice,” understood to be the apex of sound.⁵⁵ Clement’s *Protreptikos* includes vocabulary of “mere song” or chant, music, harmony, and the new song.⁵⁶ “Incantation” is the usual translation for *epōidē* (ἐπωδή, a contraction of *epi* and *ōdē*); it refers to a *song sung to or over or against*: hence, an efficacious or purposive song, which might include an incantation. Across a variety of genres, we discover fine-grained arguments about what precisely a song or a scale is or what a note sounds like when sustained or not, yet we also find an admission that the voice captures a larger range of sounds, and it is sometimes hard to determine where the voice stops speaking and begins singing.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ On the lullaby, see David Frankfurter, “Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken Word,” in GSAM, 616, and Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 11–12.

⁵⁵ Voice, *phōnē*, ranks above sound (*psophos*) and vocalization (*phthongos*) in Plato (*Rep.* 397a) and elsewhere; see LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis*, 87. Within its first pages, a character in the Plutarchian *De musica*’s dialogue states that the gathered group cannot engage in a full theorization of the human voice (Plutarch, *De mus.* 1131D; τὸ . . . αἴτιον τῆς ἀνθρώπου φωνῆς). On voice, see also Butler, *Ancient Phonograph*.

⁵⁶ See Clement of Alexandria *Protr.* 1 for these terms (discussed more below): “mere song” or chant (*ōidē*, γυμνή ἢ ᾠδή); music (*mousikē*, ἡ μουσική); new harmony (*harmonia*, ἡ καινὴ ἁρμονία); (*aïsmā*, τὸ ἄσμα τὸ καινόν).

⁵⁷ For a study of the range of sound including by non-human animals and insects, and humans who transform into singing creatures in antiquity, see LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis*; regarding the slide between speech and song, see e.g. p. 206 above. As Aristides Quintilianus puts it: “Poetry, with the medium of words alone, uses only the sense of hearing: but without melody it does not always arouse the emotions, and without rhythms it cannot bring the emotions into conformity with its subject matter. . . . Only music teaches both by words and by images of actions, and through agents that are not static or fixed in a single pattern, but are alive.” καὶ ποίησις μὲν ἀκοῇ μόνῃ διὰ ψιλῶν χρηταί

Multiple ancient writings theorize song and voice. The title and topic are found in writers from the Hellenistic to the Roman period, who themselves recount earlier debates: Philodemus's *De musica* of which only book 4 survives, the Plutarchian treatise *De musica*, Aristides Quintilianus's *De musica*. Yet *mousikē*, which includes not only what we mean by music, but also the other arts that are the purview of the nine Muses, is not only the purview of ancient musicologists or those tinkering with music theory. It is also of interest to those developing philosophical thought, to those concerned with health, to those curious about how the cosmos is structured. Moreover, *mousikē* was instantiated in a broad set of public performances: Murray and Wilson write: "*Mousikē* represented for the Greeks a seamless complex of instrumental music, poetic word, and co-ordinated physical movement. As such it encompassed a vast array of performances, from small-scale entertainment in the private home to elaborate festivals in which an entire *polis* was involved."⁵⁸ This *mousikē* was central to notions of governance in the *polis* or city, central to *paideia* or education, and central to religious practice.⁵⁹ Murray and Wilson write about the classical Greek period, but these topics were also engaged in the Roman imperial period. Indeed, what we know of this early period and its practices are often mediated through writers of the late Hellenistic or Roman periods like Philodemus, (pseudo-) Plutarch, and Athenaeus.⁶⁰

λέξεων ἀλλ' οὔτε πάθος ἀεὶ κινεῖ δίχα μελωδίας οὔτε δίχα ῥυθμῶν οἰκείοι τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις. . . .
μόνη δὲ μουσικὴ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ πράξεων εἰκόσι παιδεύει, οὐ δὲ ἀκινήτων οὐδὲ ἐφ' ἑνὸς σχήματος
πεπηγότων ἀλλὰ δι' ἐμψύχων. (*De mus.* II.4; Barker 2.460.)

⁵⁸ Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson, eds., "Introduction: *Mousikē* Not Music," in *Music and the Muses: The Culture of "Mousike" in the Classical Athenian City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1: "*Mousikē* was an endlessly variegated, rich set of cultural practices, with strongly marked regional traditions that made them a valuable item of local self-definition as well as a means for exchange and interaction. It also displays a markedly self-reflective element, a concomitant discourse about those practices: thus heroes, gods, and narratives of *mousikē* always loomed large in the realm of myth, that most malleable form of Greek creative and reflective discourse." For a more popular introduction, see Spencer Klavan, *Music in Ancient Greece: Melody, Rhythm and Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

⁵⁹ Murray and Wilson, "*Mousikē* Not Music," 2–5. Robert W. Wallace, "Damon of Oa: A Music Theorist Ostracized?," in *Music and the Muses*, 249–68, 260–61: "Greek music was communal, present at almost all social gatherings, and often performed by everyone together."

⁶⁰ On the latter, see Pauline A. LeVen, "New Music and Its Myths: Athenaeus' Reading of the *Aulos* Revolution (*Deipnosophistae* 14.616E–617F)," *JHS* 130 (2010): 35–47; for Roman period sources like Plutarch used to reconstruct classical Athenian musical practices, see e.g., Wallace, "Damon of Oa," 249–68.

Harmony and music reached to the macrocosm of the universe. They could also be understood to organize the microcosm of the human body. Iamblichus, writing about Pythagoras, provides a good example:

By applying some ineffable and abstruse divine power, he extended his hearing and fixed his intellect in the heavenly harmonious sounds of the cosmos. He alone could hear and understand, so he indicated, the universal harmony and concord of the spheres, and the stars moving through them, which sound a tune fuller and more intense than any mortal ones. (This harmony) is caused by a movement and most graceful revolution, very beautiful in its simultaneous variety, which arises from unlike and variously different sonic motions, speeds, magnitudes and conjunctions, arranged together in a most musical proportion. (*De vit. Pythag.* 15 [65–66])⁶¹

The Plutarchian *De musica* argues, in its defense of Plato, about soul music (!): “Thus Plato, wishing to give a harmonic description of the *harmonia* of the four elements in the soul, and of the cause of the reciprocal concord generated between things that are unlike, exhibited in each interval two means belonging to the soul, corresponding to ‘musical’ proportion.”⁶² As the treatise demonstrates the continuity and significance of this musical tradition for Plato and Aristotle, it touches not only on the individual soul but also upon the heavenly: “That *harmonia* is holy and something divine is asserted by Aristotle, the pupil of Plato, in the following words: ‘*Harmonia* is heavenly, and its nature is divine and beautiful and divine (*daimonion*)’” (*De mus.* 23).⁶³ Aristides

⁶¹ ἀλλὰ ἀρρήτῳ τινὶ καὶ δυσεπινοήτῳ θεϊότητι χρώμενος ἐνητένιζε τὰς ἀκοὰς καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἐνήρειδε ταῖς μεταρσίαις τοῦ κόσμου συμφωνίαις, ἐνακούων, ὥς ἐνέφαινε, μόνος αὐτὸς καὶ συνιείς τῆς καθολικῆς τῶν σφαιρῶν καὶ τῶν κατ’ αὐτὰς κινουμένων ἀστέρων ἁρμονίας τε καὶ συνῳδίας, πληρέστερόν τι τῶν θνητῶν καὶ κατακορέστερον μέλος φθεγγομένης διὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀνομοίων μὲν καὶ ποικίλως διαφερόντων ροιζημάτων ταχῶν τε καὶ μεγεθῶν καὶ ἐποχήσεων, ἐν λόγῳ δέ τιτι πρὸς ἄλληλα μουσικωτάτῳ διατεταγμένων, κίνησιν καὶ περιπόλῃσιν εὐμελεστάτην ἅμα καὶ ποικίλως περικαλλεστάτην ἀποτελουμένην. Dillon and Hershbelle, 89, 91.

⁶² (Ps) Plutarch, *De mus.* 22 = *Mor.* 1138D–E, trans. Barker, 1.228 with slight modification. ὁ τοίνυν Πλάτων τὴν ψυχικὴν ἁρμονίαν τῶν τεσσάρων στοιχείων καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα (E) ἐξ ἀνομοίων συμφωνίας δεῖξει ἁρμονικῶς βουλευθείς, ἐν ἐκάστῳ διαστήματι δύο μεσότητος ψυχικὰς ἀπέφηνε κατὰ τὸν μουσικὸν λόγον.

⁶³ (Ps) Plutarch *De mus.* 23 = *Mor.* 1139B, Aristotle fr. 47 Rose (R³), trans. Barker, 1.229 with slight modifications. “Ὅτι δὲ σεμνὴ ἡ ἁρμονία καὶ θεῖον τι καὶ μέγα Ἀριστοτέλης ὁ Πλάτωνος ταυτὶ λέγει: ‘Ἡ δὲ ἁρμονία ἐστὶν οὐράνια, τὴν φύσιν ἔχουσαθεῖαν καὶ καλὴν καὶ δαιμονίαν. The passage goes on to emphasize mathematics and melody. See also Aristides Quintilianus: “The most learned among every people also bear witness for me that it is not our souls alone that are constituted in this way, but also the soul of the all [i.e., the universe].” μαρτυροῦσι δὲ μοι καὶ οἱ παρ’ ἐκάστοις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λόγοι μὴ τὰς ἡμετέρας ψυχὰς μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν τοῦ παντός τοιαύτη κεχρησθαι συστάσει, *De mus.* II.19, slight modification of Barker, 2.494; numbered II.18 in TLG edition.

Quintilianus, too, writes of the connection between the individual and the cosmos:

The aforementioned [*mousikē*] is the only one, so to speak, that extends through every subject matter and lasts through the whole of time, adorning the soul with the beauties of *harmonia* and establishing the body with decorous rhythms. . . .

He goes on to speak of the utility for children, then for those who are advancing further:

when they are advancing even more [in education], it explains to them the nature of numbers and the variety of proportions (*analogion poikilian*) and reveals the *harmoniai* that arise from them in all bodies. Most important and most perfect (*teleōtaton*) – and hard in every case for every person to comprehend – is its capacity to produce the proportions of the soul and not only the individual soul, but also the soul of the universe. (*De mus.* I.I)⁶⁴

Hear the connection between the cosmos and the individual human as the person develops from child to adult. Hear also the suffused language of aesthetics in phrases like the “soul adorned in beauties of *harmonia*” (*psychēn te kosmousa kallesin harmonias*), or in the reference to variety (*poikilia*) – a term replete with the varied texture of embroidery or the glittering shine of mosaic tesserae, or in the emphasis on perfection (*teleōtaton*), which calls to mind the phrase to which this chapter continually returns: “Bring to perfection this perfect incantation,” or the emphasis on attaining the status of *teleioi* – the perfect or complete – in 1 Corinthians.

This larger context of competitive song and sound⁶⁵ – and of music and harmony which function on a cosmic and microcosmic level – is one important way to understand incantation in a curse like that of Kyrilla against Iennys. This is the context from which we should approach Clement of Alexandria’s *Protreptikos*. Clement, writing in sophisticated Greek from Alexandria, one of the primary cities and education-centers of Mediterranean antiquity, wanted to convince people that with Christ as

⁶⁴ μόνη δὲ ἡ προειρημένη διὰ πάσης ὥς εἰπεῖν ὕλης παρατέταται καὶ διὰ παντὸς διήκει χρόνου, ψυχὴν τε κοσμοῦσα κάλλεσιν ἀρμονίας καὶ σῶμα καθιστάσα ῥυθμοῖς εὐπρεπέσι. . . . προϊοῦσι δὲ τήν τε τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἐξηγουμένη φύσιν καὶ ἀναλογιῶν ποικιλίαν, ἀρμονίας δὲ τὰς διὰ τούτων ἐν πᾶσι σώμασιν ὑποφαίνουσα, τὸ μέγιστον <δὲ> δὴ καὶ τελεώτατον καὶ περὶ τοῦ δυσκαταλήπτου πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ψυχῆς τῆς τε καθ’ ἑκαστον, ἥδη δὲ καὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς λόγους ἔχουσα παρασχέσθαι. Trans. modified from Barker, 2.400; Greek from R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Aristidis Quintiliani de musica libri tres* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1963).

⁶⁵ Gangloff, “Rhapsodes and Rhapsodic Contests in the Imperial Period,” 130–50.

Logos and Law a new song had come, overturning the still-persisting but corrupt music of the past.⁶⁶ Clement is famous for the evidence he provides of an early Christian hymn to Christ, a kind of aretology of a Savior, which appears at the end of his *Paidagogos* (3.16).⁶⁷ Elsewhere in his writings, he also mentions the song of the *gnōstikoi* or the knowledge-filled persons: “we, spending our entire life as in a festival, persuaded that God is present everywhere in every way – singing praise songs, we farm; singing hymns, we sail the sea” (*Strom.* 7.7.37–38).⁶⁸ Clement’s God is “all eye and all ear, if one is permitted to use these expressions” and wants humans to offer true piety, without fear (*Strom.* 7.7.37).⁶⁹ The Clement of the *Stromata* and the *Paidagogos* perpetually interweaves scripture and teachings about song,⁷⁰ and his invective against others’

⁶⁶ Regarding a long debate in Greek over music and the dangers and promises of musical innovation, see e.g., Pauline LeVen, “Notes and Discussions: Timotheus’ Eleven Strings: A New Approach (PMG 791.229–36),” *CP* 106. 3 (2011): 245–54 and her “New Music and Its Myths” regarding the so-called New Music Revolution of the mid fifth century BCE, and debates over the use of certain musical instruments or innovations.

⁶⁷ See also Valentinus’s hymn as recorded (mockingly) in Irenaeus and a perhaps late third-century Greek Christian hymn with notations found in a papyrus (*P. Oxy.* 1786). Regarding the latter, Cosgrove’s analysis (see *Ancient Christian Hymn*, 129ff) shows us how philosophical-theological ideas were incanted: that is, people didn’t just write about these ideas, they also sang them. Clocking in at a mere five lines, the hymn nonetheless reveals several techniques of interest. The anapestic meter of the hymn is annotated to mark the arsis (upbeat). The hymn contains *melismata* (the singing of one syllable with multiple notes). The mention of the slide of sound on a single syllable brings us closer to the complexity of shifting sound-practices in the Roman period, including among Christian and non-Christian Neoplatonists and hymnographers (p. 141). On the hymn’s motif of cosmic stillness and silence, see pp. 10, 37; on the motif of silence more generally, see Michal Beth Dinkler, *Silent Statements: Narrative Representations of Speech and Silence in the Gospel of Luke* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).

⁶⁸ πάντα τοῖνυν τὸν βίον ἑορτὴν ἄγοντες, πάντῃ πάντοθεν παρῆναι τὸν θεὸν πεπεισμένοι, γεωργοῦμεν αἰνοῦντες, πλέομεν ὑμνοῦντες. My trans. Greek edition: Otto Stählin, Ludwig Früchtel, and Ursula Treu, *Clemens Alexandrinus. Band II: Stromata Buch I–VI* (GCS 52 [15], 17; New York: De Gruyter, 2011).

⁶⁹ ὁλος <γάρ> ἀκοῆ καὶ ὁλος ὀφθαλμοῦς, ἵνα τις τοῦτοις χρήσῃται τοῖς ὀνόμασιν, ὁ θεός. We can hear in Clement overtones of Plutarch’s *De superstitione* or Lucian’s mockery of ritual practices inspired by fear, in *De sacrificiis*.

⁷⁰ E.g., *Strom* 7.7.37–39, *Paid* 2.4.44. On the *Stromata* and the *Paidagogos* in relation to contemporaneous miscellanies, and on the aesthetics of that genre, see Heath, *Clement of Alexandria and the Shaping of Christian Literary Practice*; on the *Protreptikos* as one aspect of a larger encyclopedic set of work that includes doctrinal matters, see Marco Rizzi, “Protreptic and Rhetoric,” 339–41, especially his comparison of Clement’s work to Iamblichus’s *Protreptikos* and to his corpus more broadly, and similarities between Clement’s *Protreptikos* and the work of Galen and Maximus of Tyre.

song practices comes in the form of commonly occurring criticisms of some forms of theatrical performance and festival.⁷¹

The *Protreptikos*, in contrast, is philosophical and theological – and deeply concerned with music and incantation. Polemical, it is a smooth demonstration of all the sophistications of a rhetor of the Second Sophistic,⁷² produced in a cultural context of oral performance and competition: the speaking tours of great orators like Favorinus or Aelius Aristides, the monetary prizes for poetic presentations by rhapsodists.⁷³ Even if the text we have was not necessarily orally presented word for word, it should be understood as a spoken word performance within the context of competitive speech among elite males.⁷⁴ Clement presents

⁷¹ Clement, *Paid.* 2.4.44. For similar invective against certain kinds of music and festival, see also John Chrysostom *Adv. Iud.* 1. An oration like Dio's against the Alexandrians (*Or.* 32) employs similar invective, rooted in hierarchies of gender, sexual practice, ethnicity, and education, to rail against those whom it deems uneducated and enjoying themselves entirely too much (see discussion at 206 above, 228–29 below).

⁷² Nasrallah, *Christian Responses*, 21–50, 249–95. Marco Rizzi and Thomas Lechter rightly argue that the *Protreptikos* needs to be understood within the context of the so-called Second Sophistic; while Clement's *Protreptikos* has been read in relation to Christian writers like Justin and Origen, and within a longer philosophical tradition of defense, it should be understood as well in relation to Galen's *Adhortatio*, Philostratus's *De gymnastica*, as well as Iamblichus's *Protreptikos*. Thomas Lechner, "Süße Lust des Logos. Die Vorrede zum *Protreptikos* des Clemens von Alexandrien und die *prolaliai* der Zweiten Sophistik," in *Logos der Vernunft, Logos des Glaubens*, eds. Ferdinand-Rupert Prostmeier and Horacio E. Lona (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 149–50; Rizzi, "Protreptic and Rhetoric," 336. Clement is one among many who exploits the flexibility of protreptic literature, not a simplistic bipartite argument (for, against an idea) as described in the second-century BCE treatise of Philo of Larisa, which has in turn stifled scholarly awareness of the subtleties of the protreptic form (p. 338).

⁷³ Clement's citations and allusions share similarities with roughly contemporaneous writers like Apuleius, Maximus of Tyre, Dio Chrysostom. In Rizzi's words, "It is not a simple matter of making the audience well disposed towards Clement's work, by displaying a shared culture and a common ground, on which a Christian discourse can be implanted" ("Protreptic and Rhetoric," 345); these literary techniques also add to Clement's own authority and render the *Protreptikos* "a piece of self-advertising" different in tone from Clement's other writings. See also Maud W. Gleason, "Favorinus and His Statue," in *Making Men*, 3–20. On Aelius Aristides, see Janet Downie, *At the Limits of Art: A Literary Study of Aelius Aristides' Hieroi Logoi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); on rhapsodes, see Gangloff, "Rhapsodes and Rhapsodic Contests in the Imperial Period," which despite its focus on the question of the difference between rhapsodists and those who recite Homer (*Homeristai*), provides rich evidence of the recitation of portions of epics in public competition and as entertainment and labor, even into the Roman period.

⁷⁴ On Clement's *Protreptikos* as orally delivered, see Rizzi, "Protreptic and Rhetoric," 340–41, 344–45. I disagree with Rizzi, who takes Eusebius's comments that Justin engaged in public debates as fact, or assumes that Dio's Kingship orations were

himself as “tuning up,” to borrow Braxton Shelley’s phrase. In topic and in delivery, Clement perhaps thought he was rocking it with his *Protreptikos*. And, of course, he is arguing for his own articulation of a “Gospel Imagination” (to borrow again a phrase from Shelley), although curiously, as we shall see, one formulated by means of Homeric incantation.

Clement’s first lines are carefully crafted:

Amphion of Thebes and Arion of Methymna: both were singers, a myth both.
Amphiōn ho Thēbaïos kai Ariōn ho Mēthumnaïos amphō men ēstēn ōidikō,
*muthos de amphō.*⁷⁵

In the first phrase, stating the subjects, the assonant “a” of Amphion meets the “a” of Arion. This phrase is followed by a chiasmus: *both* were musicians, a myth *both*. That is, both were mythic and both were a myth, in the sense of fiction opposed to truth.⁷⁶ (In addition, there is a little linguistic showing off: the word “singers” appears in the little-used dual form.) The use of *mythos* is the theme Clement plays out in the first pages of his *Protreptikos*: the falseness of certain kinds of songs and stories, and the truth of the “Logos of God” who is the “new song.”

Clement’s *Exhortation* is sonorous in its first lines. It explains the power of the mythic songsters Amphion of Thebes and Arion of Methymna;⁷⁷ by means of sound, one lured a fish and the other built

delivered as is to the emperor, to argue for the likelihood that Clement’s *Protreptikos* was also delivered orally; I would rather posit the possibility of multiple phases of writing and oral performance. Rizzi, “Protreptic and Rhetoric,” 344–45.

⁷⁵ Ἀμφίων ὁ Θηβαῖος καὶ Ἀρίων ὁ Μηθυμναῖος ἄμφω μὲν ἦσθην ὥδικῶς, μῦθος δὲ ἄμφω.

⁷⁶ By ca. 300 CE, Menander Rhetor’s rhetorical handbook offered a taxonomy of hymns that included the categories of a hymn produced for a fictive divinity (such as Hesitation or Terror) and a “mythical hymn” (1.2.3–4). Menander Rhetor 1.6 includes instructions regarding how to make a mythic hymn that is not tedious. See *Menander Rhetor. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ars Rhetorica* (ed. and trans. William H. Race; LCL 539. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 29, 45–49. This sense of *mythos* as fiction or fable can be found in Plato *Rep.* 377a (e.g., LSJ s.v. μῦθος II.4), but note that this is an intellectual shift from an earlier usage, in which *logos* denoted false, empty, crafted speech, and *mythos* what is solid and true and authoritative. LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis*, 89.

⁷⁷ Clement engages with key voices and characters in the larger conversation about music. See also LeVen (*Music and Metamorphosis*, 53) on Lesbos as site for “the sounds of the lyre of Orpheus, the footsteps of Arion and Terpanter, and the songs of Sappho and Alcaeus”; Pöhlmann (“Ps. Plutarch, De Musica,” 25), discussing sung hexameters, writes: “Terpanter, the inventor of the Nomos Kitharodikos, imitated the hexameters of Homer together with the music of Orpheus. . . .”; on curative incantations attributed to legendary musicians, see Faraone, *Transformations*, 198–99.

the walls of Thebes. Clement alludes to Orpheus, and he is not alone in this. At roughly the same time, Dio Chrysostom was excoriating the Alexandrians, mocking their performers, based upon the same logic of allusions to mythic musicians:

For there is no Amphion nor Orpheus among them [these performers]. For the latter was the son of a Muse, but they were born from Disharmony,⁷⁸ having distorted and shattered the respectability of song, and in every way mutilated the archaic *mousikē*. For who among them can speak a perfect *ōidē* or a noble rhythm? But they, like evil and meddlesome cooks, grinding together the songs of women and the beats of dancers and the drunkenness of cicada-chirps, move ignorant and eager listeners. (Dio Or. 32.61–62)⁷⁹

The criticism is gendered (“songs of women”) and hints at sexual obscenity (the “rub” of *suntribein* is also used to talk about sexual activity in antiquity); it also refers in disgust to the sounds made by cicadas.⁸⁰ We are soon to meet a fabulous cicada in Clement’s *Protreptikos*, and Clement will go on to talk about a Thracian *sophistēs* (Orpheus), who tamed wild beasts by his song and even transplanted oaks by his music. With the word *sophistēs* Clement subtly marks both an adept, masterful at his craft, and a sophist – a rhetorical expert who is also likely a cheat. Both Clement and Dio carefully walk in a world of music and sound that

⁷⁸ The word *Amousia* is constructed from the word “Muse” and means a lack of education or disharmony.

⁷⁹ Dio Chrysostom Or. 32.61–62, my trans. based on Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 31–36, trans. J. W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby (LCL 358; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 232–33; the Greek is slightly emended from the Loeb as well: τούτων μὲν γὰρ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς Ἀμφίων οὐδὲ Ὀρφεύς· ὁ μὲν γὰρ υἱὸς ἦν Μούσης, οἱ δὲ ἐκ τῆς Ἀμουσίας αὐτῆς γεγόνασι, διαστρέψαντες καὶ κατὰξαντες τὸ σεμνὸν τοῦ μέλους καὶ πάντα τρόπον λωβησάμενοι τὴν ἀρχαίαν μουσικὴν. 62 Τίς γὰρ αὐτῶν ᾠδὴν τέλειον ἢ γενναῖον ῥυθμὸν οἷός τε εἰπεῖν; ἀλλὰ ἄσματα γυναικῶν καὶ κρούματα ὀρχηστῶν καὶ παροιρίας τερετίσματος, ὥσπερ κακοὶ καὶ περιέργοι μάγειροι, συντρίψαντες, ἰδίωτας καὶ λίχνους ἀκροατὰς κινουσί. We find similar gendered invective at the intersection of music, ethnicity, and philosophy, in the Plutarchian treatise *De musica*, a character named Soterichus for example, not only states that music is “the discovery of the gods” (*De mus.* 14, *Mor.* 1136B), but also offers that centuries-long grumble that things used to be better, used to be more masculine, too: ancient people respected the dignity or worth (*axia*) of music, but now “instead of the manly, divinely marvelous [music], and the one dear to the gods, they introduce into the theaters a shattering and chattering one [i.e., music]” (ἀντὶ τῆς ἀνδρώδους ἐκείνης καὶ θεσπεσίας καὶ θεοῦ φίλης κατεαγυῖαν καὶ κωτὶλην εἰς τὰ θέατρα εἰσάγουσιν, *De mus.* 15 = *Mor.* 1136B, my trans.) On moral development and music, see below regarding Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*; see also discussion of Athenaeus’s *Deipnosophistae* book 14 and his borrowings from Aristotle in LeVen, “New Music and its Myths,” 42.

⁸⁰ Bernadette Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 4–5.

(they argue) needs to be adjudicated, of music and sound that can morally affect the hearer, activating their feminine, sexual appetites. (Dio elsewhere eschews the mincing gait of Alexandrians.) Both offer steady, stable, masculine voices of critique; their knowledge, philosophy, and even low-tone sonorousness are superior.⁸¹

Clement's and Dio's references to mythic figures like Amphion and Orpheus also evoke the "magical" qualities of music in these myths; these stories invite longstanding associations with binding spells. As Robert Wallace puts it, "The Greeks recognized the great power of music, first expressed for us in the myths of musical magic: the Sirens, Orpheus, Arion and his dolphins. By playing his lyre Amphion raised the walls of Thebes. The Greeks knew of the powers of music to entrance." Pindar, Wallace explains, uses the term *philtrion* or potion to talk about song; Aeschylus *desmion* or binding spell.⁸²

From its first words, Clement's *Protreptikos* imitates its theme of song. It *sounds* fancy.⁸³ Menander Rhetor uses the term *glukutē* in connection with a *lalia*: in the words of Laurent Pernot, "pleasure is the aesthetic of the genre."⁸⁴ Sweetness, of course, is an aesthetic term, which works doubly to mark the pleasure of the speech via the pleasure of the tongue and mouth at the ripe fruit or the taste of honey.⁸⁵ We are in the realm of the senses – singing words, hearing words, tasting words.

⁸¹ See Chapter 3 on gender and speech.

⁸² Wallace, "Damon of Oa," 262: "Pindar calls song a φίλτρον <έν> θυμῷ (*Pyth.* 3.64), Aeschylus (*Eum.* 306) calls it a δέσμιον, 'a binding spell.'"

⁸³ Lechner, "Süße Lust des Logos," 150–56, grounded in Marco Rizzi's *Ideologia e retorica negli "exordia" apologetici: il problema dell' "altro"* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1993), 172–88, who himself grounds his argument in Menander, *Ars rhet.*, e.g., at 2.3.3: "the genre of the talk takes delight in sweetness and the delicacy that narratives provide" (χαίρει γὰρ τὸ τῆς λαλιᾶς εἶδος τῇ γλυκύτητι καὶ τῇ τῶν διηγημάτων ἀβρότητι, LCL 539, pp. 196–97).

⁸⁴ "[L]'hédoné est l'esthétique du genre": Laurent Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain: Histoire et technique* (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1993), 564–65, *apud* Lechner, "Süße Lust des Logos," 157 n. 47.

⁸⁵ See also Seneca, *Ep.* 40.2 on the aesthetics of speech proper to a philosopher; Cicero *De nat. deo.* 3.24 on etymologies for the names of the gods; also Augustine *De dialectica* 5–7. Lechner emphasizes, "if one wishes to encapsulate the aesthetic ideal of the sophistic *prolalia* in a handy formula, one could speak of a sweet desire for the Logos." (Lechner, "Süße Lust des Logos," 157: "Wollte man also das ästhetische Ideal der sophistischen *prolalia* auf eine griffige Formel bringen, so könnte man von der *süßen Lust des Logos* sprechen, also von der *süßen Lust*.") Lechner puns upon the meaning of Logos as speech and Clement's reference to the Word of God. Note that Lechner's argument is founded in the idea that Clement's *Protr.* 1.1–2.4 coheres with the rhetorical convention of the *prolalia*, which he sees as a development of the so-called Second Sophistic. A *prolalia*

Clement riffs further:

I can also tell you of another *mythos* and another singer, a sibling to these: Eunomos the Locrian and the Pythian cicada. A Greek festival assembly, held in honor of a dead serpent, was gathering at Pytho, and Eunomos sang a funeral song for the reptile. Whether the song was a lament or an ode for the snake, I cannot say... (*Protr.* 1)⁸⁶

When Eunomos's string snapped, a cicada (*tettiges*, itself onomatopoeic) settled on the lyre and sang notes with which Eunomos could harmonize. The cicada's song to God was produced by its own law, argues Clement, a better song than that produced by the musical laws of Eunomos,⁸⁷ and these cicadas were actually singing to the "all-wise God" and not the "dead serpent of Pytho." Clement's criticism is carefully rhetorically crafted, punctuated by forms of the word *nomos*: he refers to the *nomos* or law of the cicada, the *nomoi* of Eunomos's music; *nomos* also of course appears within Eunomos's name.⁸⁸ *Nomos* is also the term used in ancient musicology to refer to a solo piece,⁸⁹ and *nomos* – how one

may have been a free-standing introductory portion of a longer speech, used as a device to reduce the risk of sounding too grandiose in the rest of the oration, but no use of the *prolalia* can be demonstrated prior to Dio of Prusa, and it is first discussed as a theoretical approach by Menander Rhetoric; the term *dialexis* is employed by other contemporaneous writers like Philostratus or Maximus of Tyre. The idea of the *prolalia* was popularized in K. Mras, "Die προλαλιά bei den griechischen Schriftstellern," *Wiener Studien: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie und Patristik* 64 (1949): 71–81.

⁸⁶ ἔχοιμι ἂν σοὶ καὶ ἄλλον τούτοις ἀδελφὸν διηγῆσασθαι μῦθον καὶ ᾠδόν, Εὐνόμον τὸν Λοκρὸν καὶ τέττιγα τὸν Πυθικόν. πανηγυρίῳ Ἑλληνικῇ ἐπὶ νεκρῷ δράκοντι συνεκροτέτο Πυθοῖ, ἐπιτάφιον ἔρπετοῦ ᾄδοντος Εὐνόμου· ὕμνος ἢ θρήνος ὁφείως ἦν ἡ ᾠδή, οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν. G. W. Butterworth, *Clement of Alexandria: The Exhortation to the Greeks, the Rich Man's Salvation, and the Fragment of an Address Entitled, To the Newly Baptized* (LCL 92; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), here at 2–3. I use Butterworth's edition and make reference to his English translation in my own translations.

⁸⁷ ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ τῷ πανσόφῳ αὐτόνομον ᾠδὴν, τῶν Εὐνόμου βελτίονα νόμων. LCL 92, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Wallace, "Damon of Oa," 263 cites Pindar *Pyth.* 5.66–67, which reads ἀπόλεμον ἀγαγώνες πραπίδας εὐνομίαν, "after putting peaceful good governance (*eunomia*) into their minds..." Pindar, *Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes*, trans. William H. Race (LCL 56; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 314–50. That is, Clement is also likely punning on larger literary, hymnic themes. Rizzi and Lechner also discuss these puns: Rizzi talks about Clement's play on words with "Eunomos" (*Ideologia e retorica negli 'exordia' apologetici*, 177; *apud* Lechner, "Süße Lust des Logos," 164).

⁸⁹ See esp. "Appendix A: the *nomoi*," in Barker, *Greek Musical Writings*, 1.249. Barker writes: "The sources on which ps.-Plutarch relies trace the origins of the musical genre called the 'nomos' back to the seventh century. Outside a musical context, *nomos* means 'custom' or 'law': why certain types of musical composition were given the name is a matter of some uncertainty... There is no doubt, however, that most Greeks of the fifth

follows the law, and whether by “law” Torah is meant – is a key issue in many texts of the Christian Testament. The virtuosic speech puns at multiple levels. Clement explains that the bronze statue at Pytho (Delphi), depicting and celebrating Eunomos with his kithara and his “co-competitor,” has been misunderstood. The story is not that Eunomos’s playing attracted the cicada, but rather that the cicada joined the song and compensated for the missing string on its own.⁹⁰ The music is the thing, but the Greeks have gotten it wrong. The music of the cicadas precedes the hymn to Apollo, and the musician must adapt his song to the preexisting insect tune.

My emphasis (or Clement’s) on cicadas may seem weird, but as Pauline LeVen has shown, cicadas had a long, significant philosophical history. A story of their mythological origin, found only in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, is this:

Cicadas were humans who belonged to the generation before the Muses were born. But when the Muses were born and song made its appearance, some of those people were so struck by pleasure that, as they were singing, they stopped caring for food and drink and did not realize they were dying. From these were subsequently born the race of cicadas.⁹¹

Cicadas are the “soundtrack of pastoral poetry,”⁹² thought to be able to produce voice (*phōnē*) and dialogue, like humans. They were sometimes thought to be the Muses’ own representatives, and as potentially

century and later believed that the musical use of the word was in some way connected with a strict adherence to rules or ‘laws’. . . . *Nomoi* were always solo pieces.”

⁹⁰ καὶ τοῦ τέττιγος τῷ ᾄσματι ἁρμολύμενος ὁ ὥδὸς τὴν λείπουσαν ἀνεπλήρωσε χορδὴν . . . ὁ δὲ ἐκὼν ἐφίπταται καὶ ᾄδει ἐκὼν. LCL 92, p. 4.

⁹¹ *Phaedrus* 258e–259e; translation slightly modified from LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis*, 79–80. Pauline LeVen’s perspicuous analysis of pastoral sounds and human voice makes me more attentive to other expressions of the same. For example, anthropologist/ethnographer Suma Ikeuchi reflects on a special prayer mountaintop gathering of the charismatic Missão Apoio Toyota: “He [Pastor Cid] usually started out with an expressive praise of the Father in Heaven that, after a quick crescendo, always turned into full-blown glossolalia. It was as if his voice conducted the supposedly individual prayers, taking the lead in everyone’s effort to – as one regular attendant put it – ‘experience God more intimately.’ When his voice slowly came down from the climactic fast-pitched utterances to slow and soft muttering, no longer in tongues, other voices followed him to the anticipated closure. I stood still in my spot as the wave of voices gradually simmered down, eventually melting into the chirping of crickets, the rustling of leaves, and the murmur of life in the dark forest.” Suma Ikeuchi, *Jesus Loves Japan: Return Migration and Global Pentecostalism in a Brazilian Diaspora* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 89–90.

⁹² LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis*, 83.

seductive in their sound as the Sirens. While cicadas' voices are often a sign of what is the opposite to *logos*, speech,⁹³ Clement turns the cicada into that which supports the Logos, the Word of God.

From these allusions to Orpheus and Apollo, from Eunomos at the Apollonian site of the Pythian snake at Delphi, Clement moves to Dionysus and drama and the Bacchic rite. He brings before the reader or hearer's eyes those dramatic poets who are "already perfectly (*teleon*) drunken, ... utterly foolish in a Bacchic rite (*teletē*)."⁹⁴ This phrase highlights ritual practices: its repetition of the root *tel-* in *teleon* and *teletē* hints at the perfection or completion associated with initiation and progress in a cult.⁹⁵ This is terminology that we have already seen in the curse from Roman Jerusalem – the perfection (*telei*) of the perfect incantation (*telea*) – and it is language that we find in spades in 1 Corinthians, where the term is used to mark those within the *ekklēsia* who think of themselves as perfected or complete. This semantic repetition, especially in Clement's *Protreptikos*, can be understood in relation to "tuning up," in Shelley's language, that is, to finding sonic/ritual mechanisms by which one can attain to a perfection or completeness. Clement's mention of perfection and rites occurs in a passage that links both to curses and to music. He mentions initiates bound with wreathes (*anadēsantes*), a term that may call to mind other binding practices, including curse spells. Using the language of the chorus that sings in Dionysian theater, Clement contrasts these initiates to the "holy chorus of the prophets"⁹⁶ and the "heavenly logos, the true champion, who is crowned ... upon the theatrical stage of the cosmos" (*Protr.* 1).⁹⁷ Clement places his story upon the sacred, song- and dance-filled ritual stage.

Clement then returns to the mythic Eunomos and puns, contrasting him with Clement's own *eunomos* or good law:

⁹³ LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis*, 102, 84, 93.

⁹⁴ τέλεον ἦδη παροινούντας ... ἀφραίνοντας ἐκτόπως τελετῇ βακχικῇ. LCL 92, p. 6. See also Lechner, "Süße Lust des Logos," 182–83, and his discussion of iconography on Dionysiac sarcophagi. In Lechner's catalogue of themes and motifs in Clement's *Protreptikos*, see esp. "Exotische Menschen, Orte, Länder, Götter," "Götter und Heiligtümer," and "Mysterien."

⁹⁵ τέλεον and τελετῇ; this language is often associated with "mystery" cults and is found in 1 Corinthians 1–4.

⁹⁶ *Protr.* 1. χορόν τὸν ἅγιον τὸν προφητικόν. LCL 92, p. 6.

⁹⁷ *Protr.* 1. λόγος οὐράνιος, ὁ γνήσιος ἀγωνιστὴς ἐπὶ τῷ παντὸς κόσμου θεάτρῳ στεφανούμενος. LCL 92, p. 6.

My Eunomos does not sing the mode (*nomos*) of Terpander or Kapiōnos, nor the Phrygian or Lydian or Dorian mode, but sings the eternal law (*nomos*) of the new harmony, which bears God's name: the new song, the Levitical one:

“to take all pain and rage away
to bring forgetfulness of every evil” (*Od.* 4.221).

S/he has mixed a rather sweet – and *true* – *pharmakon* of persuasion in this song.⁹⁸

Clement signals his knowledge of longstanding Greek debates about music, a fight between old time song and innovators.⁹⁹ His law and his music trump the various musical modes, which are marked by ethnic particularity.¹⁰⁰ He ends with the idea of a Levitical song.

This is a puzzling passage, which I signal in part with the uncertain pronoun: Who exactly is mixing the *pharmakon* of persuasion? Within Clement's larger story, the subject is “my Eunomos.” But those aware of the famous quotation might ask: Is it the drug-mixer of the *Odyssey* or the Logos who sings the eternal *nomos* and new song? In the lines just before this passage, Clement has primed the hearer to think of law, *nomos*: he remixed his exhortation with a bit of Isaiah to explain that the truly good *nomos* is also the Logos or Word: “for out of Sion shall go forth the law (*nomos*), and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Is. 2:3). Reasonably, given the reference to “Levitical song,” one awaits a quotation from the law of Moses, or at least some passage from the Jewish scripture; reasonably, given the reference to a “new song,” one might expect a quotation from the still coalescing Christian Testament. But instead, Clement cites another scripture, Homer, beginning with the unusual word *nēpenthēs*, pain-banisher. In this passage from the

⁹⁸ Translation of Homer excerpted from Emily Wilson, *The Odyssey* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018), 159. *Protr.* 1. ἄδει δέ γε ὁ Εὐνομος ὁ ἐμὸς οὐ τὸν Τερπάνδρου νόμον οὐδὲ τὸν Καπίωνος, οὐδὲ μὴν Φρύγιον ἢ Λύδιον ἢ Δώριον, ἀλλὰ τῆς καινῆς ἁρμονίας τὸν αἰδίων νόμον, τὸν φερώνυμον τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἄσμα τὸ καινόν, τὸ Λευιτικόν. “νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπιληθες ἀπάντων.” γλυκύ τι καὶ ἀληθινὸν φάρμακον πειθοῦς ἐγκέκραται τῷ ἄσματι. LCL 92, p. 6.

⁹⁹ Wallace, “Damon of Oa,” 263: “Plutarch writes that Terpander was condemned by the ephors at Sparta because he added an eighth string to the lyre, to obtain a wider variety of music; the ephors wanted only simple songs (*Inst. Lac.* 238c).” But see also Pseudo-Plutarch *De mus.* 18, in which Terpander is an example of simplicity.

¹⁰⁰ It would take a musicologist to parse fully the gendered and ethnic prejudices around different modes of music. For example, Pseudo-Plutarch's *De mus.* 16 (trans. Barker, 1.221): “The Mixolydian *harmonia* is also emotional, and appropriate for tragedies”; this mode is associated with Sappho, and was later blended with the Dorian, “since the latter expresses magnificence and dignity, and the former emotion; and tragedy is a blend of both.” *De mus.* 17 mentions that Plato prefers the Dorian mode (*harmonia*) as “appropriate for warlike and temperate men” (ὡς πολεμικοῖς ἀνδράσιν καὶ σώφροσιν) rather than “mournful and . . . dissipated” modes (trans. Barker, 1.222). Language of softness and enervation codes as feminine in the ancient world; see Chapter 3.

Odyssey, Helen, with the knowledge of the witch or the physician, mixes a *pharmakon* – a healing drug or poisonous one, or an incantatory verse that functions in these ways – as Telemachus, Odysseus’s son, and king Menelaus sit weeping together, not knowing if Odysseus is dead or alive:

Then the child of Zeus,
Helen, decided she would mix the wine
with drugs to take all pain and rage away,
to bring forgetfulness of every evil.
Whoever drinks this mixture from the bowl
will shed no tears that day, not even if
her mother or her father die, nor even
if soldiers kill her brother or her darling
son with bronze spears before her very eyes.
(*Ody.* 4.219–27, trans. Wilson, *The Odyssey*, 159)

The passage rings with medical-magical-ritual terminology.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Iamblichus’s *Life of the Pythagoreans* recounts how Empedocles used part of this passage, sung to the accompaniment of a lyre, to prevent a murder.¹⁰²

Clement states: “S/he has mixed a true and sweet *pharmakon* of persuasion in this song.” The subject is unclear; if one knows the scrap of Homer, then the reference would be to Helen or to the unknown subject of the epithet *nēpenthes*; hearing Clement, one would think that the phrase refers to the Logos. Song and rhetorical tradition are brought together with the word *peithō* or persuasion, evoking a kind of spoken word performance: the song persuades, the speech persuades; the song is “sweet,” a word applied to some forms of rhetoric.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Helen throws a *pharmakon* in the wine (4.220); the passage that follows explains where Helen got the powerful *pharmaka* and the fields which grew the *pharmaka* (4.229–30), and how each in that land has knowledge of medicine. As Faraone notes (*Hexametrical Genres*, 119), “The poet gives a detailed description of the powers of Helen’s *pharmakon* that is very similar to later descriptions of the powers of hexametrical poetry and incantations. Here, as we might predict, scholars have usually seen the Homeric passage as the start of the tradition and the subsequent claims about poetry to be metaphoric: poetry, like a drug, can charm and heal.” This passage is found in Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 12.52 applied to an image of Pheidias; a quotation from later in this passage from the *Odyssey* is found at the beginning of Aelius Aristides’ *Sacred Tales* (1).

¹⁰² Iamblichus, *Vit. Pythag.* 113; see discussion of Empedocles as an enchanter in Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 125–26; Faraone speculates that the poet of the *Odyssey* may be referencing a well-known hexametrical incantation and suggesting that Helen’s *pharmakon* is similar to it.

¹⁰³ For Menander, *Rhet.*, see p. 229 above; Lechner, “Süße Lust des Logos,” 157. See also Chapter 3.

That Clement quotes Homer, even a passage about potions, shouldn't surprise us. Citation of Homer was an ancient pastime, a scriptural practice¹⁰⁴ in which a Homeric phrase could be inscribed into a *defixio* or tossed in the citation salad of elite writers of the so-called Second Sophistic. In the last chapter, we saw how Dionysius of Halicarnassus relied on Homer to define his own sense of aesthetics and rhetoric. Yet it is a bit surprising to see Clement baptizing Homeric song as Levitical. It is even more surprising if, as Christopher Faraone argues, there was a broader practice in antiquity of using this passage:

the six-line boast about the power of Helen's *pharmakon* reflects and perhaps even quotes a hexametrical incantation originally chanted in dactylic hexameters over wine and that the poet of the *Odyssey* knowingly uses this traditional and boastful form of incantation – something about which his audience would have had some knowledge – to explain the power of Helen's drug from Egypt, something they would not.¹⁰⁵

Faraone refers to an audience of the archaic period, long before Clement's own time. Nonetheless, the consistent use of certain poetic lines in so-called magical incantations even into late antiquity indicates that for centuries people thought it useful to insert these archaizing bits into their practices and prose, to render their ritual object or literary text more powerful. The verse Clement offers may have been heard by some as pre-Homeric: an incantation in its own right, woven into Homer's account of Helen. Clement self-consciously, witchily mixes (*enkekratai*) his own cocktail of incantation, song, law, and rhetoric. Perhaps Clement is doing what he always does, which is to mix learned Hellenism with the true drug of Christianity.

Contemporaneous writings that combine music, medicine, and theology elucidate Clement's approach. Aristides Quintilianus's *On Music* regularly uses medical terminology; he argues that the "movements and emotions" of the irrational portion of the soul shift like musical notes, and states, "If [the underlying disposition] is obscure and hard to diagnose, you should begin by applying whatever melody comes to hand. If this is effective in influencing the soul, you should persist with it, but if

¹⁰⁴ David Brakke, "Scriptural Practices in Early Christianity: Towards a New History of the New Testament Canon," in *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, eds. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Jörg Ulrich (Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 11; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012), 263–80; on scriptural practices, see pp. 96–97 above.

¹⁰⁵ Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 120.

the patient remains unaltered you should introduce a modulation; for it is likely that someone who is resistant to one sort of melody will be attracted by its opposite” (*De mus.* II.14).¹⁰⁶ In Iamblichus’s *Life of the Pythagoreans*, we also find concoction muddled from themes of health, philosophy, song, Homer, and incantation.¹⁰⁷ Centuries after Pythagoras and his early disciples, Iamblichus imagines how song was used in the philosophical-theological life of Pythagorean followers, who at an early stage of the training are called *akousmatikoi*: “probationers,” literally, “those who hear.” Song offers a philosophical-theological-medical therapy, a “medicine by means of music.”¹⁰⁸ This musical medical treatment was not (only) a personal prescription. It worked in community. Iamblichus depicts a choral arrangement with a lyre-player in the center, a circle of singers around, and “thus while that one played the lyre, they chanted certain paeans in unison, through which they expected to induce feelings of joy, and to become grateful and rhythmical.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ εἰ δ’ ἄδηλον καὶ δύσγνωστον, τὴν μὲν τυχοῦσαν μελωδίαν ἐν ἀρχῇ προσακτέον καὶ ψυχαγωγούμενον μὲν ἐπὶ τῆς αὐτῆς διατριπτέον, μένοντος δὲ ἀκινήτου μεταβολὴν ἐμποιητέον· τὸν γὰρ δυσχεραίνοντα τὸ τοιόνδε μέλος οὐδὲν ἀπαικὸς ἀγαπήσειν τὸ ἐναντίον. Greek: Winington-Ingram, *Aristidis Quintiliani de musica libri tres*; trans. Barker, 2.482–83; see also references to medicine and healing e.g., at Aristides Quintilianus *De mus.* II.6 (Barker, 2. 468), II.17 (Barker, 2.491), III.8 (Barker, 2.506).

¹⁰⁷ See also Philo’s *On the Contemplative Life*, in which music composition and singing is a cultic and communal community practice, e.g.: “And so they do not confine themselves to contemplation but also compose hymns and psalms to God in all sorts of metres and melodies which they write down with the rhythms necessarily made more solemn.” ὥστε οὐ θεωροῦσι μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιοῦσιν ᾠσματα καὶ ὕμνους εἰς τὸν θεὸν διὰ παντοίων μέτρων καὶ μελῶν, ἃ ῥυθμοῖς σεμνοτέροις ἀναγκαίως χαράττουσι. Philo *De vita contemp.* 29, trans. and Greek in Philo, *Every Good Man is Free. On the Contemplative Life. On the Eternity of the World. Against Flaccus. Apology for the Jews. On Providence* (trans. F. H. Colson; LCL 363; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941), 128–31.

¹⁰⁸ τὴν διὰ τῆς μουσικῆς ἰατρείαν. Dillon and Hershbelle, 135. “Indeed, he called this ‘medical treatment through music.’” For “those who hear” (*akousmatikoi*), see Iamblichus *De vit. Pythag.* 18 and discussion of Pythagorean communities in Dillon and Hershbelle, 14–16. Dillon and Hershbelle translate the different levels of the Pythagorean community as *akousmatikoi* “probationers” and *mathēmatikoi* “advanced students.” The (controversial) *harmonia* of fifth-century BCE Damon of Oa was recounted even in the Roman period as having calming effects; he demanded a Dorian *harmonia* when drunken youths were frenzied by the Phrygian tune from an *aulos* player. Wallace, “Damon of Oa,” 260.

¹⁰⁹ καὶ οὕτως ἐκείνου κρούοντος συνῆδον παιῶνάς τινας, δι’ ὧν εὐφραίνεσθαι καὶ ἐμμελεῖς καὶ ἔνρυστοι γίνεσθαι ἐδόκουν. Regarding this music as not merely personal, we can think of late antique engagements (e.g., Plutarch, *Life of Pericles*) with Damon of Oa. Plato’s *Republic* describes Damon as Pericles’s teacher and advisor. Yet Damon was also ostracized. That is, the outcome of this musical/emotional theory was politically

Iamblichus's hagiography of Pythagoras states that the philosopher mixed tunes like medicines to heal diseases of the body and the soul; the moral and the pharmacological combine as Pythagoras "corrected each toward virtue by means of proper tunes, as through by means of some well-blended, healing drugs."¹¹⁰ The term *pharmaka* in Greek has multiple associations: medicine and health, as well as magic and poison or recipes; the adjective *sōtērios* of course means healing, but with overtones of "salvation," in both non-Christian and Christian contexts (and Dillon and Hershbelt argue that the *Life of the Pythagoreans* shows Christian influences).¹¹¹ This music was an everyday, all-day medical script. Pythagoras taught purification from disturbance at night, freedom from sluggishness by morning, all by means of "distinctive hymns and melodies performed, in a simple mode, either with a lyre or with a voice" (*De vit. Pythag.* 15[65]).¹¹² Clement too recommended simple song at night, weaving his instructions with a citation from Wisd. 39:15–16: "Finally, before sleep, it is a sacred duty to thank God, having enjoyed God's grace and love for humanity, and so to fall asleep inspired by God. 'And sing praises to him in songs upon the lips,' it [the scripture] says, 'because by his command comes forth every blessing and there is nothing is lacking in his saving power'" (*Paid.* 2.4).¹¹³ While these ideas are transmitted and preserved largely through elite male channels, they also hint at broader, everyday "aesthetic labor" to form the healthy philosophical-theological

dangerous, and Plato himself condemns Damon as well. Wallace, "Damon of Oa," 249–50.

¹¹⁰ ἔπανορθούμενος πρὸς ἀρετὴν τούτων ἕκαστον διὰ τῶν προσηκόντων μελῶν ὡς διὰ τινων σωτηρίων συγκεκραμένον φαρμάκων. Dillon and Hershbelt, p. 89 (modified).

¹¹¹ Dillon and Hershbelt, 14, 22; see also Walsh, *The Origins of Early Christian Literature*, 32, 159.

¹¹² διὰ τινων ἰδιотρόπων ἁσμάτων καὶ μελισμάτων, ψιλῇ τῇ κράσει, διὰ λύρας ἢ καὶ φωνῆς, συντελουμένων. Dillon and Hershbelt, 89. We could easily trip past the phrase "in simple blend" (*psilē tē krasei*), but it's worth noting that this language evokes textures and aesthetics: *psilē* has the sense of being bare rather than furred – stripped, shorn – and this word is also found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus's discussion of "voiceless" letters (e.g., the twice used "differing in smoothness and roughness," ψιλότῃ δὲ καὶ δασύτῃ διαφερόντων) in *De comp.* 14 (LCL pp. 102–3); for more on Dionysius and the aesthetics of rhetoric and vowels, see Chapter 3 and the Interlude.

¹¹³ My trans., with reference made to ANF2. Ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τε πρὶν ὕπνου λαχεῖν εὐχαριστεῖν ὅσων τῶ θεῷ τῆς αὐτοῦ χάριτος καὶ φιλανθρωπίας ἀπολαύσαντας, ὡς καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ὕπνον ἰέναι ἡμᾶς ἐνθέως. «Καὶ ἐξομολογήσασθε αὐτῷ ἐν ᾧδαῖς χειλέων», φησὶν, «ὅτι ἐν προστάγματι αὐτοῦ πᾶσα εὐδοκία γίνεται, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλάττωσις εἰς τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ.» Greek edition is M. Harl, H.-I. Marrou, C. Matray, and C. Mondésert, *Clément d'Alexandrie. Le pédagogue*, 3 vols. (SC 70, 108, 158. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1960–70).

self, and not only the self as individual but also the self in community.¹¹⁴ You can sing yourself or your community to wellness.

Some musical parts or tunes (*melē*), according to Iamblichus, are medicinal.

At other times they used music as a medical treatment. There are certain melodies created for the soul's emotions [*pathē*] which, in fact, were designed to be most helpful against despondency and mental suffering; and again, other melodies against rages, angers, and against every mental disturbance of a soul so afflicted; there is another kind of musical composition invented for the desires. They also made use of dances. As an instrument they used the lyre; for he believed that pipes had a wanton, showy, and wholly ignoble sound. He also used selected phrases of Homer and Hesiod for the improvement of the soul. (*De vit. Pythag.* 25 [110–11])¹¹⁵

Phrases (*lexesin*) taken from Homer and Hesiod function as pharmacological elements, short bits in a longer recipe or script against disease. They function aesthetically in two senses: sometimes for beauty, and certainly to aid with the *aisthēseis* or feelings. They are tools within a larger diagnosis of illness of the passions (*pathē*), which needs tunes or melodies (*melē*) and music (*mousikē*): music therapy indeed, in a medical-philosophical-theological field.¹¹⁶ Finally, Iamblichus offers a passage which clinches the connection between song and incantation in the Pythagorean milieu: “There are cases in which they healed emotions and certain sicknesses, as

¹¹⁴ I borrow the phrase “aesthetic labor” from Judith Casselberry, who writes of the death of a sister in Christ in the Black Apostolic Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc. The gathered women cooked, cleaned, tended to the house of the dead woman; they “performed intimate, emotional and aesthetic religious labor as well. When Mother Geneva Reeves sang, her emotional labor attended to everyone present, as she worked to rub a sonic salve into the open wounds.” Casselberry, *The Labor of Faith*, 170.

¹¹⁵ χρῆσθαι δ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ κατὰ τὸν ἄλλον χρόνον τῇ μουσικῇ καὶ εἶναι τινα μέλη πρὸς τὰ ψυχῆς πεποιημένα πάθη, πρὸς τε ἀθυμίας καὶ δηγμούς, ἃ δὲ βοηθητικώτατα ἐπινενόητο, καὶ πάλιν αὖ ἕτερα πρὸς τε τὰς ὀργάς καὶ πρὸς τοὺς θυμούς καὶ πρὸς πᾶσαν παραλλήλῃ τῆς τοιαύτης ψυχῆς, εἶναι δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἐπιθυμίας γένος μελοποιίας ἐξευρημένον. χρῆσθαι δὲ καὶ ὀρχήσεσιν . . . χρῆσθαι δὲ καὶ Ὁμήρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου λέξεσιν ἐξειλεγμέναις πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν ψυχῆς. Trans. Dillon and Hershbelt with one modification, 135.

¹¹⁶ Iamblichus explains further that musical arrangement and musical combination “skillfully revers[e] dispositions of the soul to opposite emotions with certain suitable tunes” (trans. Dillon and Hershbelt, 137). These can include “sometimes even with melodies without words,” for example in the case of getting rid of sluggishness after sleep. On music as healing and tutelary for the irrational part of the soul, see Aristides Quintilianus, *De mus.* II. 3–5, e.g., at 5 (Barker, 2.462): “People saw that pleasure is rife in its appetitive part, grief and its offspring anger in the spirited part, and inspired ecstasy in the rational. But for each of these there was a fitting style [*harmotōn tropos*] of treatment through music, which brought the sufferer gradually, and without his knowledge, into a proper condition.”

they say, truly by means of singing as an incantation and it is probably that thence this noun, ‘incantation’ (*epōidē*) passed into common use.”¹¹⁷ Iamblichus here represents song as key to Pythagorean healing of both *pathē* and diseases; he twice uses terms related to incantation.

Clement too is interested in incantation: in song, rituals, and *daimones* – spirits, demons, or divinities, depending on your translational predilection and worldview. Clement too is hooked in a world in which a line of poetry is part of an incantatory script, whether in a *defixio* or in his own treatise. He goes on in the *Protreptikos* to assert that the Thracian Orpheus, the Theban Amphion, and the Methymnian Arion are all deceivers:

Under cover of music they have harmed (human) life, being influenced by *daimones*, through some artful magic, for the purpose of ruin. By ritual celebrations of violence, and by deifying sorrows, they were the first to lead people by the hand toward idols; yes, with stones and wood – that is to say, statues and shadow-painting – to build up the stupidity of custom, by songs and incantations confined in abject enslavement that truly beautiful freedom of those who have been made citizens of heaven. (*Protr.* 1)¹¹⁸

Clement accuses the musicians of daimonic influence and of some technical or artisanal magical work (*entekhnōi tini goēteiai*). His reference to “deeds of violence” and “deifying sorrows (*penthē*)” evokes Euripides’s *Bacchae*: the story of Pentheus being torn apart by Dionysus’s followers because of his hubris against the god. Clement’s use of the term *skiagraphia*, painting with shadows, rather than a simpler word for drawing, may signal to the reader or hearer two things: epistemological questions regarding sense perception and the relation between the real and the shadow world (e.g., *Plat. Rep.* 523b) and the *skiagraphia* or illusionistic paintings of the god Dionysus’s theaters.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the terminology of

¹¹⁷ <ἔστι> τε ὅπου καὶ πάθη καὶ νοσήματα τινα ἀφυγίαζον, ὥς φασιν, ἐπ’ ἄδοντες ὡς ἀληθῶς, καὶ εἰκὸς ἐντεῦθεν ποθεν τοῦνομα τοῦτο εἰς μέσον παρεληλυθῆναι, τὸ τῆς ἐπωδῆς. Trans. Dillon and Hershbell, 137.

¹¹⁸ ...προσχήματι <τε>μουσικῆς λυμνήμενοι τὸν βίον, ἐντέχνῳ τινὶ γοητείᾳ δαιμονῶντες εἰς διαφθοράς, ὕβρεις ὀργιάζοντες, πένθη ἐκθειάζοντες, τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐπὶ τὰ εἰδῶλα χειραγωγῆσαι πρῶτοι, ναὶ μὴν λίθοις καὶ ξύλοις, τουτέστιν ἀγάλμασι καὶ σκιαγραφίαις, ἀνοικοδομήσαι τὴν σκαιότητα τοῦ ἔθους, τὴν καλὴν ὄντως ἐκείνην ἐλευθερίαν τῶν ὑπ’ οὐρανὸν πεπολιτευμένων ῥῆσαι καὶ ἐπωδαῖς ἐσχάτῃ δουλείᾳ καταζεύξαντες. LCL 92, p. 8; note the allusion to *Phil.* 3:20: ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

¹¹⁹ Lechner, “Süße Lust des Logos,” 182–83, and see many references to the *Bacchae* in Lechner’s charts of themes within Clement, and possible sources. On illusionistic painting and especially *skiagraphia*, see Agnès Rouveret, *Histoire et imaginaire de la peinture ancienne (Ve siècle av. J.-C. - Ier siècle ap. J.-C.)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1989), 20–63.

ritual appears again in the doubled reference to “songs and incantations” (*ōidais kai epōidais*). Just as Clement had contrasted Eunomos with Clement’s own *eunomos* or good law, so too here Clement contrasts the evils of some music to “my singer,” who “has come, unloosing the bitter enslavement of tyrannical *daimones*.”¹²⁰ Clement’s use of the verb “to loose” (*kataluein*) may remind the hearer of the binding for which *daimones* are sometimes thought responsible, in the curse tablets that bind (*kata-desmoi*) and from which release is sought.

Having begun with Eunomos’s myth, Clement continues by introducing David, from whom “the new song,” which is the word of God, sprang. David the harpist was able to exorcize. He chased away *daimones* from Saul.¹²¹ Clement emphasizes that this new song has transformative powers and that it “composed the entire creation melodiously, and tuned the discord of the elements into an ordered musical concord (*sumphonia*), that the whole universe might be in harmony with it.”¹²² The Logos, who was both from David genealogically and preceded him, in contrast does not need a lyre or *kithara*. Instead, “the descendent of David, the one who also was before him, the Logos of God, despising the lyre and the kithara – soulless instruments – and harmonizing the very cosmos and indeed also the miniature cosmos – the human, both its soul and body – by means of the holy spirit, played to God through a polyphonos instrument and sang through the human instrument” (*Protr.* 1).¹²³ Clement talks of *kithara*

¹²⁰ καταλύσων ἀφίκται τὴν δουλείαν τὴν πικράν τῶν τυραννούντων δαιμόνων. LCL 92, p. 8.

¹²¹ “So far was he from singing the praises of daemons that they were put to flight by him with the true music” (πολλοῦ γε ἔδει ὑμνεῖν αὐτὸν τοὺς δαίμονας ἀληθεῖ πρὸς αὐτοῦ διωκομένους μουσικῇ), text and translation at LCL 92, 12–13. See also pp. 121–22 above to recall how John Chrysostom uses the story of Saul and David to refer to *daimones* and the problem of the *pathē*, namely, anger. Faraone, *Transformations*, 198–201, discusses evidence at Qumran and elsewhere of curative incantations associated with David; see also Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 108–11.

¹²² τοῦτό τοι καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐκόσμησεν ἐμμελῶς καὶ τῶν στοιχείων τὴν διαφωνίαν εἰς τάξιν ἐνέτεινε συμφωνίας, ἵνα δὴ ὅλος ὁ κόσμος αὐτῷ ἁρμονία γένηται. LCL 92, p. 10. This song materially produces the cosmos: “What is more, this pure song, the stay of the universe and the harmony of all things, stretching from the centre to the circumference and from the extremities to the centre, reduced this whole to harmony.” (καὶ δὴ τὸ ὅσμη τὸ ἀκήρατον, ἔρεισμα τῶν ὧλων καὶ ἁρμονία τῶν πάντων, ἀπὸ τῶν μέσων ἐπὶ τὰ πέρατα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἄκρων ἐπὶ τὰ μέσα διαταθέν, ἡρμόσατο τόδε τὸ πᾶν.) LCL 92, p. 12.

¹²³ ὁ δὲ ἐκ Δαυὶδ καὶ πρὸ αὐτοῦ, ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος, λύραν μὲν καὶ κithάραν, τὰ ἄσυχνα ὄργανα, ὑπεριδὼν, κόσμον δὲ τόνδε καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸν μικρὸν κόσμον, τὸν ἀνθρώπου, ψυχὴν τε καὶ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, ἀγίῳ πνεύματι ἁρμολογούμενος, ψάλλει τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ πολυφώνου ὄργανου καὶ προσάδει τῷ ὄργανῳ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ. LCL 92, p. 12. In the *Paidagogos*, Clement indexes the human body to scriptural passages and to the separable musical mechanics that this *organon*

and *aulos*¹²⁴ and emphasizes that there should be “the plucking, the enspiriting, the making room (*chōrēsē*) for the Lord.”¹²⁵ The terms are musical or pun upon musical practices and the theater: the *chōrēsē* toward the end is a homophonic overlap with the word for chorus. This enspiriting protects against the *daimones*; it is exorcistic, in the case of David and Saul. In the case of Clement’s listeners, such music can be apotropaic. The microscale of this cosmic shift is clear in the emphasis upon breath or spirit: the breath within the human allows for the production of sound and song: “The Lord fashioned the beautiful human as an enspirited (or breathing) instrument according to his likeness, and he himself doubtless is a *panharmonion* of God, melodious and holy, Wisdom that is above this cosmos, heavenly Logos” (*Protr.* 1).¹²⁶

David used the *kithara*. Clement uses his own voice. The Logos works without instruments. According to Iamblichus, Pythagoras’s own practices, too, no longer needed instruments, since he used “some unspoken and difficult to understand divine power, he fixed his hearing and he applied the mind upon the high, airy harmonies of the cosmos.”¹²⁷ Pythagoras indicated that “he alone could hear and understand the universal harmony and concord of the spheres and of the stars moving

(instrument) can exercise: “Our body is called an instrument, and its nerves strings, through which it has received harmonious tension, and when the body is struck by the spirit, it gives forth human sounds (*phthoggous*). ‘Praise him on the loud cymbals’: he calls the tongue is the cymbal of the mouth, which resounds in the striking of the lips. Because of this he voiced to humanity: ‘Let every breath praise the lord,’ because he oversees every breath which he made. For the human is a truly peaceful instrument.” ὄργανον τὸ σῶμα λέγει τὸ ἡμέτερον καὶ χορδὰς τὰ νεῦρα αὐτοῦ, δι’ ὧν ἐναρμόνιον εἴληφε τὴν τάσιν, καὶ κρουόμενον τῷ πνεύματι τοὺς φθόγγους ἀποδίδωσι τοὺς ἀνθρωπίνους· «αἰνεῖτε αὐτὸν ἐν κυμβάλοις ἀλαλαγμοῦ», κύμβαλον τοῦ στόματος τὴν γλῶτταν λέγει, ἢ τοῖς κρουομένοις ἐπηχεῖ χεῖλεσιν. Διὰ τοῦτο ἐπεφώνησεν τῇ ἀνθρωπότητι «πᾶσα πνοὴ αἰνεσάτω τὸν κύριον», ὅτι πᾶσαν, ἣν ἐποίησεν, ἐπεσκέψατο πνοήν. Εἰρηνικὸν γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς ὄργανον ὁ ἀνθρωπὸς ἐστίν. My trans.; Greek eds. Harl et al., SC 70, 108, 158. See also, for example, Apollinaris of Laodicea, *Metaphrasis Psalmorum* (ed. and trans. Andrew Faulkner; New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹²⁴ On why the *aulos* is not a “flute” but pipes or reeds, see West, *Ancient Greek Music*, 81–109.

¹²⁵ κιθάρα διὰ τὴν ἁρμονίαν, αὐλὸς διὰ τὸ πνεῦμα, ναὸς διὰ τὸν λόγον, ἵν’ ἡ μὲν κρέκη, τὸ δὲ ἐμπνέη, ὁ δὲ χωρήσῃ τὸν κύριον. LCL 92, p. 12.

¹²⁶ καλὸν ὁ κύριος ὄργανον ἔμπνουν τὸν ἀνθρώπον ἐξεργάσατο κατ’ εἰκόνα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ· ἀμέλει καὶ αὐτὸς ὄργανόν ἐστι τοῦ θεοῦ παναρμόνιον, ἐμμελὲς καὶ ἅγιον, σοφία ὑπερκόσμιος, οὐράνιος λόγος. LCL 92, p. 14. See also discussion in Nasrallah, *Christian Responses*, 274.

¹²⁷ *De vit. Pythag.* 15 [65], my translation after Dillon and Hershbelle, 89–90. ἀλλὰ ἀρρήτῳ τινὶ καὶ δυσεπινοήτῳ θεϊότητι χρώμενος ἐνητένιζε τὰς ἀκοὰς καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἐνήρειδε ταῖς μεταρσίαις τοῦ κόσμου συμφωνίαις.

through them.”¹²⁸ Pythagoras was a technology unto himself. Like a radio, tuned in to the cosmos and its sounds, he was able to broadcast these sonically to his followers. Leaning on Empedocles, Iamblichus attributes some of Pythagoras’s abilities to his being fashioned by a “divine spirit” (*daimonion*) (15 [66]). Iamblichus’s philosophical-theological model of Pythagoras and his community draws on the vocabulary of aesthetics and the realm of the little *daimōn* within.

In his virtuosic rhetorical skills and in his ability to move from Homeric verse regarding *pharmaka* to Isaiah’s singing *logos* to the story of David’s exorcistic music, Clement is “tuning up.” We don’t know how Clement’s audiences reacted to the *Protreptikos*. Maybe it was a flop. Maybe he was considered a star, celebrated as a model musician-healer-philosopher (as Pythagoras was). Clement shows that for some, you’re not just singing a song; you’re tapping your breath into the spirit of the Creator. Or you’re a *smikros kosmos*, a mini-universe within the greater harmonies of creation. Or you’re warding off *daimones*. As we have learned from curse tablets, you could also incant another’s destruction.

HOMERIC INCANTATION AND JULIUS AFRICANUS

Clement basks in Homeric citations, even at the most surprising point: Homeric verse is baptized as a “Levitical song.” As I have mentioned, this attention to Homer is not surprising: Homer, for instance, is known as “the poet” in Aristides Quintilianus’s *De musica* (e.g. II.9), as if no one would ask, “Which poet?”¹²⁹ Homer was good to think with: Dio Chrysostom asks: “Why in the world do you suppose Homer caused Nestor to speak the following verses to Agamemnon and Achilles when he was trying to pacify them and teach them not to quarrel with one another?” (*Or.* 57.1) and subsequently spends an entire oration interpret-

¹²⁸ *De vit. Pythag.* 15 [65], my translation after Dillon and Hershbelle, 89–90. ἐνακούων, ὡς ἐνέφανε, μόνος αὐτός καὶ συνιείς τῆς καθολικῆς τῶν σφαιρῶν καὶ τῶν κατ’ αὐτὰς κινουμένων ἀστέρων ἁρμονίας τε καὶ συνφθίας.

¹²⁹ Aristides Quintilianus also argues that within Homeric texts are examples of song which is used to educate (*De mus.* II.10 [74]: “Poetry is divided into imitation and narrative, and each of these is in turn divided into two: creations of character, and narrations. The latter frequently occur on their own, and are called ‘forms’ or ‘poems.’ That these too provide a useful musical education is adequately attested by Homer” (trans. Barker 2.476; many Homeric exempla follow).

ing this point: he among others is engaged in Homeric exegesis.¹³⁰ Rhapsodists competitively performed parts of Homer in the Roman period, even if their craft was more popular a few centuries earlier. Homer is the educational touchstone and citation of Homeric verses (among other “classics”) one mode of showing one’s abilities in culture or education (*paideia*).¹³¹

Homer is not only useful for *paideia*, as a pinnacle of education and culture, but also for so-called magic, the source of “the earliest examples of magic in Greek literature,” including the figures of Circe and Helen, “the healing of Odysseus’s thigh with an incantation, and Aphrodite’s magical strap (*kestos himas*) used to incite erotic passion.”¹³² Texts from the first to the fourth centuries CE also excerpted Homeric writings – or invented quasi-Homeric texts in their characteristic dactylic hexameter – for ritual purposes, including “Egyptian papyri, Second Sophistic literary sources, medical, veterinary, and agricultural handbooks, inscriptions on potsherds, stone amulets, and a gold tablet or *lamella*.”¹³³ *Homeromanteia* have been found: three fragments of divinatory texts

¹³⁰ Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 37–60 (trans. H. Lamar Crosby; LCL 376; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946), 419. See also Aristides Quintilianus, *De mus.* 2.17: “Elsewhere he [Homer] calls the soul Aphrodite, and its bodily nature, because of its instantiation in blood, he calls Ares; and he says that it has been bound by the divine craftsman, whom he calls Hephaestus, in fetters of just this kind” (trans. Barker, 2.491).

¹³¹ Gangloff, “Rhapsodes and Rhapsodic Contests in the Imperial Period,” 147: “By the Imperial era, although literary sources still use the label ‘Homeric’ when referring to them, rhapsodes had become a secondary conduit for Homer’s poetry.” She further argues that in the Roman period, Homeric performances shift to actors, mimes, pantomimes, as well as to sophists who “energetically exploited Homeric myths and poems.” See also Maren Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹³² Derek Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 104; Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 1–20.

¹³³ Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, 104. See James I. Porter, “Homer in the Gutter: From Samuel Butler to the Second Sophistic and Back Again,” in *Marginality, Canonicity, Passion*, eds. Marco Formisano and Christina Shuttleworth Kraus, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 231–62. This chapter details the question of how we can make sense of the paradoxical nature of references to Homer: divinized, and also parodied. As Maren Niehoff has shown, the scribal work in Alexandria of collecting and annotating Homer occurred in a context in which similar practices toward Jewish scriptures emerged, even if Philo sought to distinguish Jewish scriptures from other texts that were scripturalized, like Homer (Maren Niehoff, ed., “Why Compare Homer’s Readers to Biblical Readers,” in *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters* [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 8; see also her *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship*). We met something fed by a similar logic in the Antiochene curse in which a powerful mythos of the Pharaoh and the plague was martialled against Babylas (see Chapter 2 above).

use Homeric verses as oracles.¹³⁴ And the significance of dactylic hexameter – easy as it is to produce and enjoy – precedes Homer; as Faraone notes, “at least until the end of the classical period, dactylic hexameters remained a special kind of meter, because they alone were thought to be capable of bridging the gap between gods and mortals as a kind of ‘ritualized communication.’”¹³⁵

Homeric verses – as well as other powerful incantatory fragments, such as the hemistich of dactylic hexameter found in the *defixio* from Roman Jerusalem – were a gear within one’s machine, whether that machine be a *defixio*, a philosophical treatise on rhetoric, an opining on music, or an argument that it was the Logos as new song who deserved the Homeric epithet of “pain and sorrow-banisher.”¹³⁶ The uses of Homeric verse could be eminently practical and skirt the border of what we call medicine and ritual practice. PGM XXIIa.9–10, dating to the fourth or fifth century CE, instructs the use of *Iliad* 2.548: “the daughter of Zeus nourished, and the fruitful land bore” to help new mothers with breast or uterine pain.¹³⁷ And, as Derek Collins writes, “According to Alexander of Tralles and

¹³⁴ Raquel Martín Hernández, “Using Homer for Divination: *Homeromanteia* in Context,” *CHS Research Bulletin* 2.1 (2013): np; eadem, “The Transmission of the *Sortes Homericæ*. A Papyrological Approach to the Texts,” in *Ancient Magic Then and Now*, eds. Attilio Mastrocinque et al. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2020), 375–86; eadem, discussed briefly also in David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 181, as one example among other divinatory practices.

¹³⁵ Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 18.

¹³⁶ See e.g., a binding spell from fifth- or fourth-century BCE Athens, which includes “a hexametric Homeric intertext”: “in blood and in ashes,” calling upon chthonic Hekate, chthonic Artemis, and chthonic Hermes to bind Phanagora and Demetrios and their tavern (!) and property. Jessica Lamont, “A New Commercial Curse Tablet from Classical Athens,” *ZPE* 196 (2015): 159, 162–63.

¹³⁷ Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, 109; the translation of the *Iliad* is his; see *Il.* 2.548 in Richmond Lattimore’s translation: “Zeus’ daughter tended after the grain-giving fields...” (*The Iliad of Homer* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951] 90). If we return to the Philinna papyrus and its use of hexametric verse for incantations, we find: “Flee headache, flee . . . under a rock; / As wolves flee, as single-hooved horses (*mōnukhes hippoi*) flee” (PGM XX.15–16). Collins points out (p. 115) the long-lived nature of the phrase “single-hooved horses,” found in *Iliad* 10 and elsewhere in the *Iliad*, once in the *Odyssey*, in other archaic Greek poetry, and in Theognis. Collins argues that two different logics seem to govern the use of Homeric verses for incantation. The first has to do with an implicit knowledge of the larger context from which the short verse is taken. The incantation, in Collins’s words, “evokes a larger and more ‘echoic’ narrative context than the verse itself” (p. 108); perhaps we could say that it functions like a *historiola*. Collins names such uses analogical. But the majority of evidence regarding use of Homeric verses is “metaphorical,” in Collins’s terminology, or engages in the use of *similia similibus*, to use the more common scholarly terminology (pp. 115–22).

Rufus of Ephesus, the second-century CE Roman physician Galen was said to have experimented with Homeric incantations himself, and to have found them effective in the treatment of a scorpion sting and for the dislodging of bones stuck in the throat.”¹³⁸

A particularly powerful example of Homeric verses and their context in ritual practices is found in *P. Oxy.* 412,¹³⁹ a portion of the eighteenth *kestos* of Julius Africanus. We are not even sure what the title *Kestoi* (plural; singular *kestos*) means, but it likely refers to embroidery or braids and thus to the magical garment, varied in decoration, that Aphrodite loans to Hera so that she can enchant Zeus (κεστὸν ἱμάντα ποικίλον, *Il.* 14.214–17).¹⁴⁰ The *Kestoi*’s generic illegibility adds to the perception that the work is disturbingly weird, stumbling as it does from military tactics to calendars to how to care for horses to how to tap into the song of the cosmos. Every puzzling text from antiquity deserves a scholar who loves it, and Julius Africanus’s *Kestoi* has found that in William Adler. Adler explains that this text is part of the “appetite of the Severan age for encyclopedic knowledge” and fits within the paradoxographic traditions of the time, the trend to catch the reader’s attention with the strange and unusual.¹⁴¹

The papyrus manuscript on which *Kestos* 18 is found dates to ca. 250–265. Julius’s mention of emperor Severus Augustus indicates that the *Kestoi* were written ca. 228–231 CE.¹⁴² The name Julius Africanus is connected with letters to Origen and Aristides, as well as the writing of the *Chronographiae*.¹⁴³ Despite this solid evidence of Julius Africanus’s circulation in Christian circles, scholars as early as the seventeenth

¹³⁸ Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, 105.

¹³⁹ Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, 26–31, Greek edition and English translation, numbered as F10. This is the only fragment of Julius Africanus’s *Kestoi* (Latin transliteration: *Cesti*) that comes to us in direct transmission, rather than in the fragmented and perhaps corrupted citations in other writers. Note, however, Francesca Middleton’s caution that to look at this fragment for ritual is to miss the “principal framework” of the passage, which is textual criticism and recension. Francesca Middleton, “Illusions and Vanishing Acts: Homeric Recension, Athetesis, and Magic in *P. Oxy.* 412 (PGM XXIII),” *Helios* 41. 2 (2014): 143.

¹⁴⁰ See Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xviii.

¹⁴¹ Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xiv and his “The *Cesti* and Sophistic Culture in the Severan Age,” in *The Cesti of Julius Africanus and Its Transmission*, eds. Martin Wallraff and Laura Mecella (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 6.

¹⁴² Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xxxiii; xi–xix. The date is established by a testament drafted on the verso. See also Francis C. R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984).

¹⁴³ Adler, “The *Cesti* and Sophistic Culture in the Severan Age,” 1–2.

century engaged in gymnastics to distance the *Kestoi* from a Christian Julius Africanus and from Christianity more generally, positing a (Christian) Julius Africanus and a non-Christian named Sextus (Julius) Africanus who produced the *Kestoi*.¹⁴⁴ This idea is now discredited as an apologetic move to cleanse Christianity from a strange text which some find embarrassing.

While other portions of the *Kestoi* are known through fragments embedded in later writers, *P. Oxy.* III 412 or the eighteenth *kestos* seems to provide an undisturbed account of Julius's thought, close to the date of composition. Homeric verses interspersed with instructions and an incantation appear in the first column of *P. Oxy.* III 412.¹⁴⁵ The first thirteen lines duplicate known texts recalling Odysseus's descent to the shades of the dead, in which Odysseus calls upon his companions to invoke Hades and Persephone (*Ody.* 11.34–43).¹⁴⁶ While line 13a still draws from *Ody.* 11.50, Julius modifies line 13b; it runs along in dactylic hexameter ("in response, I uttered these words")¹⁴⁷ but is modified to introduce more smoothly a ritual script. Julius's own commentarial voice interrupts:

He has described the actions that must be done. (line 14)¹⁴⁸

Julius then treats the Homeric text with "fluidity and permeability,"¹⁴⁹ inserting lines from Agamemnon's prayer in *Il.* 3.276–80 (lines 15–17 within *Kestos* 18):

¹⁴⁴ Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xi–xii. Adler recounts Julius's cool reception in late antique Christianity, suggesting that both Rufinus (in his translation of Eusebius's *History of the Church* into Latin) and Jerome mention Julius Africanus but avoid the *Kestoi*; a tenth-century CE compiler of Byzantine military strategies (*Sylloge Tacticorum*) talks about Julius's *Kestoi*, particularly its idea of biological and chemical weapons, as "unworthy of the Christian way of life." (Reader: they are alarming.) The eleventh-century Michael Psellus sees the work as a kind of sorcery (p. xvi). Note also that Julius's eighteenth *kestos* associates him with Palestine, and we could wish for more information about his associations with Libya or Africa.

¹⁴⁵ See also British Library Papyrus 2040. Middleton, "Illusions and Vanishing Acts," 149. The author notes that in 1931, Preisendanz included only lines 22–36 of *P. Oxy.* III 412, thus excising the context and misleading readers into thinking that this was solely a Homeric invocation. See Preisendanz 2.150–51 (*PGM XXIII*). Hans Dieter Betz instead offered the full English translation (Betz, 262–64).

¹⁴⁶ Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xxxv.

¹⁴⁷ Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, 27 n. 4; see also discussion in Middleton, "Illusions and Vanishing Acts."

¹⁴⁸ ὁ δ'εἰ ποιῆσαι εἴρηκεν.

¹⁴⁹ Middleton, "Illusions and Vanishing Acts," 152. The author sees Africanus as "inverting, revising, and extending the 'rules' of Hellenistic textual criticism" and thus "restructur[ing] the reader's sense of epic textuality" (p. 140).

- 15 “[O Rive]rs and Earth and Those Beneath, you who punish
 16 [me]n who are through with life, whoever swears a false oath,
 17 [you] be our witnesses, fulfill our song.
 18 [I have come] to enquire how I might arrive at the land
 19 [of Telem]achus, whom I left at his nurse’s bosom,
 20 my [so]n.”¹⁵⁰

Lines 18–20a¹⁵¹ prime the reader/hearer to expect something ritually useful with the words in lines 20b–21:

“For the following was a most excellent spell.”
 (He utters the incantation that must be sung.)¹⁵²

Faraone points out that line 17’s “fulfill our song” (*aoi[dē]n*) “is similar to the common coda to a number of the early hexametrical incantations and in the parody of Aristophanes: τελέει δ’ ἀγαθὴν ἐπαιδὴν.” The lines even contain an evaluation of the “quality of the charm: ‘For so excellent is this incantation!’”¹⁵³

The idea that ritual instructions and the ritual content itself could be mishmashed together is unsurprising. Some ritual objects contain instructions; from the forms in which we receive texts, it sometimes seems that scribes confused the words of the curse or ritual injunction with instructions regarding it, copying both together.¹⁵⁴ This “non-hexametric

¹⁵⁰ «[ὦ ποτα]μοὶ καὶ γαῖα καὶ οἱ ὑπένερθε κάμοντας
 [ἀνθρώ]πους τ[ῆ] ν[ε]σθ[ο]ν, ὅ[ς] τις κ’ ἐπ[ὶ] [τῆ] ορκον ὁμόσση,
 [ὕμει]ς μάρτυροι ἔσ[τε], τελέετε δ’ ἅμιν ἀοι[δῆ]ν.
 [ἦλθον] χρ[η]σόμενος ὥς ἂν εἰς γαῖαν ἰκάνω
 [τῆ] λεμ[ι]άχου γε, ὅν[τι]ν ἐλειπον ἐπὶ κόλποισι τ[ῆ] ἰθ[υ]ή[ς] νη[ὸ]ς,
 [τέκνο]ν ἐμόν[ο]ν· τοίη γὰρ ἀρίστη ἦν ἐπαιδ[ὴ].
 (ἃ δεῖ ἐπᾶσαι λέγει.)

Adler, *Cesti*, F10 with slight modification in translation.

¹⁵¹ Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, 27. See Middleton, “Illusions and Vanishing Acts,” 152–53: “the interpolation of the Iliadic prayer reads easily as an attempt to construct the papyrus’s textual alterations out of Homeric material, and so supplement *Odyssey* 11 with the appropriate external content. An uncritical reader would be untroubled by the Homeric status of this passage and then potentially persuaded to reinterpret the Iliadic verses by the comment . . . in lines 19–20, which reasserts the identity of the speaker in the passage as Odysseus.” Adler argues that the invented Homeric verses appear to reproduce portions of the *Iliad* or to reproduce Homeric phraseology but “violations of metrical rules suggest that the author of the interpolation lacked total mastery of epic versification” (Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xxxvi).

¹⁵² As noted above: τοίη γὰρ ἀρίστη ἦν ἐπαιδ[ὴ].
 (ἃ δεῖ ἐπᾶσαι λέγει.)

¹⁵³ Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 205.

¹⁵⁴ For one example, see Christopher A. Faraone, “A Greek Magical Gemstone from the Black Sea Amulet or Miniature Handbook?” *Kernos* 23 (2010): 91–114.

authorial commentary”¹⁵⁵ primes the reader for the doozy of an incantation that follows:

[Hear] me, wise and watchful, well-aim[ing An]ubis
] aullipaepareunetaôisithoei . . .
 [Come Her]mes always hither, robber, well-tressed Zeus of the underworld,
 by granting [its success] fulfill this incantation (*epaoidên*);
 [come hither Had]es and Earth, undying Fire, Titan Helios;
 [come also] Iaa and Phthah and Phrên Omosôsô,
 [and Neph]thô much-revered, and Ablanathô rich in blessings,
 [fier]y serpent-girded, earth-shaking Kareiê,
 [Abrax]as, far-famed deity of cosmic name,
 controlling [the world axis] and heavenly dance and cold light of Ursa Major;
 [come a]lso, Phrên, in self-control more excellent than everyone else to me,
 [. . .] ôrieu and phasie and sisyôn
 [and Bi]rth and Death and beauteous-burning Fire;
 [come Isi]s earthly and heavenly and belonging to dreams
 [guardian goddess], and Sirius who . . .¹⁵⁶

Adler calls this “magical invocation” and points out its mixture of Greek, Egyptian, and “Judaic” religious elements, including *vores magicæ*.¹⁵⁷ Iaa is a likely reference to Yahweh, here understood as a local god among other local variants of gods, including the “well-tressed Zeus of the underworld.”¹⁵⁸ After “and Sirius who. . . ,” the writing inexplicably breaks off, and the next line calmly returns to *Ody*. 11.51,

¹⁵⁵ Middleton, “Illusions and Vanishing Acts,” 152.

¹⁵⁶ [κλυῖθι] μοι, εὐμειδῆς καὶ ἐπίσκοπος, εὐστο[χ]’ Ἄν]ουβι

. . . αὐλιπταε παρευνεταωσιθει . . .
 [ἔλθ’ δ’] ἄεί, ἄρπας, δεῦρ’ εὐπλόκαμε χθόνιε Ζεῦ,
 [κῦρσαι] δωσάμενοι κρηήνῃς τήνδ’ ἐπασιδὴν
 [δεῦρ’ Ἀιδ]ῆ καὶ Χθών, πῦρ ἄφθιτον, Ἥλιε Τιτάν,
 [ἐλθέ καὶ] Ἴαα καὶ Φθᾶ καὶ Φρῆ νομοσώσω[ν],
 [καὶ Νεφ]θῶ πολύτιμε καὶ Ἀβλαναθῶ πολύολβε,
 [πυρσ]φδρακοντόζων’, ἐρυσίχθων, ἱβικαρείη,
 [Ἀβραξ]ᾶ, περίβωτε τὸ κοσμικὸν οὖνομα δαίμων,
 [ἄξονα] καὶ χορ[ον] καὶ φῶτα νέμων παγέρ’ Ἄρκτων,
 [ἐλθέ κ]αὶ ἐνκρατεῖα πάντων προφερέστερ’ ἐμοί, Φρῆν,
 . . .] ὠρίεω καὶ φασίε καὶ σισυῶν
 [καὶ Γε]νεᾶ καὶ Ἀπηβιοτὰ καὶ Πῦρ καλλιαιθέης,
 [ἔλθ’ Ἴσ]ις χθονία καὶ οὐρανία καὶ ὀνείρω<ν>
 [ῆ μεδέει]ς καὶ Σείρι’ ὅς . . .

Text and translation (with slight modifications) Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, F10.

¹⁵⁷ Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xxxvi.

¹⁵⁸ Ahuvia Kahane, “Blood for Ghosts? Homer, Ezra Pound, and Julius Africanus,” *New Literary History* 30 (1999): 820, 834 n. 11, which refers to Viellefond, Les “Cestes,” p. 288, n. b.: Iaa in the Greek, and commonly Yah in the Hebrew Old Testament, as

[And thes]e words, standing beside the pit, I sang;
[for well] I remembered Circe's stern admonitions,
who knows [as man]y potions as the broad earth grows.¹⁵⁹

This hexametric bit of *Kestos* 18 concludes (lines 43–44) with the famous Homeric verses:

[and a gh]ost army was standing round about and beside the pit;
a[nd first] came the ghost of my comrade Elpenor.

Julius breaks into prose as he abruptly writes: “and so forth,”¹⁶⁰ quickly concluding what is a “ritual ‘Homeric’ offering of blood for ghosts.”¹⁶¹

In the second column of *P. Oxy.* 412, Julius Africanus's voice emerges with an authoritative text-critical intervention. Julius states that the Homeric invocation he offers was omitted either by Homer or by the Peisistratids, the Athenian tyrants credited with drafting the first text of Homer. With the very mention of the Peisistratids, Julius signals how his own editorial approach differs from the “ordering, limitation, and censorship” of those classical tyrants.¹⁶² Moreover, he insists that he has seen

also per Ahuvia Kahane, “The Literary Charms of *P. Oxy.* 412,” *Hyperboreus* 3.2 (1997): 319. See also J. Hammerstaedt, who says that Wunsch had already known this (p. 56): “Die in col. I 22–36 enthaltene magische Anrufung besteht aus einer Mischung religiöser Elemente griechischer, ägyptischer und jüdischer Provenienz und enthält nicht den geringsten Hinweis auf die Situation des Odysseus.” J. Hammerstaedt, “Julius Africanus und seine Tätigkeiten im 18. Kestos (*P. Oxy.* 412 col. II),” in *Die Kestoi des Julius Africanus und ihre Überlieferung*, eds. M. Wallraff and L. Mecella (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 53–70. On the idea of YHWH as a local god, see Paula Frederiksen, “How Jewish is God? Divine Ethnicity in Pauline Theology,” *JBL* 137.1 (2018): 193–212.

¹⁵⁹ [Τοιάδ]ε μὲν παρὰ βόθρον ἐγὼν ἦϊσα παρασ<τ>άς
[εὖ γάρ] ἐμεμνήμην Κίρκης ὑποθημῶσυν ἄ[ω]ν
[ἢ τόσα φ]άρμακα οἶδεν ὅσ[α] τρέφει εὐρεῖα χθών·

Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, F10.

¹⁶⁰ τὰ θ' ἐξῆς. Middleton's translation is “and the rest.” She interprets this line as part of Julius's self-conscious role as Homeric editor who is expansive, pointing up the potential of all the rest of the *Odyssey*. Middleton, “Illusions and Vanishing Acts,” 145–46. On boasting of one's familiarity with Homer, see a first- or second-century CE funerary inscription from Athens (*IG* II,2 9145, cited and translated in Gangloff, “Rhapsodes and Rhapsodic Contests in the Imperial Period,” 134–35): “Do you really wish to know, very dear stranger, / who I am and whence I come? / Kos is my homeland, my name is Nikomedes, / servant of the Muses, / I sang Homer's poems in the theater; / after having enjoyed many successes, / I now lie in sweet sleep.”

¹⁶¹ Kahane, “Blood for Ghosts,” 819.

¹⁶² Middleton, “Illusions and Vanishing Acts,” 142; regarding the offspring of the Peisistratids as organizing Homer, see Cicero, *De orat.* 3.137 (cited on p. 142 n. 10); see also Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xxxvii. As Middleton argues, Julius Africanus establishes his authority as a “permissive” editor of Homer's text,

this version of the *Odyssey* was deposited in public libraries in Aelia Capitolina (Jerusalem), Nysa in Caria, and Rome; in doing so, he hints at his sophistication in having plumbed these prestigious research centers. He further boasts of his role as architect for Severus Augustus in the latter location.¹⁶³

Julius Africanus gives us sonic glimmers not only by disclosing good incantations in Homer, but also in other ways. Julius Africanus's *Kestoi* offer musical notations. For example, in his long seventh *kestos*, Africanus names nine pentagons as significant in ritual practices. He not only assigns to these animals and plants, but also assigns two musical notes to each, the first marking vocal notation and the second instrumental.¹⁶⁴ In one of several examples from the seventh *kestos*, we read:

over and against authoritative Hellenistic textual critics Zenodotus and Aristophanes, who would exclude the lines 38–48 as *asymphōnon* – not agreeing, or not in voice with, the rest of the Homeric passage. Julius instead includes these lines and excises 44–47. “P. Oxy. 412 opens up the question of what Odysseus actually said in the Underworld and what form his invocation took, supplying the information lost in the athetesis of 11.44–7” (Middleton, “Illusions and Vanishing Acts,” 142–43). In addition, Julius seems to engage in the technique of supplying Homer with Homer in his use of lines from the *Iliad* (Agamemnon’s prayer) and his weaving of those lines into the story of Odysseus via mention of Telemachus; he treats Homeric text with “fluidity and permeability” (p. 152). See also Faraone, *Hexametrical Genres*, 204–5, appendix B.

¹⁶³ Middleton, “Illusions and Vanishing Acts,” 140–43; Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xxxvi–xxxvii; Jared Secord, “Julius Africanus, Origen, and the Politics of Intellectual Life under the Severans,” *Classical World*, 110.2 (2017): 218, although the latter too positivistically reads the evidence regarding wealth and standing, or poverty and lack of access to education, in early Christian sources. The attempt to bolster textual evidence are not surprising, given the larger context of Roman-period “fakes” or inventions, and of pseudepigraphy as part of the operative mode of extending the author function and authoritative voices in late antiquity, whether Paul’s voice, or Plato’s, or Homer’s. See Patricia Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Irene Peirano, *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Tom Geue, *Author Unknown: The Politics of Anonymity in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019); J. Gregory Given, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Historiography of Early Christianity* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2019); Karen King, “What Is an Author? Ancient Author-Function in The Apocryphon of John and The Apocalypse of John,” in *Scribal Practices and Social Structures Among Jesus Adherents: Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg*, eds. William Edward Arnal et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 15–42; Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 224–56.

¹⁶⁴ His prose was probably accompanied by diagrams. Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, 77 n. 64.

The healer should have a light touch, so that he might make the incision easily, and he should wield a knife with a sharp edge; for the blunt edge causes pain. The one acting as an assistant should be ready for everything; he should sprinkle on the bandage the medicine that lies in pentagon 4, in which, in pyramidal form, lie signs of the vocal and instrumental enharmonios of the hypatai, upside-down alpha, and reversed gamma with a stroke behind it. (*Kestos* 7.4; Adler F12)¹⁶⁵

Not only song, but also sound: in the seventh *kestos*, Julius Africanus gives instructions regarding intercepting sounds:

If anyone in a big army camp should wish to learn the intentions of his own soldiers or enemy secrets, he should dig a deep well, lower into it the person of his choosing, and cover up the mouth with a cloth that happens to be on hand; nothing will get by the one seated inside, but, as if he were a diviner, he will describe to you in detail the words and the sounds he heard. (*Kestos* 7.16, Adler F12)

This quotidian instruction is immediately followed by a higher sound: “For the upper atmosphere is crammed with sounds, and the earth in unmixed form disrupts vision by its density and dulls hearing by the clamor.”¹⁶⁶

Julius Africanus, between his tactical sound machine, his musical notations, and his Homeric incantation, is interested in sound. You can also see why commentators have decided that he is a bit beyond the pale. He adds complexity to our understanding of what constituted Christianness in late antiquity. Whether to indicate that the *Kestoi* are a puzzle too hard to solve or to distance Julius Africanus from Christianity, editors of the text assert that, in general, the text “pays scant attention to religion.”¹⁶⁷ This commonly held idea is puzzling. It indicates that we are looking for religion in

¹⁶⁵ Adler explains, “These are Lydian scales, which, alongside such fixed structural tones as *hypate* and *mese*, also include moveable tones such as *parhypate*, *lichanos*, and also *proslambanomenos*. . . . [C]hromatic and enharmonic variants are also added in some pentagons.” Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, 47 n. 21, who also points forward to discussions in Alypius’s fourth-century CE *Isagoge* and Boethius’s institution *musica* of the sixth century CE. These observations about modes or *harmoniai* become extremely technical. Aristides Quintilianus offers a helpful discussion of scales and notes, with charts in the Barker edition; so too we find technical discussion of notes and scales in the Plutarchian *De musica*. These can help to make some sense (if not complete sense) of passages in Julius Africanus, such as *Kestos* 7, which reads: “If, then, you have recognized the animal from its characteristic features (for my description of it is neither obscure nor hard to comprehend), you would immediately commend it; but in any case, you will find it lying at the end, in pentagon 9, next to the signs of the *mesae* of the enharmonic Lydian mode [it is at the close], reversed pi and sigma” (*Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, 87–88).

¹⁶⁶ Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, 83 (F12).

¹⁶⁷ Adler, *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*, xxx.

all the wrong places. Do we find scriptural commentary or explicit discussion of, say, a liturgy in the *Kestoi*? No. And is plenty about the *Kestoi* that still eludes us – its bits on veterinary medicine or its military advice?¹⁶⁸ Yes. But in it we find what we would label religion, too. The *Kestoi* offer philosophical-theological understanding of the mechanisms of the cosmos, ritual practices for healing, and incantation and song.

Julius's work makes sense in a broader field, including the writings of those whom scholars usually call neo-Platonists or theurgists¹⁶⁹: that is, those engaged with Platonic philosophy (and Homeric verse) in order to enact material change in the world. Christians too were doing this work.¹⁷⁰ Julius Africanus's *Kestos* 18 on Homeric incantation serves multiple purposes. It straight up offers useful incantatory material, but it also functions to secure Julius's *bona fides* in the competitive educational circles of the third century CE by demonstrating his editorial knowledge and bibliophilic ways. The form of the *Kestoi*, insofar as we can reconstruct it, is an olio: a hodgepodge or a miscellany. In this, it corresponds to contemporaneous aesthetic impulses: the *poikilia* or variety that we have seen noted as a prized element in song, and the expansive aesthetics of works like Clement's own *Stromata*.

¹⁶⁸ But note that we also find military information in Aristides Quintilianus's *De musica* II.6 [62] (trans. Barker 2.466), including the use of music as a military strategy, since all hear it immediately and can react to it: "As to war, in which Rome was and is outstandingly glorious (and, let me add, may it so remain), the fact that drill exercises 'in pyrrhic style' are done to music hardly needs mentioning, since everyone knows it quite well. What most people do not know is that in the perils of battle itself they often avoid the use of verbal commands, since damage would be done if they were understood by those of the enemy who speak the same language. Instead they signal by musical means, using that martial and rousing instrument the salpinx, and each command is assigned a specific tune. Thus frontal attacks and flanking advances, for instance, have each been given their own particular melodies: another sounds the retreat: there are special calls for wheeling to left or to right. The signals are not heard first by one section, then by the next: the whole army acts at a single sound."

¹⁶⁹ For Proclus, for example, Homeric verses contained *symbola* which were clues to the cosmos's operations; he allegorically understood verses of the *Iliad* to refer to the soul's purification. Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, 128; see also 106, 129; Homeric verses are also used for oracles: the boundaries between what are traditionally labelled medicine, magic, prophecy are unclear and "ritual" forms a better cachement device.

¹⁷⁰ No one doubts that there are Christian neo-Platonists but we should also recognize Christian theurgists: some early Christian rituals are meant to bring about material change and some early Christian teachings are meant to produce pupils who try and try again at philosophical-ritual practices to induce such change in themselves and their environments.

||: THE VAMP :||

Iamblichus's *Life of the Pythagoreans* gives us a glimpse of Pythagoras as experimenter, as a man who heard the blow of hammer on metal as a repeated resonance that opened up his understanding of cosmic harmony and allowed him to enjoy and to develop a technology to access divine knowledge. Pythagoras was walking along and “pondering how he could invent some instrumental aid for hearing” when

He happened, by a marvelous chance, to be walking past a forge where he heard hammers beating iron on an anvil, and making mixed sounds in full harmony with one another, except for one combination. He recognized in these the octave and the fifth and the fourth, and he saw the interval between the fourth and the fifth was dissonant in itself, but was capable of completing the range of greatness between them. (*De vit. Pythag.* 16 [115])¹⁷¹

Pythagoras was “delighted. . . that his project had the backing of divinity” and rushed to experiment in the forge, discovering that the key independent variable was the weight or size of the hammer.¹⁷² Pythagoras then produced an ideal lyre and extended his experiment to “cymbals, auloi, syrinxes, monochords, trigona, and the like,” finding “that the arithmetical relationship was unvaryingly harmonious in all of them” (*De vit. Pythag.* 26; trans. Dillon and Hershbelle, 140–41). Pythagoras is a systematic organizer and experimenter with technology, which he then presents to his followers for their philosophical-theological and medical benefit.

The repeated blow of hammer on iron opens up a technology to understand the organization of the cosmos, its structures and harmonies. Earlier in the chapter I hesitated to write “technology,” but was inspired to use this term by both Alexander Wehileye and Shane Butler’s attention to the mechanisms by which sound is produced and received. I was not sure whether it fit the context of ancient Christian sources and contemporaneous curse tablets. But I think the term technology works well, signalling as it does also the *technē* or craft of ritual. In the previous chapter, we saw that some ancient sources depict the human body as itself a variable technology for the production of sounds, both beautiful and

¹⁷¹ παρά τι χαλκοτυπεῖον περιπατῶν ἔκ τινος δαιμονίου συντυχίας ἐπήκουσε ῥαιστήρων σίδηρον ἐπ’ ἄκμονι ῥαίωντων καὶ τοὺς ἤχους παραμῖξ πρὸς ἀλλήλους <συμφωνοτάτους> ἀποδιδόντων, πλὴν μιᾶς συζυγίας. ἐπεγίνωσκε δ’ ἐν αὐτοῖς τὴν τε διὰ πασῶν τὴν τε διὰ πέντε καὶ τὴν διὰ τεσσάρων συνῳδίαν, τὴν δὲ μεταξύττητα τῆς τε διὰ τεσσάρων καὶ τῆς διὰ πέντε ἀσύμφωνον μὲν ἑώρα αὐτὴν καθ’ ἑαυτήν, συμπληρωτικὴν δὲ ἄλλως τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς μειζονότητος. Trans. Dillon and Hershbelle, 139.

¹⁷² Manuscript evidence then breaks into diagrams.

harsh, with trachea and teeth and lips and breath (*pneuma*) working together. We have just seen that technology is key to Pythagoras's own discoveries regarding music and theology, and to his ability to duplicate these for the sake of his followers. We have seen that within the curse tablets of antiquity or within Julius Africanus's editorial work on Homeric texts, incantation is a small machine that drives the technology of healing or accusing, of calling for divine attention.

Weheliye's *Phonographies* turns to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's idea of the *ritournelle* or refrain, "a rhythmic pattern in a field of chaos, or rather the autopoietic vacillation of the universe."¹⁷³ Weheliye uses the concept of the refrain "because it allows for theorizations from and with the sonic, while also underscoring the singularity of the subjects and objects under scrutiny."¹⁷⁴ Or we could tune it to another key, entering again into the sanctuaries of the Church of God in Christ with Braxton Shelley's careful exegetical work on the function of repetition and the "vamp" in Gospel singing. Bishop G. E. Patterson repeats a key song in many sermons over time, drawing his own words from the Psalm – "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endures forever" – and collapsing the temporality of the Israelites and Patterson's own congregation. In addition, Patterson repeatedly (in Shelley's analysis) hovers around the tenor B-natural:

Across decades of his ministry, in countless sermons, delivered in countless keys, Bishop Patterson finds his way to this one note in moments of final emphasis. As such, this climactic pitch links each sermonic moment to countless other homiletic events, connecting this catalog to a force that lies beyond it. This ecstatic sound is Patterson's eternal pitch.

This repetitive hitting of the same note occurs even in Patterson's very last sermon, with his last strength and breath. Shelley terms this a "sonic portal" that is also a "vibrating link between this world and another."¹⁷⁵

Let me offer another sonic portal. I began this chapter with a page from Tyehimba Jess's *Olio*, its language of music – the F note, the pentatonic black keys that lift off the piano's whites toward bliss (Figure 4.1). As we

¹⁷³ Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 16. ¹⁷⁴ Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 16.

¹⁷⁵ Braxton D. Shelley, "An Eternal Pitch: Bishop G. E. Patterson's Broadcast Religion," lecture in the Institute of Sacred Music Lecture Series Race, Power, and the Production of Musical Canons (Yale Divinity School, March 29, 2021) and his *An Eternal Pitch: Bishop G. E. Patterson, Broadcast Religion, and the Afterlives of Ecstasy*. For context, see also Martin, *Preaching on Wax*; Jonathan L. Walton, *Watch This! The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).

F

pentatonic black

keys raise up high into bliss,

born to sing my name

Figure 4.1 Tyehimba Jess, *Olio*, p. 107.

recall from the Interlude, Jess's *Olio* is dotted with line-drawings, contains shape poems that are "sculptural,"¹⁷⁶ lists the names, locations, and dates of Black church arsons, includes invented interviews on the topic of pianist and composer Scott Joplin. Over the course of the book of poetry, for example, *Olio* embodies its meaning of "miscellany" and embeds sketches as well as historical materials, such as newspaper accounts about Ira Berlin and Scott Joplin, even as it presents Berlin's stealing of Joplin's music, and a story of Scott Joplin as haunted.¹⁷⁷ As Jess explains in an interview,

The idea behind it is to enter the conversation of history and introduce voices that had previously been unheard or silenced. So one side of the poem you have the known historical narrative and usually on the right side you have the underheard perspective. I wanted to create a space of tension between these two narratives. Tension that would result in a new narrative. It's call and response but it's also proclaim and retort.¹⁷⁸

Jess's earlier poetry collection, *leadbelly*, explicitly treats John Lomax's exploitation of the music of Huddie Ledbetter (also known as Lead Belly). Jess does so in poems that are separate and antagonistic, formed as letters written home by Lomax or by leadbelly ("lomax is a carpetbagger / to the

¹⁷⁶ Jacob Sunderlin, "'The Gut Meaning of Grace': Tyehimba Jess's *Olio*," *Kenyon Review*, <https://kenyonreview.org/reviews/olio-by-tyehimba-jess-738439/>. See discussion on p. 143 above.

¹⁷⁷ Tyehimba Jess, *Olio* (Seattle and New York: Wave Books, 2016). See for example its use of documentary evidence to create a (half) poem, such as "Irving Berlin's Reply to Rumors Regarding Theft of Scott Joplin's 'Real Slow Drag,'" in the 1916 *Green Book Magazine* (p. 174), or the reconstruction of the voice of Fisk Jubilee singer Jennie Jackson (1852–1910) in a poem which is found between lists of 1996 Black church arsons (p. 151). My gratitude to Todne Thomas for introducing me to Jess's work and her engagement with it for her project on Black Church arson; see e.g., her "Black Church Arson in the Museum," *JAAR* 89.4 (2021): 1360–1405. See extended discussion of *Olio* in the Interlude.

¹⁷⁸ Matthew Janney, "Poet Tyehimba Jess Retells History through African American Music," *Culture Trip*, June 13, 2018, <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/articles/poet-tyehimba-jess-retells-history-through-african-american-music/>.

core").¹⁷⁹ Jess also forms poems that are paralleled on the page, the split impressions of the same events.¹⁸⁰ Whether the *Kestoi* or *Olio*, or Clement's *Stromata*, what are the varied aesthetics of the miscellany?

I set Jess's words as the incipit for my chapter because *Olio* resonated for me with the idea of song and incantation in antiquity and the technical, musicological discussions – Julius Africanus's and Aristides Quintilianus's interest in the pentatonic and in charts and scales. Jess refers to the "pentatonic black." Jess conjures¹⁸¹ the past to talk about the significance and power of song; he also requires us to attend to how those in power constrict, manipulate, procure, and produce song – and how song is an evanescent form of cultural production that is hard to capture, technologically, and difficult to value in a capitalist market. One poem emerges in the voice of Fisk Jubilee singer Ben Holmes (Figure 4.2).

The poem reads like a historical entry, noting Ben Holmes's birth and death years; the poem is embedded between a threshold and lintel, a header and footer, of capitalized lists of Black churches which have been burned, along with their locations and dates. The page is saturated with history; the poem's title "Jubilee" evokes not only the Fisk Jubilee singers¹⁸² but also a period of time: the cycle of seven times seven. Ben Holmes is muses on history: "someone slipped me that Proclamation/ of Lincoln's. 'Long came overdue freedom. . ." It connects voice and breath to authoritative text:

Here we are,
each voice shimmerin' like ol' North Star's rapture. . .
we've come far by strapping lungs to scripture.

Like Jess, I am interested in a history of song; like Holmes, I am interested in how ancient lungs were also strapped to scripture, whether Homeric incantations or bits of what Jews would call holy or Christians would name as sacred. Ancient songs and incantations were also

¹⁷⁹ Tyehimba Jess, "leadbelly writes home, 1934," *leadbelly*, 87.

¹⁸⁰ "leadbelly v. Iomax: song hunting, 1934," *leadbelly*, 84.

¹⁸¹ On conjure see Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), e.g., at p. 4: "It is my belief that permutations of the supernatural in practices such as conjuring, the African American tradition of healing and harming, have been resigned as 'religion.'" Regarding conjure and music, particularly the blues, see pp. 144–49.

¹⁸² See Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 204–5 on the creation of the Fisk Singers and the racial politics of their performances.

PERRY'S CHAPEL, ITTA BENA, MS, 1964: DANIEL BAPTIST CHURCH, ABERDEEN, MS, 1964:
ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH, NATCHEZ, MS, 1964: SOCIETY HILL BAPTIST CHURCH,
MCCOMB, MS, 1964: 16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM, GA, 1964:

JUBILEE: BEN HOLMES (1846–1875)

I'd hear these songs borne raw from cane fields,
tangled up in the work of the dirt with
the hurting of the lash. Now, I was real
lucky. I was a tailor's 'prentice.
But then I got sold to a slave trader.
Went from threading needle to squalid slave pen,
grubbin' old cow's head and grits . . . till later
on, someone slipped me that Proclamation
of Lincoln's. 'Long came overdue freedom . . .
next comes book learnin'. We've traveled hard,
each tongue spinning spirituals into tens and ones
to buy Fisk its spellers and bricks. Here we are,
each voice shimmerin' like ol' North Star's rapture . . .
we've come far by strapping lungs to scripture.

BELL FLOWER BAPTIST CHURCH, GRENADA, MS, 1967: REFORMED MISSIONARY CHURCH,
CHICAGO, IL, 1967: NEWELL CHAPEL METHODIST CHURCH, MERIDIAN, MS, 1968: SOLID ROCK
MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, CHICAGO, IL, 1970: MULBERRY BAPTIST CHURCH, WILKES CO., GA, 1977:

Figure 4.2 Tyehimba Jess, "Jubilee: Ben Holmes (1846–1875)." *Olio*, p. 61.

produced under variable conditions of power. These small data, embedded within a *defixio* or a treatise, show something of a thought-world that found the divine (*daimones* or Logos or god or gods) accessible through a transhistorical fragment of sound.

CONCLUSIONS

Weheliye writes: “I take these sonic flickers as inspirations, since they make perceptible singulars that only signify in their ‘poetics of relation’ to other sounds and matters.”¹⁸³ This chapter has traced sonic flickers from Mediterranean antiquity to see that the ancient song or incantation was a mechanism of healing, of changing a situation, of marking the importance of Logos as new song, of figuring out the structures of the cosmos. Incantations were also sometimes made more powerful by embedding history and the past, and it had the powerful effects: of striving toward justice, of bringing something new, of healing. Braxton Shelley’s explication of the vamp helped us to understand that this may be a cross temporal technology: not only do we find repetition of “bring to perfection this perfect incantation” from the fifth century BCE to the fourth century CE, but we also find in the present the idea that a repetitive phrase of song could metaphysically change individuals and communities. It reminds me of Kevin Quashie, who cites a sentence from Audre Lorde and then describes some similar boundary-transgressing:

“Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. . . .” This praisesong dissolves the boundary between the magical and the tangible, the sensible and the intelligible, and defines consciousness as a habitat where transcendence and immanence converge.¹⁸⁴

In this chapter, we saw that Clement attempted to remix Homer with the Logos, to astonish and amaze with his performance.¹⁸⁵ The *Protreptikos* fully participates in the incantatory world of antiquity and the work of exegesis of Homeric song. It renders the Logos a healing force and a new song that is also a *pharmakon* – a Greek term that can variously be translated as potion, poison, or medicine. But Clement also sets up the Logos as a magician or pharmacologist like Helen of Troy: the Logos mixes the true and sweet *pharmakon* of persuasion into song. We need to *hear* it out loud. The text cues us to this because it starts with competition and it starts with song. A contextualization of the importance of song and incantation in antiquity provides an explanation for why

¹⁸³ Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 17.

¹⁸⁴ Kevin Quashie, *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 19.

¹⁸⁵ On rhetoric and astonishment, see Ari Bryen, *The Judgment of the Provinces: Law, Culture, and Empire in Rome’s Eastern Provinces*. I am grateful to the author for allowing me to read this work in draft.

Clement of Alexandria begins with chirping cicadas and crescendos to the Logos as “new song” and “Levitical song” in his *Protreptikos* or *Exhortation to the Greeks*, and helps us to see why the rhetor’s voice could sometimes sound like singing.

A contextualization of the importance of song and incantation in antiquity also helps us to make sense of Julius Africanus’s reference to technical musical terminology and his offering up of a Homeric incantation. Knowing that song and incantation were not mere entertainment but key modes of cultural and aesthetic expression allows us to understand better that historical flotsam and jetsam – a quotation of Aristophanes which perhaps itself originated in incantation, or phrases from Homer – were aesthetic components of the larger machines of the ancient ritual objects we call *defixiones* or curse tablets.

In antiquity, those of low status and high were preserving lines and half-lines, stitches and hemistitches, of dactylic hexameter and using those sounds as tools to amplify their voices towards divinities and towards (and against) their neighbors. Today, we might think of the music industry as a multi-billion-dollar entertainment business; and in antiquity, too, there were high-paid speakers and singers who won prizes, if not Grammys. But there was also the cutting-edge trend of discussion of music. And there was the everyday use of sound for ritual purposes. Aristides Quintilianus writes:

No human activity is complete without music. Music beautifies hymns to the gods, and their worship; it brings good cheer to private celebrations and public festivities; it gives vigour and support to those at war or on journeys; it takes away the hardship from sailing and rowing, and from the hardest kinds of manual labour, easing their toil; and among some foreign peoples it is used even in mourning, where it blunts with melody the sharpness of grief. (*De mus.* II.4)¹⁸⁶

Past fragments of poetry were repurposed, used as prescriptions to effect healing, used in incantations to effect change, to demand that the gods and others *listen* to their concerns.

What we find in the phrase from the Jerusalem *defixio*, “bring to perfection this perfect incantation,” is one among many examples of sonic

¹⁸⁶ Translation Barker, 2.461–62. Οὐκ οὐκ ἔνεστι πρᾶξις ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἥτις ἄνευ μουσικῆς τελεῖται. θεοὶ μὲν ὕμνοι καὶ τιμαὶ μουσικῇ κοσμοῦνται, ἔορτα δὲ ἴδια καὶ πανηγύρεις πόλεων ἀγάλονται, πόλεμοι δὲ καὶ ὁδῶν πορεῖαι διὰ μουσικῆς ἐγείρονται τε καὶ καθίστανται· ναυτιλίας τε καὶ εἰρεσίας καὶ τὰ χαλεπώτατα τῶν χειρωνακτικῶν ἔργων ἀνεπαχθῆ ποιεῖ τῶν πόνων γινομένη παραμύθιον. παρὰ δὲ τισι τῶν βαρβάρων κἂν τοῖς κήδεσι παρεῖληπται τῆς κατὰ τὸ πάθος ἀκρότητος τῇ μελωδίᾳ παραθραύσουσα.

experimentation and repetition down through the ages. I'm not saying that this sonic repetition is always holy or used well: the *defixio* from Kyrilla curses Iennys, after all. Yet in this phrase's repeated use over roughly a millennium, or in the Homeric phrases that are repurposed as incantation, I think that we find what James I. Porter refers to as "the sublime's indifference to genre." Those who wrote on the sublime in antiquity probably wouldn't have agreed that these objects were sublime, or even that Clement's *Protreptikos* impressed them with his version of the new and Levitical song. The fourth-century Roman *defixio* likely indicates stress among those of artisanal or mercantile status, not elites. Yet we can see certain incantations, certain phrases as tuning forks, resonant. We can't play them anymore. But if they were struck at the right frequency, they were thought to work: small mechanisms to soothe the user, to thwart the opponent, and to "tune up" to the divine.

Conclusions

When I was an undergraduate student, deeply clueless, around nineteen years old, I wandered into John Gager's course "Ancient Christian Magic." I had (shockingly) only recently realized that the Bible itself was something other than a unitary Word of God, excitingly and frighteningly more than a single book offered by one divine voice and spirit. Gager drenched unsuspecting undergraduates in understudied and (to me) surprising aspects of the history of ancient Christianity and of Mediterranean antiquity more generally. I can't remember many details from the course. But I know it left me with at least two books that I've lugged around from school to school, job to job, home to home: an old, blandly toned gray-green print version of the first volume of the Ante-Nicene Fathers and Betz's *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*. The small print and obscure translation of Justin's *Apologies* within the Ante-Nicene Fathers and the surprising charts of "magical" recipes in Betz nestled together on my shelf. Ancient Christian writings and curse tablets wouldn't let me go. And Gager's course – this is itself an *apologia* for the power of the undergraduate Humanities – left me with lingering questions about how language and ritual work, about the boundaries of what we call Christian, about the poignancy of calling to divine beings, about the frightening work of cursing one's neighbor.

This book has been my attempt at a social history of religion and curses, of materiality and sound, of aesthetics and ritual, of searches for justice in the first- to fourth-century CE Mediterranean world. Grounded in feminist hermeneutics, it has explored how those of low status, as well as high, developed ideas and practices for accessing the divine and addressing what they felt to be injustices. Scholars have traditionally

characterized *defixiones* as magic, marginal to the study of religion. Guided by the work of Henk Versnel, who insists on a poetics of *defixiones*, and the talents of Jessica Lamont, who demonstrates how poetry is woven into some curse tablets, and the insights of David Frankfurter and others, who are interested in the ritual that attended such objects, the aesthetics of curse tablets, including their materiality, has emerged clearly. Ancient *defixiones* are significant objects for the study of religion.

The idea that curses are not only the purview of the study of magic, but also the purview of the study of religion, is thus not particularly controversial, even if much scholarship still uses “magic” without much reflection on the category. But these curses and amulets and recipes are also sources for theological-philosophical data. They are not mere “everyday religion” and examples of strange practice fit for the study of religion; they are crystalline (or leaden) instantiations of faith – of trust, of belief, of complex thought processes about the god(s), divine power, human subjectivity and agency.¹ These curses and amulets and recipes are also evidence of the sophisticated aesthetic strategies by which those of low status and high harnessed the agency of materiality (lead, location), the power of incantation and song, and the force of spirits and gods. They did so to effect what they thought was justice, sometimes in a situation of ongoing legal dispute. Curses are evidence of a theological discourse and practice that includes and exceeds Roman legal history. Poetics and song traditions embedded in the curses are *working* parts of the machine of these ritual objects, effective because of ancient perceptions and valuations of the power – an aesthetic power in the sense of beauty and rhythm, and an aesthetic power in the sense of sense perception – of song and spoken word. To use a scrap of poetry was not a citational practice but a ritual one.

The preceding chapters have engaged in historical reconstructions which brushed up to an ethical historiography.² The aim has not been the impossible uncovering of history “as it really was” (von Ranke) or a claim to an objective reconstruction, as if we could ever have a window onto a historical period for which our data is fragmentary. No historiographical method renders map into territory: no attempt at

¹ See Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

² Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); further, see Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007) and her *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019).

reconstruction is fully equal to the thing reconstructed. The work of historiography is imaginative and humbling. It should be supported by as much data as possible, but it will always be a little wrong. Indeed, the book has deliberately investigated that which is historically elusive: practices that were sometimes considered marginal in antiquity and which have been marginalized in the history-writing of ancient Christianity, the effervescent incantations and pleas not (only) of the wealthy but of those of low status, sometimes of women, the stuff that doesn't fit easily into our larger histories of Christianity or for that matter histories of antiquity.

Throughout the book, I have attempted to reroute the inheritances of the field of the study of ancient Christianity away from the mainstream texts that are seen as its core, and toward phenomena that are seen as marginal, yet were ubiquitous in antiquity. Thus, we engaged a broader set of materials in Mediterranean antiquity, bringing them into the fold of what is essential to know for the study of religion and the reconstruction of ancient Christianity. Thus too, I hope, we can reroute the aesthetic prejudices of the field, which still turn to literary texts and literature that was elite in its first instantiation, or became elite – like the texts of the Christian Testament – understanding these to be the inheritance of a discipline that is still invested in the essence of Christianity. This approach has been an enterprise in seeking out “otherwise possibility,” to borrow from Ashon Crawley, or “alternative social worlds,” in the words of womanist ethicist Keri Day – to see what possibilities and alternatives, both attractive and repugnant, we might discover amid the curses, the rolling up of lead and its piercing with nails, speaking in tongues and the binding of tongues, the arranging of letters and signs, and the incantations and songs of antiquity.

Sophisticated aesthetics are not only the purview of the elite voices we have heard – Dionysius of Halicarnassus on composition, for example, or Clement of Alexandria on song. They are also deployed by and against those of lower status, whose biographies we can barely know. We have met many such characters in this book. Sotērianos, cursing Aristōn in second-century Amathous, Cyprus, used legal terminology and even the gates of Hades against his legal opponent, seeking to quell his anger. The greengrocer Babylas, in late third- or fourth-century Antioch, may have found out that he and his livestock had been condemned to a watery well, chilly and drowned, and his mother Dionysia had been insulted, her womb called polluted. Karpimē Babbia, the garland weaver in Corinth: How can we tell her story? She engages in a low-status profession, one used by a sophisticated writer like Plutarch as a simile for the cheap work

of bad orators whose words like flower wreaths quickly wilt. She is consigned to “monthly destruction.” Nearby, the Corinthian wo/men exceeded human language with the “tongues of angels” and effervesced with “kinds of tongues.” In fourth-century Jerusalem, Kyrilla condemns Iennys so that he cannot speak or act against her. She nails him – she literally asks that he be struck and that “the tongue, the eyes, the wrath, the ire, the anger, the delaying, the opposition” be nailed, possibly seeking to bind him in a legal case. To effect this she uses *charactēres, voces magicæ*, and the divine name Iaōth, calling on the goddess Persephone to “bring to perfection this perfect incantation,” in doing so renewing a centuries-long tradition of deploying this half-line or hemi-stitch of dactylic hexameter. I have sought to bring these little-known people alongside the characters some of us may know better from the study of Mediterranean antiquity: Justin, John Chrysostom, the apostle Paul, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Clement of Alexandria, Aristides Quintilianus, Iamblichus.

Our characters are embedded in place(s) and their curses are powered by material efficacy. Sotērianos places his curse against his legal opponent Aristōn in a shaft that might hold the corpses of the crucified and beheaded; in any case, it is an underground (in every sense) legal archive. The person who curses Babylas uses a cold, watery well at the foot of Mt. Staurin in Antioch. The external wall of the theater at Miletos, facing the sea, beams a signal for archangelic protection via signs, imitations of gemstone amulets, vowels, and command: Protect the city and its inhabitants. Standing in the forum of Roman Corinth, looking to the south midway up the high, shaggy crag of the Acrocorinth, Christ-followers could see the three terraces of the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. There, certainly in the second and third century CE, curses were laid and some ritual of burning occurred. In Jerusalem, sometime between its foundation in the late third century CE and its destruction, likely in an earthquake in 363 CE, a lavish Roman structure with two open courtyards housed a judicial curse against Iennys by Kyrilla. Its use of an incantation puts us in mind of the many contemporaneous groups that used song and incantation as *pharmakon*, as medicine or as poison, including the followers of Pythagoras and the followers of Christ, including Julius Africanus.

Scholars have usually interpreted such curses as individualized phenomena – the solitary work of an individual or an individual with a ritual expert, processing some slight large or small, stirring up and leaching out emotions and frustration via a curse. Yet, as we have seen, curses and amulets often take part in similar writing and assemblage/archival practices that we find in civic claims and imperial rescripts, and even a

Christian apology to an emperor. The inscription in Miletos is posted publicly on the external wall of a theater, even as its strategies resound with individual amulets that we know from papyri and amuletic recipes. This is an international, ecumenical set of practices that resound around the Mediterranean basin and beyond for centuries.

This exploration of aesthetics of curses and their historical contexts necessitated a turn *outside* the usual theoretical conversation partners for the study of antiquity. I have instead used a method of triangulating between ancient literary text, ancient curse, and a contemporary work of art, whether visual or poetic. By this repeated method of triangulation, something emerges in the space space between objects. I have leaned on contemporary art and poetry that engages historical materials, weaving them into larger critiques of the state of the world. Perhaps it is because their art is a compelling and immediate synaesthetic mode of laying bare the significance and relevance of historical materials. The mechanisms and technologies of these artworks and poems are different from the citation, the footnote, the signposting and even the conclusion-writing of an academic book and article. Maybe I like this stuff because these artists do it better than we academic writers do, or differently; these works of art and poetry are less showy about the labor that produced them and more immediate in their powers of critique and expression. Emma Amos, Titus Kaphar, Glenn Ligon, M. NourbeSe Philip, Tyehimba Jess, and others deeply engage with historical materials. Kaphar rewrote the advertisement of the sale of enslaved persons on Princeton's campus; Ligon reproduces, even scripturalizes Ellison; Philip duplicated edicts against the speech of enslaved persons and scientific arguments about the capacities of enslaved persons; Jess plunges into late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American archives, using historical fragments to produce songful poems.

Scholars of religion and in particular of religion in Mediterranean antiquity have turned to theoretical frameworks involving materiality, probing the agential possibilities of matter and/or refocusing our attention away from the human alone. Yet we have rarely turned to contemporary art-making as a critical, theoretical intervention that can inform the study of antiquity, even as there is a burgeoning discussion of art practice as research method and product, for example by Natalie Loveless, or the significance of art to the study of religion, for example by Anthony Pinn. Even as this book has attended to how artists and ancient ritual specialists used historical material (*historiolae*, lines of Homer, lead, nails, and incantatory scrap) in such a manner, it has also engaged in its own work

of assemblage. In doing so, I hope to have opened questions about scholarly engagements with history, ethics, and aesthetics in analyses of ancient ritual.

Let me clarify that in juxtaposing the ritual practitioners who produced and used ancient *defixiones* and these contemporary artists, I am not suggesting a cross-temporal, cross-geographic universality of religious rituals or of ritual sound. I do not argue that Titus Kaphar (or Renée Stout or Valerie Maynard), or Glenn Ligon, or M. NourbeSe Philip, or Tyehimba Jess, do the same thing as the ritual practitioners of antiquity who produced or used *defixiones* – nor, for that matter, do I want to suggest strong similarities between these various artists and their multiple media. Rather, I respect these artists as producing research-creations and offering in those creations theorizations: lenses for a new perception of the world. I am interested in the way in which these contemporary artists engage history, and particularly the fact that they embed historical artifacts within their work. Their art “rhymes” with historical materials, to borrow a word from artist Edward Sorrells-Adewale. These contemporary art works provide a lens for investigating the aesthetics of the curse tablet and encourage us to ask whether some *defixiones*, too, engage history, emotions, and justice.

Their use of fragments, and sometimes even their use of nails to affix those historical fragments, discloses the labor of art-making, which draws upon ritual practice and heightens our awareness of it. Their assemblages depend upon the ritual and history, fragments of which constitute the art; the power of the ritual and the ethical deployment of documentary historical materials fund the art’s power. These artists are engaged in the work of art, which resembles the labor of ritual. They not only use historical materials and practices but also ethically intervene in them. In their critiques of white and colonialist regimes that have defined what is considered canonical or beautiful, the artists also make space to question what white and colonialist aesthetics underpin our scholarly attentions in antiquity. Whom do we choose to represent and what do we assess as beautiful or worthy of attention? How can we instead continue to turn our labor to women, those of low status, and the understudied? There is work to be done in disciplining the discipline to reflect upon what it considers – what we consider – to be beautiful or worthy of study and replication. The Greek word *askēsis* is usually translated as “discipline” in English: I want to pursue this (w)hol(l)y academic asceticism.

My book has paid lavish attention to such “magical” curses in order to reconstruct aspects of ancient Christianity: how documentary evidence

aimed toward justice is collated; how short narratives are used to situate oneself and another in the world; how the ontological borders between humans, angels, *daimones*, god(s), and powerful things can be thinned; how one can speak in or hear the tongues of humans and angels; how song and incantation, embedded into everyday life, can heal or harm. The broader world of curses and the recipes used to produce them help us to understand more fully the content of ancient Christian texts, with their complex allusions to *pharmaka* and *mageia*, their occasional use of curses, and the like. We have to attend to so-called magical materials to understand their context and ethos: the struggle for justice in the midst of the bureaucratic preparation of documents, the power of a phrase or an image to evoke an entire narrative and the power of narrative to critique, the flight into other tongues and linguistic possibilities, the lift of breath through the trachea that opens up to vowels and consonants, to hissing and clacking against tongue and teeth, to songs that heal and that even resonate with strains and tones from elsewhere in the cosmos.

I am interested in the broader cultural context that nurtures the idea that god(s), spirits, and *daimones* are involved in everyday existence. This was an era where the air was thick with *daimones*, in which *pneumata* or spirits materially circulated. It was a time when people tried to reach out and harness power, to exact justice against the machinations of some Roman imperial pronouncement, or just to curse a neighbor. There is an intimacy and tenderness, as well as terror, in a world in which various beings might be invoked to wonderful or terrible ends. This is a world where folk thought that the smallest problem might allow them to hope for and to call upon the gods, a world in which they sought ritual practitioners to move spirits, a world where they gestured, incanted, sang, drew, and wrote, to try to make concrete the connections between themselves and the objects and the divinities that surrounded them. Knowing that my historical reconstructions are provisional, that our data is fragmentary, and that my own perceived connections to antiquity are of my making – I need the ancient world, but the long-dead do not need me – I hope that you have felt welcomed into my work to reconstruct this world of difference.

Ancient Sources

- Achilles Tatius. *Leucippe and Clitophon*. Translation John Winkler. *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*. Edited by B. P. Reardon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Leucippe and Clitophon*. Edited by E. Vilborg. *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia*, i. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1955.
- Apollinaris of Laodicea. *Metaphrasis Psalmorum*. Edited and translated by Andrew Faulkner. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Apuleius. *Apologia. Florida. De Deo Socratis*. Edited and translated by Christopher P. Jones. LCL 534. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Aristides Quintilianus. *Aristidis Quintiliani de musica libri tres*. Edited by R. P. Winnington-Ingram. Leipzig: Teubner, 1963.
- De musica. Translated in Andrew Barker. *Greek Musical Writings: Volume 2, Harmonic and Acoustic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Audollent, A. *Defixionum Tabellae*. Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1904.
- Barker, Andrew. *Greek Musical Writings, Volume 1: The Musician and His Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Greek Musical Writings, Volume 2: Harmonic and Acoustic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Betz, Hans Dieter. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Cicero. *Tusculan Disputations*. Translated by Margaret Graver. *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- John Chrysostom. *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*. Translated by Paul W. Hawkins. *Fathers of the Church* 68. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1979.
- Old Testament Homilies, Volume 1: Homilies on Hannah, David and Saul*. Translated by Robert Charles Hill. Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003.

- Clement of Alexandria. *Clemens Alexandrinus. Band II: Stromata Buch I–VI*. Edited by Otto Stählin. Translated by Ludwig Früchtel and Ursula Treu. GCS 52[15], 17. New York: De Gruyter, 2011.
- Clément d'Alexandrie. *Le pédagogue*. Edited and translated by M. Harl, H.-I. Marrou, C. Matray, and C. Mondésert, 3 vols. SC 70, 108, 158. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1960–70.
- Clément d'Alexandrie. *Le protreptique*. 2nd ed. Translated by C. Mondésert. SC 2. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1949.
- Clement of Alexandria: *The Exhortation to the Greeks, the Rich Man's Salvation, and the Fragment of an Address Entitled, To the Newly Baptized*. Translated by G. W. Butterworth. LCL 92. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939.
- The Paedagogus and Stromata*. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Translated by William Wilson. Ante-Nicene Fathers 2. Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.
- L. Annaeus Cornutus: *Greek Theology, Fragments, and Testimonia*. Edited and translated by George Boys-Stone. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018.
- Cosgrove, Charles H. *An Ancient Christian Hymn with Musical Notation. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1786: Text and Commentary*. Studien und Texte zum Antike und Christentum 65. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.
- Corsten, Thomas. *Die Inschriften von Laodikeia am Lykos*. Bonn: R. Habelt, 1997.
- Dio Chrysostom. *Discourses 31–36*. Translated by J. W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby. LCL 35. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940.
- Discourses 37–60*. Translated by H. Lamar Crosby. LCL 376. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946.
- Dionysius of Halicarnassus. *Ars Rhetorica*. In *Menander Rhetor. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ars Rhetorica*. Edited and translated by William H. Race. LCL 539. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
- Critical Essays, Volume II: On Literary Composition. Dinarchus. Letters to Ammaeus and Pompeius*. Translated by Stephen Usher. LCL 466. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Documents of Ancient Greek Music: The Extant Melodies and Fragments Edited and Transcribed with Commentary*. Edited by Egert Pöhlmann and M. L. West. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001.
- Epictetus. *Discourses, Books 1–2*. Translated by W. A. Oldfather. LCL 131. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925.
- Epiphanius of Salamis. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Book I (Sects 1–16)*. Translated by Frank Williams. 2nd ed. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Gager, John. *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Galen. *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul*. Edited by Walther Riese. Translated by Paul W. Harkins. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963.
- The Getty Hexameters: Poetry, Magic, and Mystery in Ancient Selinus*. Edited by Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

- Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies: Text and Translation*. Edited by Christopher A. Faraone and Sofia Torallas Tovar. Berkeley: California Classical Studies, 2022.
- Hauken, Tor. *Petition and Response: An Epigraphic Study of Petitions to Roman Emperors, 181–249*. Bergen: The Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1998.
- Hauken, Tor, and Hasan Malay. “A New Edict of Hadrian from the Province of Asia Setting Regulations for Requisitioned Transport.” Pp. 327–48. *Selbstdarstellung und Kommunikation: Die Veröffentlichung staatlicher Urkunden auf Stein und Bronze in der Römischen Welt*. Edited by R. Haensch. Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009.
- Hauken, Tor, Cumhur Tanriver, and Kazim Akbiyikoğlu. “A New Inscription from Phrygia: A Rescript of Septimius Severus and Caracalla to the *Coloni* of the Imperial Estate at Tymion.” *Epigraphica Anatolica* 36 (2003), 33–44.
- Homer. *The Iliad of Homer*. Translated by Richard Lattimore. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- Homer *The Odyssey*. Translated by Emily Wilson. New York: W. W. Norton, 2018.
- Horsley, G. H. R. *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Burdur Archaeological Museum*. London: British Institute at Ankara, 2007.
- Iamblichus. *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*. Translated by Thomas Taylor. London: Bertram Dobell, 1821.
- On the Pythagorean Way of Life*. Translated by John M. Dillon and Jackson Hershbell. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991.
- Iamblichi de vita Pythagorica liber*. Edited by U. Klein (post L. Deubner). Leipzig: Teubner, 1937.
- Josephus. *The Jewish War, Volume III: Books 5–7*. Translated by H. St. J. Thackeray. LCL 210. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928.
- Julius Africanus. *Cesti: The Extant Fragments*. Edited by Martin Wallraff, Carlo Scardino, Laura Mecella, and Christophe Jean-Daniel Guignard. Translated by William Adler. GCS 18. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012.
- Justin, *Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*. Edited by Denis Minns and Paul Parvis. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- “Longinus” *On the Sublime*. Edited by D. A. Russell. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Lucian. *How to Write History. The Dipsads. Saturnalia. Herodotus or Aetion. Zeuxis or Antiochus. A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting. Apology for the “Salaried Posts in Great Houses.” Harmonides. A Conversation with Hesiod. The Scythian or The Consul. Hermotimus or Concerning the Sects. To One Who Said “You’re a Prometheus in Words.” The Ship or The Wishes*. Translated by K. Kilburn. Loeb Classical Library 430. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959.
- Malay, Hasan, and Georg Petzl. *New Religious Texts from Lydia*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017.
- Maximus of Tyre: The Philosophical Orations*. Translated by Michael B. Trapp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Meyer, Marvin W., and Richard Smith, eds. *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

- Migne, J.-P. *Patrologiae cursus ompletes (series Graeca) (MPG)* 48, Paris: Migne, 1857–66.
- Mitford, Terence Bruce. *Inscriptions of Kourion*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1971.
- Musonius Rufus. *Musonius Rufus: Lectures and Sayings*. Translated by Cynthia King. United States: CreateSpace, 2011.
- Novum Testamentum Graece*, constituted by Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, edited by Barbara and Kurt Aland. 28th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.
- Oliver, James H. *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989.
- Oribasius. *Works*. In Charles Daremberg. *Oeuvres d'Oribase: texte grec, en grande partie inédit, collationné sur les manuscrits*. Paris: J.-B. Baillièrre & fils, 1851.
- Origen. *Origen: Contra Celsum*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Contre Celse*, 4 vols. Translated by M. Borret. SC 132, 136, 147, 150. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967–69.
- Origen On First Principles*. Translated by John Behr, 2 vols. Oxford Early Christian Texts. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Petzl, Georg. *Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens*. Epigraphica Anatolica 22. Bonn: Habelt, 1994.
- Philo. *Every Good Man is Free. On the Contemplative Life. On the Eternity of the World. Against Flaccus. Apology for the Jews. On Providence*. Translated by F. H. Colson. LCL 363. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941.
- Philostratus. *Lives of the Sophists*. In Philostratus, Eunapius. *Lives of the Sophists. Eunapius: Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*. Translated by Wilmer C. Wright. LCL 134. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921.
- Pindar. *Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes*. Translated by William H. Race. LCL 56. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Pliny. *Natural History, Volume VIII: Books 28–32*. Translated by W. H. S. Jones. LCL 418. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963.
- Plutarch. *Moralia, Volume I: The Education of Children. How the Young Man Should Study Poetry. On Listening to Lectures. How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend. How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue*. Translated by Frank Cole Babbitt. LCL 197. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927.
- Moralia, Volume II: How to Profit by One's Enemies. On Having Many Friends. Chance. Virtue and Vice. Letter of Condolence to Apollonius. Advice About Keeping Well. Advice to Bride and Groom. The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men. Superstition*. Translated by Frank Cole Babbitt. LCL 222. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928.
- Moralia, Volume VIII: Table Talk, Books 1–6*. Translated by P. A. Clement and H. B. Hoffleit. LCL 424. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Moralia, Volume XIV: That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible. Reply to Colotes in Defence of the Other Philosophers. Is "Live Unknown" a Wise Precept? On Music*. Translated by Benedict

- Einarson and Phillip H. De Lacy. LCL 428. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- Pöhlmann, Egert. *Documents of Ancient Greek Music: The Extant Melodies and Fragments Edited and Transcribed with Commentary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001.
- Preisendanz, Karl. *Papyri Graecae Magicae Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2 vols. Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1928, 1931. 2nd ed., A. Henrichs, ed. Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1973–74.
- Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri, III Index*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1941.
- Quintilian. *The Orator's Education, Volume I: Books 1–2*. Edited and translated by Donald A. Russell. LCL 124. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition*. Edited by Carol Newsom. HSS 27. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985.
- Tacitus. *Histories: Books 4–5. Annals: Books 1–3*. Translated by Clifford H. Moore and John Jackson. LCL 249. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931.
- Urbanová, Daniela. *Latin Curse Tablets of the Roman Empire*. Innsbruck: Innsbruck Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, 2018.
- Zosimos of Panopolis. *On the Letter Omega*. Edited and translated by Howard M. Jackson. SBL Texts and Translations 14; Graeco-Roman Religion 5. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1978.

Bibliography

- Addey, Crystal. *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.
- Adler, William. "The *Cesti* and Sophistic Culture in the Severan Age." Pp. 1–15. *The Cesti of Julius Africanus and Its Transmission*. Edited by Martin Wallraff and Laura Mecella. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Albrecht-Crane, Christa. "Style, Stutter." Pp. 121–30. *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*. Edited by Charles J. Stivale. Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2005.
- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: New Press, 2010.
- Arthurs, Joshua. *Excavating Modernity: The Roman Past in Fascist Italy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012.
- Aupert, Pierre. "Amathonte hellénistique et romaine: l'apport des travaux récents." *Cahiers du Centre d'Études Chypriotes* 39 (2009): 25–48.
- Aupert, Pierre, and David R. Jordan. "Magical Inscriptions on Talc Tablets from Amathous." *AJA* 85.2 (1981): 184.
- "Tablettes magiques d'Amathonte." Pp. 67–71. *Art antique de Chypre du Bronze moyen à l'époque byzantine au Cabinet des médailles*. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1994.
- Austin, J. L. *How To Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1962.
- Bagnall, Roger, Roberta Casagrande-Kim, Akin Ersoy, and Cumhur Tanriver, eds. *Graffiti from the Basilica in the Agora of Smyrna*. New York: ISAW/ New York University Press, 2016.
- Bailliot, Magali. "Rome and the Roman Empire." Pp. 175–97. *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*. Edited by David Frankfurter. RGRW. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Bailey, R. "The Confession of Cyprian of Antioch: Introduction, Text and Translation." MA thesis. McGill University, 2009.
- Baldwin, James. "Many Thousands Gone." Pp. 25–46. *Notes from a Native Son*. Boston: Beacon, 2012. First published 1955.

- Barad, Karen. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs* 28 (2003): 801–31.
- Barton, Carlin et al. *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.
- Bazzana, Giovanni. *Having the Spirit of Christ: Spirit Possession and Exorcism in the Early Christ Groups*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.
- Becker, Adam H., and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds. *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.
- Beliso-De Jesús, Alisha. *Electric Santeria: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
- Bellis, Alice Ogden. "I Am Burnt but Beautiful: Translating Song 1:5a." *JBL* 140.1 (2021): 91–111.
- Belser, Julia Watts. "Improv and the Angel: Disability Dance, Embodied Ethics, and Jewish Biblical Narrative." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 47.3 (2019): 443–69.
- Ben Ami, Doron, Yana Tchekhanovets, and Robert Walter Daniel. "A Juridical Curse from a Roman Mansion in the City of David." *ZPE* 186 (2013): 227–36.
- Bernabé, Alberto. "The *Ephesia Grammata*: The Genesis of a Magical Formula." Pp. 71–96. *The Getty Hexameters: Poetry, Magic, and Mystery in Ancient Selinous*. Edited by Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Bernstein, J. M., ed. *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Bevilacqua, Gabriella. "Chiodi Magici." *Archeologia Classica* 52 (2001): 129–50.
- Bickers, Patricia. "I Am a Man: A Body of Work," *Art Monthly* 317 (June 2008). *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed August 25, 2023).
- Bitner, Bradley J. "Mixed-Language Inscribing at Roman Corinth." Pp. 185–218. *The First Urban Churches, Volume 2: Roman Corinth*. Edited by James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn. WGRWSup 8. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016.
- Blänsdorf, Jürgen. "The *Defixiones* from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz." Pp. 141–89. *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Edited by Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Blum, Edward, and Paul Harvey. *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- Bohak, Gideon. *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Bond, Sarah. "Blog: Addressing the Divide between Biblical Studies and Classics." *Society for Classical Studies*, April 13, 2019. <https://eidolon.pub/barbarians-inside-the-gate-part-i-c175057b340f>.
- Bonner, Campbell. *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950.

- Bookidis, Nancy, and Ronald S. Stroud. *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: Topography and Architecture*. Corinth XVIII.3. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Bordowitz, Gregg. *Glenn Ligon, Untitled (I Am a Man)*. London: Afterall Books; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018.
- Bortolani, Ljuba Merlina. *Magical Hymns from Roman Egypt: A Study of Greek and Egyptian Traditions of Divinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Boundas, Constantin V., and Dorothea Olkowski, eds. *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Boustán, Raʿanan, and Joseph E. Sanzo. "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magic, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity." *HTR* 110.2 (2017): 217–40.
- Brakke, David. "Scriptural Practices in Early Christianity: Toward a New Understanding of the New Testament Canon." Pp. 263–80. *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*. Edited by David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Jörg Ulrich. Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 11. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011.
- Brashear, William M. "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)." *ANRW II* 18.5 (1995): 3398–412.
- Brélaz, Cédric. "Local Understandings of Roman Criminal Law and Procedure in Asia Minor." Pp. 157–84. *Law in the Roman Provinces*. Edited by Kimberly Czajkowski, Benedikt Eckhardt, and Meret Strothman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Bremmer, Jan N. "Preface." Pp. 7–19. *The Materiality of Magic*. Edited by Dietrich Boschung and Jan N. Bremer. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Briggs, Sheila. "Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society." Pp. 110–23. *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*. Edited by Richard A. Horsley. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000.
- Brooks, Gwendolyn. "The *Chicago Defender* Sends a Man to Little Rock." Pp. 32–34. *The Bean Eaters*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960.
- Brooten, Bernadette J. *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Bryen, Ari. *Violence in Roman Egypt: A Study in Legal Interpretation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- "Law in Many Pieces." *Classical Philology* 109.4 (2014): 346–65.
- "Martyrdom, Rhetoric, and the Politics of Procedure," *Classical Antiquity* 33.2 (2014): 244–45.
- The Judgment of the Provinces: Law, Culture, and Empire in Rome's Eastern Provinces* In progress.
- Buell, Denise Kimber. *Why this New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- "The Microbes and Pneuma That Therefore I Am." Pp. 63–87. *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology*. Edited by Stephen D. Moore. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.
- Burns, Dylan M. *Apocalypse of the Alien God: Platonism and the Exile of Sethian Gnosticism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

- Burrus, Virginia. "Seducing Theology." *Theology & Sexuality* 18.2 (2012): 118–21.
- Butler, Connie. "Glenn Ligon, *Untitled ('I am an invisible man')*." Pp. 92–92. *Defining Contemporary Art: 25 Years in 200 Pivotal Artworks*. Edited by Daniel Birnbaum et al. New York: Phaidon, 2011.
- Butler, Shane. *The Ancient Phonograph*. Brooklyn: Zone, 2015.
- "Ancient Sound Studies: Review of Sean Alexander Gurd, *Dissonance: Auditory Aesthetics in Ancient Greece*." *CR* 68.1 (2018): 256–58.
- Butler, Shane, and Sarah Nooter. "Introduction: Sound Hearing." Pp. 1–11. *Sound and the Ancient Senses*. Edited by Shane Butler and Sarah Nooter. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Byron, Gay L. *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Campt, Tina. *Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021.
- Carson, Anne. "Candor." *BOMB* 116 (Summer 2011). <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/candor/>.
- Cartledge, Mark J. *Charismatic Glossolalia: An Empirical-Theological Study*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.
- Casselberry, Judith. *The Labor of Faith: Gender and Power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.
- Castelli, Elizabeth. *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991.
- "Ultimately, It's Not a Change of Color, but a Whole Change-of-Subject-Kind of Thing." Pp. 849–52. *African Americans and the Bible*. Edited by Vincent L. Wimbush. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2000.
- Chanotis, Angelos. "Under the Watchful Eyes of the Gods: Divine Justice in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor." Pp. 1–4. *The Greco-Roman East: Politics, Culture, Society*. Edited by S. Colvin. YCS 31.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Chireau, Yvonne P. *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Chuh, Kandice. *The Difference Aesthetics Makes: On the Humanities "After Man"*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.
- Clark, Elizabeth. *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Clarysse, Willy. "Tomoi Synkollēsimoι." Pp. 344–59. *Ancient Archives and Archival Traditions: Concepts of Record-Keeping in the Ancient World*. Edited by Maria Brosius. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Cline, Rangar H. "Archangels, Magical Amulets, and the Defense of Late Antique Miletus." *JLA* 4.1 (Spring 2011): 55–78.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*, May 22, 2014.
- Coleman, Kathleen M. "Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments." *JRS* 80 (1990): 44–73.
- Collins, Derek. *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*. Malden: Blackwell, 2008.
- "The Magic of Homeric Verses." *CP* 103.3 (2008): 211–36.

- Concannon, Cavan. "When You Were Gentiles": *Spectres of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Cook, John Granger. *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Cox Miller, Patricia. "In Praise of Nonsense." Pp. 481–505. *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*. Edited by A. H. Armstrong. New York: Crossroad, 1986.
- The Corporeal Imagination. Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Crawley, Ashon. *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.
- The Lonely Letters*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Cribiore, Raffaella. *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Curbera, Jaime. "Maternal Lineage in Greek Magical Texts." Pp. 195–203. *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4–8 May 1997*. Edited by David R. Jordan et al. Bergen: Norwegian Institute, 1999.
- "From the Magician's Workshop: Notes on the Materiality of Greek Curse Tablets." Pp. 97–122. *The Materiality of Magic*. Edited by Dietrich Boschung and Jan N. Bremer. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- "Lexical Notes on Greek Prisons and Imprisonment." *Revue de philologie* 92.1 (2018): 7–37.
- Day, Keri. *Religious Resistance to Neoliberalism: Womanist and Black Feminist Perspectives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Notes of a Native Daughter: Testifying in Theological Education*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.
- Azusa Reimagined: A Radical Vision of Religious and Democratic Belonging*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022.
- de Abreu, Maria José. *The Charismatic Gymnasium: Breath, Media, and Religious Revivalism in Contemporary Brazil*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.
- De Bruyn, Theodore S. *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- De Bruyn, Theodore S., and Jitse H. F. Dijkstra. "Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets." *BASP* 48 (2011): 163–216.
- De Certeau, Michel. "Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias." *Representations* 56 (1996): 29–47. Translated by Daniel Rosenberg and originally published as "Utopies vocales: Glossolalias," *Traverses* 20 (1980): 26–37.
- De Giorgi, Andrea U. *Ancient Antioch: From the Seleucid Era to the Islamic Conquest*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- De Giorgi, Andrea U., and A. Asa Eger. *Antioch: A History*. London: Routledge, 2021.

- Deissmann, Adolf. *Light from the Ancient East*. Translated by Lionel R. M. Strachan. New York, 1927. Facsimile of earlier edition. Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 1995.
- de Jonge, Casper C. *Between Grammar and Rhetoric: Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Language, Linguistics and Literature*. Mnemosyne Supplements 301. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- “Dionysius and Longinus on the Sublime. Rhetoric and Religious Language.” *AJP* 133.2 (2012): 271–300.
- Delcommune, Alexandre. *Vingt années de vie africaine: récits de voyages, d'aventures et d'exploration au Congo belge, 1874–1893*. 2 vols. Brussels: Larcier, 1922.
- Deleuze, Gilles. “He Stuttered.” Pp. 23–29. *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*. Edited and translated by Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- den Dulk, Matthijs. “Justin Martyr and the Authorship of the Earliest Anti-Heretical Treatise.” *VC* 72 (2018): 471–83.
- Denecker, Tim. *Ideas on Language in Early Latin Christianity: From Tertullian to Isidore of Seville*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- Denzey Lewis, Nicola. “Ordinary Religion in the Late Roman Empire: Principles of a New Approach.” *SLA* 5.1 (2021): 104–18.
- Denzey Lewis, Nicola, and Justine Ariel Blount. “Rethinking the Origins of the Nag Hammadi Library.” *JBL* 133 (2014): 399–419.
- Derbew, Sarah. *Untangling Blackness in Greek Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.
- Destrée, Pierre, and Penelope Murray, eds. *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.
- de Wet, Chris L. *The Unbound God: Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought*. London: Routledge, 2018.
- Dieleman, Jacco. “The Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri.” Pp. 283–321. *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*. Edited by David Frankfurter. RGRW. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Dinkler, Michal Beth. *Silent Statements: Narrative Representations of Speech and Silence in the Gospel of Luke*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.
- Doerfler, Maria E. “Christianity and Roman Law.” *The Oxford Handbook on Christianity and Law*. Edited by John Witte, Jr. and Rafael Domingo. Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.
- Dolganov, A. “Reichsrecht and Volksrecht in Theory and Practice: Roman Justice in the Province of Egypt (P.Oxy. II 237, P.Oxy. IV 706, SB XII 10929).” *TYCHE* 34 (2019): 27–60.
- Douglas, Kelly Brown. *The Black Christ*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994.
- Downie, Janet. *At the Limits of Art: A Literary Study of Aelius Aristides' Hieroi Logoi*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Drew-Bear, Thomas. “Imprecations from Kourion.” *BASP* 9.3/4 (1972): 85–107.
- “Documenting Appropriations.” *Pharos*. <https://pharos.vassarspaces.net/category/documenting-appropriations/>.
- Drucker, Johanna. *The Visible World: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909–1923*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

- Du , Casey, and Gregory Nagy. "Milman Parry." Pp. 590–92. *The Cambridge Guide to Homer*. Edited by Corinne Ondine Pache. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Dzwiza, Kirsten. *Schriftverwendung in antiker Ritualpraxis: anhand der griechischen, demotischen und koptischen Sammelschriften des 1.–7. Jahrhunderts*. Ph.D. diss. Erfurt University, 2013.
- Edlow, Robert Blair. *Galen on Language and Ambiguity*. Leiden: Brill, 1977.
- Edmonds, Radcliffe G., III. *Drawing Down the Moon: Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.
- Ehrensperger, Kathy. "Between Polis, Oikos, and Ekklesia: The Challenge of Negotiating the Spirit World (1 Cor 12:1–11)." Pp. 105–32. *The First Urban Churches, Volume 2: Roman Corinth*. Edited by James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn. WGRWSup 8. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016.
- Eidinow, Esther. *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- "Binding Spells on Tablets and Papyri" Pp. 351–87. *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*. Edited by David Frankfurter. RGRW. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- "Testing the Oracle?" Pp. 44–67. *Ancient Divination and Experience*. Edited by Lindsay G. Driediger-Murphy and Esther Eidinow. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Ellis, JJJJJJerome. "Prayers to My Stutter #1 and #3." *The Offing*. July 21, 2020.
- Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Random House, 1952.
- Engberg-Pedersen, Troels. *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- English, Darby. *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.
- Eshleman, Kendra. *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Eurell, John-Christian. "The Nature of Pauline Glossolalia and Its Early Reception." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 72.2 (2019): 182–190.
- Eyl, Jennifer. *Signs, Wonders, and Gifts: Divination in the Letters of Paul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Faraone, Christopher A. "Stopping Evil, Pain, Anger, and Blood: The Ancient Greek Tradition of Protective Iambic Incantations." *GRBS* 49 (2009): 227–55.
- "A Greek Magical Gemstone from the Black Sea Amulet or Miniature Handbook?" *Kernos* 23 (2010): 91–114.
- The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.
- Hexametrical Genres from Homer to Theocritus*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Faraone, Christopher, and Amina Kropp. "Inversion, Adversion and Perversion as Strategies in Latin Curse-Tablets." Pp. 381–98. *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Edited by Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Sim n. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

- Farrington, Lisa. *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African American Women Artists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Ferguson, Roderick. *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- Forbes, Christopher. *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and Its Hellenistic Environment*. WUNT 2.75. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995.
- Formisano, Marco. "Toward an Aesthetic Paradigm of Late Antiquity." *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007): 277–84.
- Fotopoulos, John. "Paul's Curse of Corinthians: Restraining Rivals with Fear and Voces Mysticae (1 Cor 16:22)." *NovTest* 56 (2014): 275–309.
- Fox, Arminta. *Paul Decentered: Reading 2 Corinthians with the Corinthian Women*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019.
- Franek, Juraj, and Daniela Urbanová. "'May Their Limbs Melt, Just as This Lead Shall Melt...': Sympathetic Magic and *Similia Similibus* Formulae in Greek and Latin Curse Tablets [Part 1]." *Philologia Classica* 14.1 (2019): 27–55.
- "'As Isis Loved Osiris, So Let Matrona Love Theodoros': Sympathetic Magic and *Similia Similibus* Formulae in Greek and Latin Curse Tablets [Part 2]." *Philologia Classica* 14.1 (2019): 177–207.
- Frank, Georgia. "Singing Mary: The Annunciation and Nativity in Romanos the Melode." Pp. 170–79. *The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*. Edited by T. Arentzen and M. Cunningham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Frankfurter, David. "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magic *Historiola* in Ritual Spells." Pp. 451–70. *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*. Edited by Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- "Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt." *GRBS* 46 (2006): 37–62.
- "Preface." Pp. xi–xii. And "Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions." Pp. 3–20. And "Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken Word." Pp. 608–25. *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*. Edited by David Frankfurter. RGRW. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Frederick, Marla. *Colored Television: American Religion Gone Global*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016.
- Fredriksen, Paula. "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *NTS* 56 (2010): 232–52.
- Paul: The Pagan's Apostle*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.
- "How Jewish is God? Divine Ethnicity in Pauline Theology," *JBL* 137.1 (Spring 2018): 193–212.
- Frilingos, Christopher A. *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Fujii, Takashi. *Imperial Cult and Imperial Representation in Roman Cyprus*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2013.

- Gadza, Elaine, ed. *The Ancient Art of Emulation: Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- Gangloff, Anne. "Rhapsodes and Rhapsodic Contests in the Imperial Period." Pp. 130–50. *Homer in Performance: Rhapsodes, Narrators, and Characters*. Edited by Jonathan Ready and Christos Tsagalis. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018.
- Garrett, Susan R. *Magic and Miracles in Luke-Acts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Georgi, Dieter. "The Interest in Life of Jesus Theology as a Paradigm for the Social History of Biblical Criticism." *HTR* 85.1 (1992): 51–83.
- Geue, Tom. *Author Unknown: The Politics of Anonymity in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
- "Keeping/Losing Records, Keeping/Losing Faith: Suetonius and Justin Do the Document." Pp. 203–22. *Literature and Culture in the Roman Empire, 96–235: Cross-Cultural Interactions*. Edited by Alice König, Rebecca Langlands, and Jamed Uden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Given, J. Gregory. "Ignatius of Antioch and the Historiography of Early Christianity." Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2019.
- Glancy, Jennifer. *Slavery in Early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Gleason, Maud W. *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Preservation in Ancient Rome*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Glenn Ligon: *Stranger*. New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2001.
- Goggin, M. "Rhythm in the Prose of Favorinus." *YCS* 12 (1951): 149–201.
- Gonosová, Anna. "City and the People." Pp. 115–29. In *Antioch: The Lost City*. Edited by Christine Kondoleon. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Goodenough, Erwin Ramsdell. *The Theology of Justin Martyr*. Jena: Verlag Frommannsche Buchhandlung, 1923.
- Gordley, Matthew E. *Teaching Through Song in Antiquity: Didactic Hymnody Among Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.
- Gordon, Richard. "The Healing Event in Greco-Roman Folk Medicine." Pp. 363–76. *Ancient Medicine in Its Socio-cultural Context, Volume 2: Papers Read at the Congress Held at Leiden University, 13–15 April 1992*. Vol. 2. Edited by H. F. J. Horstmannshoff, Philip J. van der Eijk, and P. H. Schrijvers. *Clio Medica* 28. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- "*Signa nova et inaudita*: The Theory and Practice of Invented Signs in Greco-Egyptian Magical Texts." *MHNH: revista internacional de investigación sobre magia y astrología antiguas* 11 (2011): 15–45.
- "Charaktères between Antiquity and the Renaissance." Pp. 253–300. *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'antiquité à la Renaissance*. Edited by Véronique Dasen and Jean-Michel Spieser. Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014.

- "Queering Their Pitch: The Curse-Tablets from Mainz, with Some Thoughts on Practising 'Magic.'" *JRA* 27 (2014): 253–300.
- "From Substances to Texts." Pp. 133–74. *The Materiality of Magic*. Edited by Dietrich Boschung and Jan N. Bremer. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- "Imaginative Force and Verbal Energy in Latin Curse-tablets." Pp. 111–30. *Litterae Magicae: Studies in Honor of Roger S. O. Tomlin*. Edited by Celia Sánchez Natalías. Vol. 2. Zaragoza: Libros Pórtico, 2019.
- Gorodeisky, Keren. "19th Century Romantic Aesthetics." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, June 14, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/aesthetics-19th-romantic>.
- Graf, Fritz. "Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual." Pp. 188–213. *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*. Edited by Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Grand-Clément, Adeline. "Poikilia." Pp. 406–21. In *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*. Edited by Pierre Destrée and Penelope Murray. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.
- Greenwood, Emily, and Barbara Gratosi. "Introduction." Pp. 1–24. *Homer in the Twentieth Century: Between World Literature and the Western Canon*. Edited by Emily Greenwood and Barbara Gratosi. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Grieser, Alexandra, and Jay Johnston. "What is an Aesthetics of Religion? From the Senses to Meaning – and Back Again." Pp. 1–49. *Aesthetics of Religion: A Connective Concept*. Edited by Alexandra Grieser and Jay Johnston. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.
- Gurd, Sean Alexander. *Dissonance: Auditory Aesthetics in Ancient Greece*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.
- Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Edited by Arnold I. Davidson. Translated by Michael Chase. Oxford & New York: Blackwell, 1995.
- Hagel, Stefan. *Ancient Greek Music: A New Technical History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Haley, Shelley. "Be Not Afraid of the Dark: Critical Race Theory and Classical Studies." Pp. 27–50. *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christianity*. Edited by Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2009.
- Halliwell, Stephen. *Between Ecstasy and Truth: Interpretations of Greek Poetics from Homer to Longinus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Hammermeister, Kai. *The German Aesthetic Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Hammerstaedt, J. "Julius Africanus und seine Tätigkeiten im 18. Kestos (P.Oxy. 412 col. II)." Pp. 53–70. *Die Kestoi des Julius Africanus und ihre Überlieferung*. Edited by M. Wallraff and L. Mecella. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009.
- Harkness, Nicholas. *Glossolalia and the Problem of Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.

- Harries, Jill. "Triple Vision: Ulpian of Tyre on the Duties of the Proconsul." Pp. 193–209. *Roman Rule in Greek and Latin Writing*. Edited by Jepser Majbom Madsen and Roger David Rees. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Harris, Michael D. "Resonance, Transformation, and Rhyme: The Art of Renée Stout." Pp. 107–56. *Astonishment and Power*. Edited by Wyatt MacGaffey, David C. Driskell, Michael D. Harris, and Sylvia H. Williams. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Museum of African Art, 1993.
- Harris, William. "'Sounding Brass' and Hellenistic Technology." *BAR* 8.1 (1982): 38–41.
- Hartman, Saidiya V. *Lose Your Mother*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2007.
- Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019.
- Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. *Song and Memory: Biblical Women in Syriac Tradition*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010.
- Heath, J. M. F. *Clement of Alexandria and the Shaping of Christian Literary Practice: Miscellany and the Transformation of Greco-Roman Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Heintz, Florent. "Circus Curses and Their Archaeological Contexts." *JRA* 11 (1998): 337–42.
- "Magic Tablets and the Games at Antioch." Pp. 163–67. *Antioch: The Lost City*. Edited by Christine Kondoleon. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Hitchcock, F. R. Montgomery. "St. Paul's Hymn of Love (1 Cor. xiii)." *Theology* 26.152 (1933): 63–75.
- Hollmann, Alexander. "A Curse Tablet from Antioch against Babylas the Greengrocer." *ZPE* 177 (2011): 157–65.
- Honoré, Tony. *Justinian's Digest: Character and Compilation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Ulpian: Pioneer of Human Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Hughes, Carly Daniel, and Maia Kotrosits. "Tertullian of Carthage and the Fantasy Life of Power: On Martyrs, Christians, and Other Attachments to Juridical Scenes." *J ECS* 28.1 (2020): 1–31.
- Hussein, Ersin. *Revaluing Roman Cyprus: Local Identity on an Island in Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Ikeuchi, Suma. *Jesus Loves Japan: Return Migration and Global Pentecostalism in a Brazilian Diaspora*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019.
- Isaac, Benjamin. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Jacobs, Andrew S. *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- "Dialogical Differences: (De-)Judaizing Jesus' Circumcision." *J ECS* 15 (2007): 291–335.
- Jackson, Jerma A. *Singing in My Soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Janney, Matthew. "Poet Tyehimba Jess Retells History through African American Music;" *Culture Trip*. 13 June 2018. <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/>

- [usa/articles/poet-tyehimba-jess-retells-history-through-african-american-music](#). Accessed 7 November 2022.
- Janowitz, Naomi. *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002.
- Jayne-Graham, Emma. *Reassembling Religion in Roman Italy*. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Jennings, Willie James. *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020.
- Jess, Tyehimba. *leadbelly*. Seattle: Wave Books, 2005.
- Olio. Seattle: Wave Books, 2016.
- Johnson, Sylvester. *African American Religions, 1500–2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Jones, Brice C. *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity*. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016.
- Jones, Christopher P. “Ten Dedications ‘To the Gods and Goddesses’ and the Antonine Plague.” *JRA* 18 (2005): 293–301.
- “Cosa and the Antonine Plague?” *JRA* 19 (2006): 368–69.
- Jordan, David. “Defixiones from a Well Near the Southwest Corner of the Athenian Agora.” *Hesperia* 54.3 (1985): 205.
- Kahane, Ahuvia. “The Literary Charms of P. Oxy. 412.” *Hyperboreus* 3.2 (1997): 319–34.
- “Blood for Ghosts? Homer, Ezra Pound, and Julius Africanus.” *New Literary History* 30 (1999): 815–36.
- Kalleres, Dayna S. “Drunken Hags with Amulets and Prostitutes with Erotic Spells: The Re-Feminization of Magic in Late Antique Christian Homilies.” Pp. 219–44. *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*. Edited by Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.
- Kallis, Aristotle. *Third Rome, 1922–43: The Making of the Fascist Capital*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Kaphar, Titus. April 2017. “Can Art Amend History?” *TED talk*, 12:44, www.ted.com/talks/titus_kaphar_can_art_amend_.
- Language of the Forgotten*. New Haven: Titus Kaphar LLC, 2020.
- Kartzow, Marianne Bjelland. *Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles*. BZNW 164. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009.
- Kelley, Nicole. “Philosophy as Training for Death: Reading the Ancient Christian Martyr Acts as Spiritual Exercises.” *CH* 75.4 (2006): 723–47.
- Kelley, Shawn. *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Kelly, Benjamin. *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Kent, Benedict H. M. “Curses in Acts: Hearing the Apostles’ Words of Judgment Alongside ‘Magical’ Spell Texts.” *JSNT* 39.4 (2017): 412–40.
- Kimmel, Joseph. “Power in the Name: Towards a Theological Posthumanism.” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2023.

- King, Karen L. "Which Early Christianity?" Pp. 66–81. *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*. Edited by Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- "What Is an Author? Ancient Author-Function in The Apocryphon of John and The Apocalypse of John." Pp. 15–42. *Scribal Practices and Social Structures Among Jesus Adherents: Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg*. Edited by William Edward Arnal, Richard S. Ascough, Robert A. Derrenbacker, Jr., and Philip A. Harland. Leuven: Peeters, 2016.
- "The Gnostic Myth: How does its Demise Impact 21st Century Historiography of Christianity's 2nd Century?" Pp. 122–36. *Christianity and the Second Century: Themes and Developments*. Edited by James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Klavan, Spencer. *Music in Ancient Greece: Melody, Rhythm and Life*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021.
- Klein, William. "Noisy Gong or Acoustic Vase? A Note on I Corinthians 13.1." *NTS* 32.2 (1986): 286–89.
- Knox, Wilfred Lawrence. "Jewish Liturgical Exorcism." *HTR* 31.3 (1938): 191–203.
- Kondoleon, Christine, ed. *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Konstan, David. *Beauty: The Fortunes of an Ancient Greek Ideal*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- "Beauty." Pp. 366–80. *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*. Edited by Pierre Destrée and Penelope Murray. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.
- Koosed, Jennifer. *The Bible and Posthumanism*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014.
- Kotrosits, Maia. *Rethinking Early Christian Identity: Affect, Violence, and Belonging*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015.
- The Lives of Objects: Material Culture, Experience, and the Real in the History of Early Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.
- Krämer, Yael. "O Thunder and Lightning-hurling Iao': Cursing Babylas the Greengrocer in Late-Roman Antioch." Article in progress.
- Kropp, Amina. "How Does Magical Language Work? The Spells and Formulae of the Latin Defixionum Tabellae." Pp. 357–80. *Magical Practice in the Latin West*. Edited by Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- LaGamma, Alisa. "Kongo: Power and Majesty." Pp. 17–46. *Kongo: Power and Majesty*. Edited by Alisa LaGamma. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015.
- Lamont, Jessica L. "A New Commercial Curse Tablet from Classical Athens." *ZPE* 196 (2015): 172–73.
- "Early Greek Incantations in Late Roman Jerusalem: Kyrilla's Judicial Case." *ZPE* 209 (2019): 43–53.
- "Cold and Worthless: The Role of Lead in Curse Tablets." *TAPA* 151.1 (2021): 35–68.
- "The Curious Case of the Cursed Chicken: A New Binding Ritual from the Athenian Agora." *Hesperia* 90 (2021): 79–113.
- In Blood and Ashes: Curse Tablets and Binding Spells in Ancient Greece*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.

- Lanni, Adriaan. "Taking Restorative Justice Seriously." *Buffalo Law Review*, 69.3 (2021): 635–82.
- Last, Richard. "Paul among the Fluent in Corinth: Introducing Paul and the 'Associated Behaviours' of Stuttering into the Study of Dysfluency in Antiquity." *NovTest* 64 (2022): 54–78.
- LeBoulluec, Alain. *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque, IIe–IIIe siècles*. Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1985.
- Lechner, Thomas. "Süße Lust des Logos. Die Vorrede zum Protreptikos des Clemens von Alexandrien und die *prolaliai* der Zweiten Sophistik," Pp. 149–206. *Logos der Vernunft, Logos des Glaubens*. Edited by Ferdinand-Rupert Prostmeier and Horacio E. Lona. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010.
- Lemcke, Luas. *Imperial Transportation and Communication from the Third to the Late Fourth Century: The Golden Age of the Cursus Publicus*. Brussels: Latomus, 2016.
- Leonhard, Clemens, and Hermut Löhr, eds. *Literature or Liturgy? Early Christian Hymns and Prayers in Their Literary and Liturgical Context in Antiquity*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Letteney, Mark, and Matthew Larsen. *Ancient Mediterranean Incarceration*. Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming.
- LeVen, Pauline. "New Music and Its Myths: Athenaeus' Reading of the Aulos Revolution (*Deipnosophistae* 14.616E–617F)." *JHS* 130 (2010): 35–47.
- "Notes and Discussions: Timotheus' Eleven Strings: A New Approach (PMG 791.229–36)." *CP* 106.3 (2011): 245–54.
- "The Colors of Sound: *Poikilia* and Its Aesthetic Contexts." *Greek and Roman Musical Studies* 1.1 (2013): 229–42.
- "The Erogenous Ear." Pp. 212–32. *Sound and the Ancient Senses*. Edited by Shane Butler and Sarah Nooter. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Music and Metamorphosis in Greco-Roman Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Leventhal, Max. *Poetry and Number in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. Cambridge Classical Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.
- Leyerle, Blake. *The Narrative Shape of Emotion in the Preaching of John Chrysostom*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020.
- Lin, Yii-Jan. *The Erotic Life of Manuscripts: A History of New Testament Textual Criticism and the Biological Sciences*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- "Of Escoffier, Gastronomie, Craft, and Canon." *Reading in These Times: The Critical Task*. Edited by Fernando J. Segovia and Tat-siong Benny Liew. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022.
- Immigration and Apocalypse: The Revelation of John in the History of American Immigration*. New Haven: Yale University Press, in progress.
- Locke, Alain. *The New Negro*. New York: Albert and Charles Boni, Inc., 1925.
- Lohr, Shelby, and R. Isabela Morales. "Samuel Finley." Princeton University, <https://slavery.princeton.edu/stories/samuel-finley>.
- Long, A. A. *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002.

- Lopez, Davina C. *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.
- Lord, Albert. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- Loveless, Natalie. *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.
- Luijendijk, AnneMarie. *Forbidden Oracles? The Gospel of the Lots of Mary*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Lundhag, Hugo, and Lance Jenott. *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015.
- Lynch, Tosca A. C., and Eleonora Rocconi. *A Companion to Ancient Greek and Roman Music*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020.
- Maas, P. "The Philinna Papyrus." *JHS* 62 (November 1942): 33–38.
- MacDonald, Louise. "Inscriptions Relating to Sorcery in Cyprus." *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 13 (1891): 160–90.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. "The Eyes of Understanding: Kongo Minkisi." Pp. 21–103. *Astonishment and Power*. Edited by Wyatt MacGaffey, David C. Driskell, Michael D. Harris, and Sylvia H. Williams. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Museum of African Art, 1993.
- Manekin-Bamberger, Avigail. "Jewish Legal Formulae in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls." *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015): 69–81.
- "The Vow-Curse in Ancient Jewish Texts." *HTR* 112.3 (2019): 340–57.
- Manning, J. G., Uri Yiftach-Firanko, and James G. Keenan, eds. *Law and Society in Egypt from Alexander to the Arab Conquest, 332 BC–AD 640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Marchal, Joseph. *The Politics of Heaven: Women, Gender, and Empire in Philippians*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.
- Marchal, "The Usefulness of an Onesimus: The Sexual Use of Slaves and Paul's Letter to Philemon." *JBL* 130.4 (2011): 749–70.
- Appalling Bodies: Queer Figures Before and After Paul's Letters*. New York: Oxford, 2020.
- "Still After: Reintroducing the Corinthian Women Prophets at Thirty." Pp. 1–46. *After the Corinthian Women Prophets: Reimagining Rhetoric and Power*. Edited by Joseph Marchal. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021.
- Marco Simón, Francisco. "Execrating the Roman Power: Three *Defixiones* from Emporiae (Ampurias)." Pp. 399–425. *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Edited by Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Marcovich, Miroslav. *Patristic Textual Criticism*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994.
- Mariev, Sergei, and Wiebke-Marie Stock, eds. *Aesthetics and Theurgy in Byzantium*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.
- Martin, Dale. *The Corinthian Body*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Martin, Lerone. *Preaching on Wax: The Phonograph and the Shaping of Modern African American Religion*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.
- Martín Hernández, Raquel. "Using Homer for Divination: *Homeromanteia* in Context." *CHS Research Bulletin* 2.1 (2013): np.

- "The Transmission of the *Sortes Homericae*. A Papyrological Approach to the Texts." Pp. 375–86. *Ancient Magic Then and Now*. Edited by Attilio Mastrocinque, Joseph E. Sanzo, and Marianna Scapini. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2020.
- Martínez-Ruiz, Bárbaro. "Kongo Ins-(ex)piration in Contemporary Art." *The Art Bulletin* 98.3 (2016): 291–96.
- Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual: Affect, Movement, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Matthews, Lydia and Irene Salvo. "Cursing-Prayers and Female Vengeance in the Ancient Greek World." Pp. 141–59. *Revenge and Gender in Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Edited by Lesel Dawson and Fiona McHardy. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.
- Matthews, Shelly. "Hearing Wo/men Prophets." Pp. 47–68. *After the Corinthian Women Prophets: Reimagining Rhetoric and Power*. Edited by Joseph Marchal. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021.
- Mauss, Marcel. *A General Theory of Magic*. Translated by Robert Brain. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.
- Mayer, Wendy. "Shaping the Sick Soul: Reshaping the Identity of John Chrysostom." Pp. 140–64. *Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium: Studies Inspired by Pauline Allen*. Edited by Geoffrey Dunn and Wendy Mayer. VC Suppl. 132. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Mayer, Wendy, and Pauline Allen. *The Churches of Syrian Antioch (300–638 CE)*. Leuven: Peeters, 2012.
- McKie, Stuart. "The Social Significance of Curse Tablets in the North-Western Provinces of the Roman Empire." Ph.D. thesis. The Open University, 2017.
- McMillan, Christopher Rasheem. "Biblical Performance Criticism: The Almost, But not Quite, Transubstantiation of Performance Studies into Religious Studies." *Liminalities* 13.1 (2017): 1–23.
- Meyer, Birgit, and Jojada Verrips. "Aesthetics." Pp. 20–30. *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture*. Edited by Birgit Meyer and Jojada Verrips. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Meyer, Elizabeth A. *Legitimacy and Law in the Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Middleton, Francesca. "Illusions and Vanishing Acts: Homeric Recension, Athetesis, and Magic in *P. Oxy 412* (PGM XXIII)." *Helios* 41.2 (2014): 139–62.
- Millar, Fergus. *The Emperor in the Roman World: 31 BC–AD 337*. London: Duckworth, 1977.
- Miller, Anna C. *Corinthian Democracy: Democratic Discourse in 1 Corinthians*. Eugene: Pickwick, 2015.
- Millis, Benjamin. "The Social and Ethnic Origins of the Colonists in Early Roman Corinth." Pp. 13–36. *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Edited by Steven J. Friesen, Dan Schowalter, and James Walters. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Minets, Yuliya. *Slow Fall of Babel: Languages and Identities in Late Christian Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

- Mitchell, Margaret. *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993.
- “Paul’s Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction.” Pp. 307–39. *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Edited by Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen. HTS 53. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Mitchell, Stephen. “Requisitioned Transport in the Roman Empire: A New Inscription from Pisidia.” *JRS* 66 (1976): 106–31.
- Morgan, Teresa. *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Morrison, Brenda, and Eliza Ahmed. “Restorative Justice and Civil Society.” *Journal of Social Issues* 62.2 (2006): pp. 209–15.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.
- Moss, Candida. *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom*. New York: HarperOne, 2014.
- Mras, K. “Die προλαλία bei den griechischen Schriftstellern.” *Wiener Studien: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie und Patristik* 64 (1949): 71–81.
- Murray, Penelope, and Peter Wilson. “Introduction: Mousikē Not Music.” Pp. 1–8. *Music and the Muses: The Culture of “Mousikē” in the Classical Athenian City*. Edited by Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Naeem, Asma, and Leslie Cozzi, eds. *Valarie Maynard: Lost and Found*. Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 2020.
- Nagy, Gregory. *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Nasrallah, Laura Salah. *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*. HTS 52. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- “The Knidian Aphrodite in the Roman Empire and Hiram Powers’s *Greek Slave*: On Ethnicity, Gender, and Desire.” Pp. 51–78. *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christianity*. Edited by Laura Salah Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2009.
- Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-century Church amid the Spaces of Empire*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- “1 Corinthians.” Pp. 456–59. *The Letters and Legacy of Paul: Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition*. Edited by Margaret Aymer et al. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2016.
- “Lot Oracles and Fate: On Early Christianity among Others in the Second Century.” Pp. 213–42. *Christianity in the Second Century*. Edited by James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

- “‘I Do Not Wish to be Rich’: The ‘Barbarian’ Christian Tatian Responds to *Sortes*.” Pp. 290–308. *My Lots Are in Thy Hands: Sortilege and Its Practitioners in Late Antiquity*. Edited by AnneMarie Luijendijk and William E. Klingshirn. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- “A Formation of a Christian Archive? The Case of Justin Martyr and an Imperial Rescript.” Pp. 179–202. *Literature and Culture in the Roman Empire*, 96–235. Edited by Alice König, Rebecca Langlands, and James Uden. Cross-Cultural Interactions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- “*Christemporos*: Christ and the Market in Early Christian Texts.” *Biblical Interpretation* 30.4 (2021): 1–29.
- “Judgment, Justice, and Destruction: *Defixiones* and 1 Corinthians.” *JBL* 140.2 (2021): 347–67.
- “The Work of Nails: Religion, Mediterranean Antiquity, and Contemporary Black Art.” *JAAR* 90.2 (2022): 1–21.
- “What’s Love Got to Do with It?: Violence, ‘Love Charms,’ and ‘Erotic Spells’.” In progress.
- Naveh, Joseph, and Shaul Shaked. *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993.
- Ngai, Sianne. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Niehoff, Maren. *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- “Why Compare Homer’s Readers to Biblical Readers.” Pp. 3–14. *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters*. Edited by Maren Niehoff. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- Nongbri, Brent. *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.
- Olender, Maurice. *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Oster, Richard. “When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11.4.” *NTS* 34.4 (1988): 481–505.
- Pachoumi, Eleni. *Concepts of the Divine in the Greek Magical Papyri*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.
- Padilla Peralta, Dan-el. “Barbarians Inside the Gate, Part 1.” *EIDOLON*, November 9, 2017.
- “Hammer Time: The Publicii Malleoli Between Cult and Cultural History.” *Classical Antiquity* 37.2 (2018): 267–320.
- “The Future of Classics.” Panel presented at Society for Classical Studies Annual Meeting, January 5, 2019.
- Parker, Angela. “One Womanist’s View of Racial Reconciliation in Galatians.” *JFSR* 34.2 (2018): 23–40.
- If God Still Breathes, Why Can’t I?: Black Lives Matter and Biblical Authority*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021.

- Parry, Milman. "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-making: I. Homer and Homeric Style." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 41 (1930): 73–147.
- "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-making: II. The Homeric Language as the Language of Oral Poetry." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 43 (1932): 1–50.
- Patel, Shaily Shashikant. "Magical Practices and Discourses of Magic in Early Christian Traditions: Jesus, Peter, and Paul." Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 2017.
- Patel, Shaily Shashikant., "Dissertation Spotlight Magical Practices and Discourses of Magic in Early Christian Traditions: Jesus, Peter, and Paul." *Ancient Jew Review* (January 29, 2019).
- "Notes on Rehabilitating 'Magic' in the Study of Early Christian Literature." *Religion Compass* 15.10 (October 2021): 1–12.
- Pearson, Birger A. "Theurgic Tendencies in Gnosticism and Iamblichus's Conception of Theurgy." Pp. 253–75. *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*. Edited by Rich T. Wallis and Jay Bregman. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Peers, Glenn. *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004.
- Peirano Garrison, Irene. *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Pentcheva, Bissera V. *Hagia Sophia: Sound, Space, and Spirit in Byzantium*. State College: Penn State University Press, 2017.
- Peppard, Michael. "'Poetry', 'Hymns' and 'Traditional Material' in New Testament Epistles or How to Do Things with Indentations." *JSNT* 30.3 (2008): 319–42.
- Pernot, Laurent. *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain: histoire et technique*. Paris: Institut d'études augustinienes, 1993.
- Peters, Janelle. "Creation, Angels, and Gender in Paul, Philo, and the Dead Sea Scrolls." *Open Theology* 7.1 (January 2021): 60–68.
- Petrovic, I. "Hymns in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*." Pp. 244–67. *Hymnic Narrative and the Narratology of Greek Hymns*. Edited by Andrew Faulkner and Owen Hodkinson. Mnemosyne Supp. 384. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Philip, M. NourbeSe. *Zong*. Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.
- *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*. Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2015.
- Pinn, Anthony. *Interplay of Things: Religion, Art, and Presence Together*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.
- Piranomonte, Marina. "Religion and Magic at Rome: The Fountain of Anna Perenna." Pp. 191–213. *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Edited by Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Pöhlmann, Egert. "Ps. Plutarch, *De Musica*: A History of Oral Tradition of Ancient Greek Music." *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 99.3 (2011): 11–30.

- Poirier, John C. *The Tongues of Angels: The Concept of Angelic Languages*. WUNT 2.287. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.
- Porter, Sarah F. "A Church and Its Charms: Space, Affect, and Affiliation in Late Fourth-Century Antioch." *SLA* 5.4 (2021): 651, 656–57.
- Porter, Sarah F. *Early Christian Deathscapes in Late Antique Antioch*. Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2022.
- Porter, James I. *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Porter, James I. "Rhetoric, Aesthetics, and the Voice." Pp. 91–108. *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*. Edited by Erik Gunderson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Porter, James I. "Language as a System in Ancient Rhetoric and Grammar." Pp. 512–23. *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language*. Edited by Egbert J. Bakker. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2010.
- Porter, James I. *The Sublime in Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Porter, James I. "Homer in the Gutter: From Samuel Butler to the Second Sophistic and Back Again." Pp. 231–62. *Marginality, Canonicity, Passion*. Vol. 1. Edited by Marco Formisano and Christina Shuttleworth Kraus. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Prettejohn, Elizabeth. *Beauty and Art 1750–2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Quashie, Kevin. *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Aisthesis. Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*. Translated by Zakir Paul. London: Verso, 2013.
- Ratzan, David M. "Freakonomika: Oracle as Economic Indicator in Roman Egypt." Pp. 248–89. *My Lots Are in Thy Hands: Sortilege and Its Practitioners in Late Antiquity*. Edited by AnneMarie Luijendijk and William E. Klingshirn. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Rebillard, Éric. *The Early Martyr Narratives: Neither Authentic nor Forgeries*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.
- Redman, Samuel J. *Prophets and Ghosts: The Story of Salvage Anthropology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021.
- Reed, Annette Yoshiko. "The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology, Demonology, and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr." *J ECS* 12.2 (2004): 141–71.
- Reed, Annette Yoshiko. *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Reed, Annette Yoshiko. *Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Richlin, Amy. *Arguments with Silence: Writing the History of Roman Women*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014.
- Rist, Martin. "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: A Liturgical and Magical Formula." *JBL* 57.3 (1938): 289–303.
- Rivera, Mayra Rivera. *Poetics of the Flesh*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

- Rives, James B. "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime." *Classical Antiquity* 22.2 (2003): 313–39.
- Rizzi, Marco. *Ideologia e retorica negli "exordia" apologetici: il problema dell' "altro."* Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1993.
- "Protreptic and Rhetoric: Clement of Alexandria." Pp. 335–48. *When Wisdom Calls: Philosophical Protreptic in Antiquity*. Edited by Olga Alieva, Annemaré Kotzé, and Sophie Van der Meer. Turnhout: Brepols, 2018.
- Roberts, Michael. *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Rosenmeyer, Patricia. *Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Rothkopf, Scott. *Glenn Ligon: America*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art; New Haven: distributed by Yale University Press, 2011.
- Rouveret, Agnès. *Histoire et imaginaire de la peinture ancienne (Ve siècle av. J.-C. - Ier siècle ap. J.-C.)*. Rome: École française de Rome, 1989.
- Rüpke, Jörg. *On Roman Religion: Lived Religion and the Individual in Ancient Rome*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016.
- Saliou, Catherine. "Libanius's *Antiochicus*, Mirror of a City? Antioch in 356, Praise and Reality." Pp. 35–52. *Antioch II: The Many Faces of Antioch: Intellectual Exchange and Religious Diversity, CE 350–450*. Edited by Silke-Petra Bergjan and Susanna Elm. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018.
- Sánchez Natalías, Celia. "The Medium Matters: Materiality and Metaphor in Some Latin Curse Tablets." Pp. 9–16. *Material Approaches to Roman Magic: Occult Objects and Supernatural Substances*. Edited by Adam Parker and Stuart Mckie. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2018.
- Sanders, Todd K. "A New Approach to 1 Corinthians 13.1." *NTS* 36 (1990): 614–18.
- Sandburg, Carl. *American Songbag*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1928.
- Sanzo, Joseph Emanuel. *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Sarischouli, Panagiota. "A Glossary of *Voces Magicae*: Some Further Thoughts." Paper Presented at the "Incantatory Words: Greek and Egyptian Languages in the Magical Papyri" Conference. University of Chicago Center in Paris, September 28, 2021.
- Schäfer, Peter. "Communion with the Angels: Qumran and the Origins of Jewish Mysticism." Pp. 37–66. *Wege mystischer Gotteserfahrung. Mystical Approaches to God: Judentum, Christentum und Islam. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Edited by Peter Schäfer. Berlin: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2009.
- Schulz, Verena. "The Music of the Words in Roman Rhetoric." Pp. 365–68. *A Companion to Ancient Greek and Roman Music*. Edited by Tosca A. C. Lynch and Eleonora Rocconi. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*. Boston: Beacon, 1992.
- Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 2000.

- Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001.
- Schweitzer, Albert. *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*. Translated by William Montgomery. London: A&C Black, 1931.
- Secord, Jared. "Julius Africanus, Origen, and the Politics of Intellectual Life under the Severans." *Classical World* 110.2 (2017): 211–35.
- Sered, Danielle. *Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair*. New York: The New Press, 2019.
- Shaner, Katherine. *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Shaw, Brent. "Judicial Nightmares and Christian Memory." *J ECS* 11.4 (2003): 533–63.
- Shaw, Gregory. *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*. Revised ed. Kettering: Angelico, 2014.
- "Taking the Shape of the Gods: A Theurgic Reading of Hermetic Rebirth." *Aries – Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 15 (2015): 136–69.
- Shelley, Braxton D. "Analyzing Gospel." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72.1 (2019): 181–243.
- Healing for the Soul: Richard Smallwood, the Vamp, and the Gospel Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- "An Eternal Pitch: Bishop G. E. Patterson's Broadcast Religion." Lecture presented at Race, Power, and the Production of Musical Canons, Institute of Sacred Music, Yale Divinity School, March 29, 2021.
- An Eternal Pitch: Bishop G. E. Patterson, Broadcast Religion, and the Afterlives of Ecstasy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2023.
- Shepardson, Christina. *Controlling Contested Places: Late Antique Antioch and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019.
- Smith, David Raymond. *Hand this Man over to Satan*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- "Re: Corinthians." Pp. 17–34. *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*. Edited by Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011.
- "Trading Places." Pp. 11–27. *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*. Edited by Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Smith, Morton. *Jesus the Magician*. New York: Harper Collins, 1978.
- "The Jewish Elements in the Magical Papyri." Pp. 242–56. *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh*. Vol. 2. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Smith, Tracy K. *Wade in the Water: Poems*. Minneapolis: Greywolf Press, 2018.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *What is Scripture? A Comparative Approach*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005. Originally published in 1993.
- Sorett, Josef. *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

- Spillers, Hortense. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17.2 (1987): 64–81.
- "All the Things You Could Be by Now If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother": Psychoanalysis and Race." *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1996): 710–34.
- Squire, Michael. "POP Art: The Optical Poetics of Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius." Pp. 25–99. *The Poetics of Late Latin Literature*. Edited by Jaś Elsner and Jesús Hernández Lobato. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Steinke, Darcey. "My Stutter Made me a Better Writer." *New York Times*. June 6, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/06/opinion/reading-writing-stuttering.html?searchResultPosition=8>.
- Stendahl, Krister. "The Charismatic Movement and the New Testament," Pp. 17–28. *What the Spirit is Saying to the Churches*. Edited by Theodore Runyon. New York: Hawthorne Books, 1975.
- "The New Testament Evidence." Pp. 49–60. *The Charismatic Movement*. Edited by Michael P. Hamilton. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.
- Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Stivale, Charles J., ed. *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005.
- Stowers, Stanley. *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
- "Why 'Common Judaism' Does Not Look Like Mediterranean Religion." Pp. 235–55. *Strength to Strength: Essays in Appreciation of Shaye J. D. Cohen*. Edited by Michael E. Satlow. Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018.
- Stratton, Kimberly. *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- Stroud, Ronald S. *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions. Corinth XVIII.6*. Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Corinth, 2013.
- Strubbe, Johannes. *Arai epitymbioi: Imprecations against Desecrators of the Grave in the Greek Epitaphs of Asia Minor: A Catalogue*. Bonn: R. Habelt, 1997.
- Sunderlin, Jacobs. "'The Gut Meaning of Grace': Tyehimba Jess's *Olio*." *The Kenyon Review*. <https://kenyonreview.org/reviews/olio-by-tyehimba-jess-738439/>.
- Swain, Simon, ed. *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Swetnam-Burland, Molly. *Egypt in Rome: Visions of Egypt in Roman Imperial Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Talamanca, Guiliana Foti. *Ricerche sul processo nell'Egitto greco-romano, Volume 1: L'organizzazione del 'Conventus' del 'Praefectus Aegypti'*. Milan: A. Guiffre, 1974.
- Tate, Greg. *Fly Boy 2: The Greg Tate Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Thee, Francis C. R. *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984.

- Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Thomas, Todne. *Kincraft: The Making of Black Evangelical Sociality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.
- “Black Church Arson in the Museum.” *JAAR* 89.4 (2021): 1360–1405.
- Thompson, Cynthia L. “Hairstyles, Head-Coverings, and St. Paul: Portraits from Roman Corinth.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 51.2 (1988): 99–115.
- Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Vintage Books, 1984.
- Thompson, Robert Farris, and Joseph-Aurélien Cornet. *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds*. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1981.
- Tomlin, R. S. O. “The Curse Tablets.” Pp. 59–277. *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, Volume 2: The Finds from the Sacred Spring*. Edited by B. Cunliffe. Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988.
- Townsley, Gillian. *The Straight Mind in Corinth: Queer Readings Across 1 Corinthians 11:2–16*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017.
- Trzcionka, Silke. *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth Century Syria*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Tupamahu, Ekaputra. “‘I Don’t Want to Hear Your Language!’ White Social Imagination and the Demography of Roman Corinth.” *The Bible and Critical Theory* 16.1 (2020): 64–91.
- _____. *Contesting Languages: Heteroglossia and the Politics of Language in the Early Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Turner, Eric G. “A Curse Tablet from Nottinghamshire.” *JRS* 53 (1963): 122–24.
- Tyrrell, George. *Christianity at the Crossroads*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909.
- Uden, James. “The Noise-Lovers: Cultures of Speech and Sound in Second-Century Rome.” Pp. 58–74. *Literature and Culture in the Roman Empire, 96–235: Cross-Cultural Interactions*. Edited by Alice König, Rebecca Langlands, and James Uden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- van der Horst, Pieter W. “‘The God Who Drowned the King of Egypt’: A Short Note on an Exorcistic Formula.” Pp. 135–39. *The Wisdom of Egypt: Jewish Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuisen*. Edited by Anthony Hillhorst and George H. van Koosten. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Vandorpe, Katelijn. “Archives and Dossiers.” Pp. 216–55. *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*. Edited by Roger S. Bagnall. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Várhelyi, Zsuzsanna. “Magic, Religion, and Syncretism at the Oracle of Claros.” Pp. 13–31. *Between Magic and Religion: Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society*. Edited by Sulochana Asirvatham et al. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.
- Vásquez, Manuel A. *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. Oxford; London; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Vecchiato, Riccardo. “Crucified and Beheaded: The Archaeological Context of the Amathous Curses (DTAud 22–37).” *RRE* 7.1 (2021): 31–42.

- Versnel, Henk S. "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers." Pp. 60–106. *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*. Edited by Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- "Prayers for Justice, East and West: New Finds and Publications Since 1990." Pp. 275–354. *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Edited by Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- "The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words." Pp. 105–58. *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*. Edited by Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Viego, Antonio. *Dead Subjects: Toward a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Vogt, Jochen, et al. "Lead Isotope Analysis in Magic Artefacts from the Berlin Museums." *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* 10 (2018): 1111–27.
- von Harnack, Adolf. *What Is Christianity? Lectures Delivered in the University of Berlin During the Winter-Term 1899–1900*. Translated by Thomas Bailey Saunders. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901.
- von Möllendorff, Peter. "Frigid Enthusiasts: Lucian on Writing History." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 47 (2001): 117–40.
- Wallace, Robert W. "Damon of Oa: A Music Theorist Ostracized?" Pp. 249–68. *Music and the Muses: The Culture of "Mousikē" in the Classical Athenian City*. Edited by Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Waller, Daniel James. "Curious Characters, Invented Scripts, and . . . Charlatans? 'Pseudo-Scripts' in the Mesopotamian Magic Bowls." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 78.1 (2019): 119–39.
- Walsh, Robyn Faith. *The Origins of Early Christian Literature: Contextualizing the New Testament within Greco-Roman Literary Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Walt, Luigi. "As If Not: Dissimulation Strategies from Paul to the Sixth Book of Ezra." Pp. 131–61. *Figures of Ezra*. Edited by Jan N. Bremmer, Veronika Hirschberger, and Tobias Nicklas. Leuven: Peeters, 2018.
- Walton, Jonathan L. *Watch This! The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism*. New York: NYU Press, 2009.
- Watson, Lindsay. *Arae: The Curse Poetry of Antiquity*. Leeds: Cairns, 1991.
- Weheliye, Alexander. *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Welborn, L. L. *Paul, a Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1–4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition*. London: T & T Clark, 2005.
- Welu, James A. "From Antioch to Worcester: The Pursuit of an Ancient City." Pp. 3–16. *The Arts of Antioch: Art Historical and Scientific Approaches to Roman Mosaics and a Catalogue of the Worcester Art Museum Antioch*

- Collection*. Edited by Lawrence Becker and Christine Kondoleon. Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 2005.
- Wendt, Heidi. "Ea Superstitione: Christian Martyrdom and the Religion of Freelance Experts." *JRS* 105 (2015): 183–202.
- At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- West, M. L. *Ancient Greek Music*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1992.
- Whitmarsh, Tim. *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Beyond the Second Sophistic: Adventures in Greek Postclassicism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- "Less Care More Stress: A Poem from the Roman Empire." *Cambridge Classics Journal* (December 2021): 135–63.
- Wilburn, Andrew T. *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012.
- "Figurines, Images, and Representations Used in Ritual Practices." Pp. 456–506. And "Building Ritual Agency: Foundations, Floors, Doors, and Walls." Pp. 555–602. *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*. Edited by David Frankfurter. RGRW. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- "The Selenite and Lead Curse Tablets from Amathous, Cyprus and the Transmission of Magical Technology." *RRE* 7.1 (2021): 43–70.
- Wilder, Craig Steven. *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Williams, Delores. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993.
- Williams, Gareth D. *The Curse of Exile: A Study of Ovid's Ibis*. Cambridge: The Cambridge Philological Society, 1996.
- Williams, Jeremy. *Criminalization in Acts of the Apostles: Race, Rhetoric, and the Prosecution of an Early Christian Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).
- Williams, Sylvia M. "Fragments of History." Pp. 11–12. *Astonishment and Power*. Edited by Wyatt MacGaffey, David C. Driskell, Michael D. Harris, and Sylvia H. Williams. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Museum of African Art, 1993.
- Wimbush, Vincent L. "Introduction: Reading Darkness, Reading Scriptures." Pp. 1–43. *African Americans and the Bible*. Edited by Vincent L. Wimbush. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2000.
- "Introduction: TEXTureS, Gestures, Power: Orientation to Radical Excavation." Pp. 1–20. *Theorizing Scriptures: New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon*. Edited by Vincent Wimbush. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008.
- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *History of the Art of Antiquity*. Translated by Harry Francis. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006.
- Winkler, John J. *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

- Wire, Antoinette Clark. *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Wynter, Sylvia. "On Disenchanted Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond." *Cultural Critique* 7 (1987): 207-44.
- Wyschogrod, Edith. *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Yarbro Collins, Adela. "The Function of 'Excommunication' in Paul." *JBL* 73.1/2 (1980): 251-63.
- Mark: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.
- Youngquist, Paul. "The Mothership Connection." *Cultural Critique* 77 (2011): 1-23.
- Zehr, Howard. *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times*. Harrisonburg: Herald Press, 2015.

Index of Ancient Sources

JEWISH SCRIPTURES AND	7:16, 120	
QUMRAN		<i>IQHa</i>
<i>Exodus</i>	XI:9-23, 163n44	
9:16, 121		NEW TESTAMENT
10:20, 121		<i>Matthew</i>
14:23-28, 109n53		8:14-15, 94n11
14:27, 109n54		10:28, 86
15:1, 119		
15:4a, 109n53		<i>Mark</i>
<i>Joshua</i>		1:1-2, 62n67
3:13-14, 109		16:17-18, 162
<i>Psalms</i>		
113:3-6, 109		<i>Luke</i>
<i>Song of Songs</i>		12:5, 86
1:51, 20n55		<i>Acts</i>
<i>Isaiah</i>		2, 142, 176
2:3, 233		2:3, 161n38
<i>Daniel</i>		2:3-4, 161
2:13, 121		2:6, 162
<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>		10:46, 162
39:15-16, 237		19:6, 162
		<i>Romans</i>
		7, 49n22

9:17, 121
9:18, 119, 121

1 Corinthians

1:11, 155
1:26–29, 158
1–4, 157n22, 171n69, 176
2:1–5, 159
2:8, 155
5, 191
5:3–5, 191n141
5:4a, 191n141
5:5, 194n153
5:9, 155
6, 191
10:20–21, 171
11, 157n23, 157, 167, 176
11:1, 156n22, 181
11:4–6, 156n21
11:10, 157
11–14, 157n22, 171
12:4–6, 160
12:8–10, 156
12:10, 148, 160, 177,
202
12:13, 157n23
12:28, 175, 176, 180
12:28–31, 160
12–14, 161, 178
13, 180, 183
13:1, 40, 147, 160, 163n42, 175, 180, 181,
184
13:1b, 182
14, 176
14:2, 161
14:5, 148, 177
14:7–11, 175
14:11, 161
14:12, 162
14:13, 177
14:18, 177
14:18–19, 180
14:21, 178
14:22–23, 175
14:23, 177
14:26, 190
14:33a–36, 167
14:33b–35, 190
15:3, 59n60
16:22, 148n5, 192

2 Corinthians

5:4, 121
12:2–4, 161n36

Galatians

1:8–9, 35
3:1, 35
3:28, 157n23

Jude

4, 55n45

Revelation

20:4, 65
22:3, 58n55

OTHER ANCIENT SOURCES

Achilles Tatius

Leukippe and Klitophon
6.18.3, 162n41

Aelius Aristides

Or.
50.107–8, 60n61
Sacred Tales
1, 234n101

Aeschylus

Eum.
306, 229n82

Apollinaris of Laodikeia

Metaphrasis Psalmorum, 241n123

Apuleius

Apol.
66, 74n108

Aristides Quintilianus

De mus.
1.1, 224

De mus. (cont.)

- II.3–5, 238n116
- II.4, 222n57, 259
- II.6, 236n106, 252n168
- II.9, 242
- II.10, 242n129
- II.14, 236
- II.19, 223n3
- II.17, 236n106, 243n130
- III.8, 236n106

*Aristotle**Rhet.*

- 1404a22–24, 158
- 1406a, 57n53

*Augustine**De dialectica*

- 5–7, 229n85

*Caelius Aurelianus**De morbis acutis et chronicis*

- I.162–65, 174n79

*Cicero**De nat. deo.*

- 3.24, 229n85

De orat.

- 3.40–41, 160n29
- 3.137, 249n162

Inst.

- II.3.58, 206n10

Orat.

- 57, 206n10

Tusc. disp.

- 3.82, 70
- 3.82–83, 70n98
- 3.83, 70

*Clement of Alexandria**Paid.*

- 2.4, 237
- 2.4.44, 225–6n70, 225–6n71
- 3.15.2, 168n60
- 3.16, 225

Protr.

- I, 221n56, 230, 232, 239, 240, 241

- I.1–2.4, 229n85

Strom.

- 7.7.37, 225
- 7.7.37–38, 225
- 7.7.37–39, 225n70

Confession of (pseudo-) Cyprian

- 9, 116n83

*Dio Chrysostom**Or.*

- 12.52, 234n101
- 32, 226n71
- 32.61–62, 228
- 32.68, 206
- 33.38, 167n57
- 33.52, 168n60
- 57.1, 242

*Dionysius of Halicarnassus**De comp.*

- I, 165
 - 3, 165, 166
 - 6, 164
 - 11, 166
 - 14, 169, 170, 237n112
 - 16, 171
 - 37, 166
- Demosthenes*
- 54, 158n25

*Epictetus**Diss.*

- I, 72–3, 73n104
- 2.8, 5

*Epiphanius**Panarion*

- I.III.42, 178n93

*Euripides**Tro.*

- 764, 189n137

Eusebius*Hist. eccl.*

4.12, 79n121
9.2-3, 117n83

Galen*Aff. dig.* 35 73*De capt.*

2.90, 199
3, 200

Hippolytus*Refutatio*

4.28, 178n93

Homer*Il.*

1.473-4, 207n11
2.548, 244
3.189, 56n47
3.276-280, 246
6.186, 56n47
10, 244n137
14.214-217, 245
4.219-227, 234
4.221, 233

Od.

10.461, 56n49
11, 247n151
11.34-43, 246
11.39, 56n49
11.50, 246
11.51, 248
22.383-6, 193n148
23.15, 56n49

Iamblichus*De vit. Pythag.*

15 [65], 237, 241n127
15 [65-66], 223
15 [66], 242
16 [115], 253
18, 236n108
25 [110-111], 238
26, 253
29, 207
113, 234n102

De myst.

III.9, 138n110
VII.4, 138n28

Irenaeus*Adv. haer.*

26.9.6-9, 189n138

Jerome*Ep.*

22.30, 70n98
108.24.1, 185n119

Joannes Camaterus*De zodiaco*

1001, 108n50

John Chrysostom*Adv. Iud.*

1, 117, 226n71
8.6.5, 116
8.8.4, 116

Dav.

1.7, 122

Hom. in Act.

38, 30

Josephus*Bell. Iud.*

5.1.19, 64

Julius Africanus*Kest.*

7, 251n165
7.4, 251
7.16, 251
18, 245, 248,
252
18.15-18, 246
18.17, 247
18.18-20a, 247
18.19-20, 247n151
18.20b-21,
247
18.37, 248
18.43, 249

*Justin Martyr**1Apol.*

- 2.2, 38, 88
 8.4, 86n142
 17.4, 84
 18.1, 84
 18.3-4, 85
 18.3-6, 84
 19.8, 86
 23.3, 82
 26.2, 82
 26.4, 82
 31, 76n114
 35.9, 80
 48.3, 80
 54.6, 82
 56.1-2, 82
 58.3, 85
 62.2, 82
 64.1, 82
 64.1-5, 82
 68.3-5, 78
 69.1, 80
 69.2, 73

2Apol.

- 2.8, 87
 5.6, 83, 85
 14.1, 80, 88
 15.1, 82

Dial. Tryph.

- 16, 130-3276n115

*Justinian**Dig.*

- 1.16.9.2-5, 78n120

*Lactantius**Div. Inst.*

- 1.6, 30n89
 5.11.19, 76n113

Inst.

- 238c, 233n99

*Libanius**Or.*

- 29.9, 114n73
 45, 60n61
 54.42, 114n73

*“Longinus”**De subl.*

- 10.1, 197
 10.3, 165n50

*Lucian**Anacharsis*

- 27, 108n50

*Maximus of Tyre**Or.*

- 8.5-6, 56n46

*Menander**Ars Rhet.*

- 1.1-9, 217n42
 1.2.3-4, 227n76
 1.6, 227n76
 2.3.3, 229n83

Musonius Rufus

- 3.6, 174n82

Nichomachus

- Harmonikon Enchiridion*, 187n127

Oribasius

- 6.7-9, 172
 6.10, 173

*Origen**Contra Cels.*

- 1.23, 118n88
 1.24, 118n88
 1.6, 94n12
 2.49, 3n3
 4.33-34, 118
 4.34, 118n87
 5.45, 118n88,
 178n93
 7.9, 189n137
De princ.
 3.1.14, 120, 121

Hom. in Exod.

3.3, 120n90

Philocalia

27.3-9, 120n90

Ovid

Ibis, 6n15, 38n121

Pausanias

Descr.

10.5.6-8, 54n38

Philo

De vita contemp.

29, 236n107

Philostratus

Vit. soph.

1.1, 77n118

1.15, 77n118

1.16, 167n56

1.20, 167, 206

1.20-21, 168

1.47, 57n53

Pindar

Pyth.

3.64, 229n82

5.66-67, 230n88

Plato

Crat., 188, 199,

200

Phaedr.

258e-259e, 231n91

Resp.

377a, 227n76

397a, 221n55

523b, 239

Pliny

Nat. hist.

28.3, 27n74

28.5-6, 27n74

30.1, 26-7

30.4, 27

Plutarch

De aud., 2n2, 196n159

De def. or., 54n38

De gen. Soc., 56n46

De mus.

1131D, 221n55

6, 208n17

14, 228n79

15, 228n79

Mor.

130A-F, 174n78

165F-166A, 189n138

166B, 189n137

11, 189n137

Praec. gr. reip., 2n2, 196n160

Quaest. conviv.

3, 2n2, 196n160

Polemo

Physiog., 169

(Ps) Plutarch

De mus.

16, 233n100

17, 233n100

18, 233n99

22, 223n63

23, 223

Quintilian

Inst.

1.10.31-32, 206n9

8.pr.18-20, 173n74

11.3.57-60, 206n10

Pseudo-Clement

Recog.

8.29.3-4, 185n119

Seneca

Ep.

14.2, 73n104

40.2, 229n85

Suetonius

Aug.
31.1, 30n89

Supp. Mag.

I.23, 94n12
I.29, 118n88
I.31, 94
I.51, 93n6

Tacitus

Ann.
2.69, 30

Virgil

Ecl.
8.69, 5n11

Vitruvius

De arch.
5.1–3, 182n109

Zosimos of Panopolis

On the Letter Omega, 138n30

INSCRIPTIONS

**Audollent, Defixionum
Tabellae**

4 67n85
25 67n87 (= *IKourion* 130)
27 64 (= *IKourion* 130)
271 108n54

CIL III

12336, 81n129 (= *SIG* 11, 888, *IGRR* I 674)

IG

II, 2 9145 250n160
IX, 2 232 133n19

IGBulg IV

2236 81n129 (= *CIL* III 12336, *IGRR* I 674,
SIG 11, 888)

IKourion

127 51–3, 58–62
130 67n87 (= *Audollent* 25)
132 64 64 (= *Audollent* 27)

IMilet

943 130–1, *Figure I.1*, *Plate 11* (= *CIG*
2.2895)

IGPannonia

96 131–2, *Plate 12* (= *SEG* 29–1047)

SEG

2-479 113n72
4-263 55n45
26-1392 78n120

Supp. Epigr.

II.479 113n72
IV.263.13, 15, 55n45

PAPYRI

PGM I

42, 83

PGM II

53, 135n23

PGM IV

86–87, 83
94–135, 92
3007–3086, 109n54
3053–3055, 109n54

PGM V

70-95, 136n26
345, 112n66

PGM VII

396-404, 60n63

PGM X

24-35, 135
36-50, 136

PGM XIXa

1-54, 136
1-54:52, 136n25

PGM XX

1-4, 204
15-16, 244n137

PGM XXIIa

9-10, 244

PGM XXIII

see *P. Oxy.* 412

PGM XLIII

1-27, 136n26

PGM XLIV

1-18, 136n26

PGM XLVI

4, 60n63

P. Lond. lit.

239, 94n12

P. Oxy.

1786, 225n67
412, 245n139, 246n145,
250n162
LXXVI 5073, 62n67

P. Lips.

I 40.iii.20-21, 80n124

P. Yale

1.61, 52n33

Parisinus gr.

450, 79, 81

Index

- Acrocorinth, 1–3, 40, 147, 190, 192, 198, 264
- Adler, William, 251n165
- Aelius Aristides, 53, 226
- aesthēsis, aisthēseis, 17, 18, 238
- aesthetics, 15–16
- of Anglo-European portraiture, 44
 - Babylas curses literary, 106–8
 - biases of, 23
 - of Blackpentecostalism, 149
 - of coldness, 57, 113
 - colonialist, 266
 - contemporary prejudices and, 184
 - of curses, 7, 38, 48, 97, 106, 196, 199, 259, 262, 265, 266
 - of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 235
 - of display, 80
 - experimentation and, 42
 - experimentation of language and, 164–67
 - gendered, 202
 - glossolalia and, 176, 181–83
 - history of study of, 16–22
 - Homeric verse and, 220
 - of Iamblichus, 242
 - inclusion and, 211
 - justice and, 6, 50, 84, 89
 - of Justin's *Apologia*, 87
 - of Kongolese power figures, 44
 - of language, 190, 201, 202
 - of lead, 90
 - of letters, 172
 - of lower status voices, 263
 - the material turn and, 210
 - of the nailed curse tablet, 88
 - philological, 15
 - racialized, 22, 38, 202
 - range of scholarly approaches to, 16–22
 - ranking of *charismata* and, 175
 - redefining, 15–22
 - repetition and, 126
 - rethinking of, 13–14
 - of ritual objects, 7, 190
 - of ritual engagement, 146
 - of ritual texts, 5
 - of simile, 31
 - social approaches to, 15
 - of song, 129, 224, 229
 - of sound, 174, 184–86
 - of speech, 176
 - of speech and writing, 164–66
 - study of in Classics, 20–21
 - theological ideas and, 41
 - of tongues, 177, 199
 - of translation of 1 Corinthians, 181–83
 - of ugliness, 170–71, 172
 - use of shapes and, 136
 - voces magicae* (magical voices) and, 188
 - of voice, 164, 185
- affect, 47, 47n16
- Ahmed, Sara, 71–72, 71n99
- Alexander, Michelle, 48n21
- Alexandria
- commentarial tradition in, 208
 - invective against, 205, 228
 - scribal work in, 243n133
- alterity, 4, 9, 24
- Amathous curses, 51–69
- archaeological data, 63–67

- as assemblage, 65–66, 81
 concern for justice in, 53
 Homeric terminology in, 55–57
 invocation of *daimones* in, 55–57, 60–62
 justice and, 63, 67–69
 Justin's *Apologia* and, 87
 legal aspects of, 54–55, 59–60
 materiality of, 52–53
 poetic sounds of, 57–59
 poetry of, 60–62
 as public work of legal display, 66–67
 as work of ritual specialists, 53–54
- Amos, Emma, 14–15, 22
- Amphion, 227–29, 239
- amulets, 33–34, 36, 37, 39, 130, 141. *See also* Miletos inscription; gem, gemstones
 aesthetics of, 262
 assemblage and, 264
 Chrysostom's criticism of, 123
 convergence of materiality and sound and, 129
 and fever, 94, 115, 117
 inscribed, 134, 137
 John Chrysostom's criticism of, 115–16, 117
 medicinal, 4
 as source of theological-philosophical data, 262
- Anankē, 1, 195
- Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power, 33
- anger, 52, 56–57, 60, 61, 75, 88, 122–23, 135
- Antioch, 8, 82, 104, 112, 114–15, 117. *See also* John Chrysostom
 House of Gē, 112
 House of the Boat of the Psyches, 112
 House of the Calendar, 63, 104, 113
- apokatastasis, 121
- Apuleius, 74
- Aquincum gemstone, 131–32
- archangels, 136–37
 invocation of, 130–31, 133–34
- archival practices, 78, 87, 89, 128, 264
- Arendt, Hannah, 40n122
- Arion of Methymna, 227
- Aristides Quintilianus, 40, 221n57, 222, 223n63, 224, 235, 238n116, 242n129, 242, 252n168, 256, 259
- Ariston, 51–52, 54, 57, 123, 135
- Aristophanes, 33, 129, 203–4, 208, 209, 212, 217, 247, 259
- Aristotle, 164
 aesthetics and, 16–17, 113
 harmonia and, 223
 rhetoric and, 158
 taxonomy of language, 200
 voice and, 158, 164
- assemblages, 46–48, 266
 aesthetics of justice and, 89
 Alexander Weheliye and, 215–16, 254, 258
- Amathous curses and, 66
- archival practices and, 78, 264
- critique of injustice and, 47–51
- curses as, 5, 33, 48
- Jasbir Puar and, 47
- Justin's *Apologia* as, 78–81, 87
- ritual objects and, 41
- Association for Cultural Equity, 219
- Audollent, A., 33, 54
- Austin, J. L., 33, 108
- Azusa Street, 148, 150, 202
- Babylas curses, 103–14
 coldness of lead and, 114–15
historiola of Pharaoh and, 118–22
 justice and, 123, 125
 literary aesthetics of, 106–8
 poetics of, 124
 use of *historiola* in, 108–10
- Bailliot, Magali, 31
- Baldwin, James, 101–2, 143
- Bar Kochba revolt, 76
- Barad, Karen, 11, 47n16
- Barker, Andrew, 230n89
- Baths of Trajan, 81
- Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb, 17n36, 17, 18
- Bennett, Jane, 11
- Berlin, Irving, 143, 255
- Betz, Hans Dieter, 33, 135, 261
- binding spells, 26, 32, 73, 108, 123, 229.
See also curse tablets
 Babylas curses as, 108
- Blackpentecostalism, 141
 aesthetics of, 149
- Bohak, Gideon, 34
- Brakke, David, 95–96
- breath, 40, 138–39, 150–55, 158–59, 164, 202, 241–42, 254, 267. *See also* music; *pneuma*; voice

- breath (cont.)
 in 1 Corinthians, 171, 201
 incantation and, 10, 256
 vowels and, 169–70, 199
 Brélaz, Cédric, 50n26
 Bryen, Ari, 52n33, 59n60, 72, 79, 84n133, 84
 Building of the Tablets (Corinth), 192, 198
 Butler, Connie, 97
 Butler, Judith, 11
 Butler, Shane, 184, 210n22, 217, 253
 Byron, George Gordon (Lord), 18
- Campt, Tina, 9n17, 11
 canon, 35, 95
 Carson, Anne, 41
 Casselberry, Judith, 209n19, 238n114
 Certeau, Michel de, 161n37
charaktères (signs), 6, 32, 39, 62, 93–94, 129, 131, 133–35, 136, 141–42, 186, 191, 196, 201, 204
charismata, 156, 158, 160, 175, 176–77, 180, 182
 Chireau, Yvonne P., 256n181
Chronographiae (Julius Africanus), 245
 Chuh, Kandice, 6, 13
 cicadas, 146, 228–32
 Clark, Elizabeth, 120
 the Classics, 15, 18, 20–22, 202, 220
 Clement of Alexandria, 3, 8, 40, 130, 137, 203, 215, 224–35, 259, 263. *See also* *Protreptikos* (Clement)
 on apotropaic power of song, 240–41
 on daimonic influence in music, 240
 Collins, Derek, 34, 244, 244n137
 Corinthians, First, 155–64
 aesthetic prejudice against glossolalia in, 181–83
charismata in, 156, 158, 160, 175, 176–77, 180, 182
 curses in, 191
 daimones in, 171
 experimentations with *pneuma*, 158
 gendered view of speech in, 168
 glossolalia and, 141, 175–76, 188
 kinds of tongues and, 160–64
 language play and, 198
 perfection in, 224, 232
pneuma in, 171–72, 201
 rhetoric of, 156–60, 182–83
 sound in, 190
 spirit and, 157–60
 tongues and, 150, 176–78, 180–81, 184, 186, 190, 198–99
 wisdom and, 155–56, 157
 women in, 157, 162, 167, 176, 190–91
 Cosgrove, Charles H., 225n67
 Council of Laodikeia, 54
 Cox Miller, Patricia, 27n76, 110, 176, 188, 188n131, 201, 210–11
Cratylus (Plato), 188, 197, 199–200
 Crawley, Ashon, 9–10, 11n22, 141–42, 148, 149–50
 creeds, as *historiolae*, 94
 Criboire, Raffaella, 212n27
 critical theory, 12–13, 46
 crucifixion, 64n75, 64–65, 66, 77, 159
 curse tablets, 13, 31–32, 39–40, 49, 52, 64.
See also Babylos curses
 Acrocorinth, 147, 192
 aesthetics of, 196, 199, 259, 262, 266
 Amathous, 65–66
charaktères and, 201
 Corinthian, 150, 192–97, 198
daimones and, 71, 240
 incantation and, 128, 190
 justice and, 7, 8, 33, 34, 51, 53, 65, 126, 194, 266
 lead, 128
 materiality of, 124, 262
 nailed, 31, 38, 88, 128, 192
 poetic repetition in, 212
 poetics of, 262
 as prayers for justice, 54
 story and, 90–91
 technology of, 91, 254
voces magicae (magical voices) and, 198, 200
 curses, 10, 23, 31, 32, 35–36, 53–54, 113, 125, 141, 196, 201, 209, 262
 in 1 Corinthians, 192
 as aesthetic assemblages, 33
 aesthetic strategies of, 262
 aesthetics of, 7, 15–16, 38, 48, 97, 265
 assemblages and, 5, 47
 authority of story and, 91
 concern for justice, 50–51
 constructed categories of, 36–38
 convergence of materiality and sound and, 129
 as enactment of justice, 10
 as exercise of political power, 69–70

- feminization of, 4
 graves as depositories of, 63–65, 112
 Homeric verse in, 243–45
 as improvisational attempts at justice, 88
 judicial, 70
 justice and, 38
 legal, 24n64, 54–55
 legal power and, 88
 literary aesthetic of, 106
 materiality of, 5, 90, 114–15, 262
 otherwise possibilities and, 69
 performative force of, 97
 as philosophical-theological objects, 5
 as political, 6
 power of substance and, 91
 as prayers for justice, 88
 as private and minor, 23–25
 as ritual objects, 3, 8, 123
 social history of ancient Christianity and, 2–3, 33, 146, 261
 as source of theological-philosophical data, 262
 as speech act, 32
 stories and, 33
 as technologies for managing emotions, 70–72
 technology of, 7, 28, 124
 theorization of, 6–7
vores magicae (magical voices) and, 191
- daimnes, 55n46
daimones, 5, 9n16, 24n65, 38, 47, 55, 60, 61, 63n67, 69, 75, 83, 118, 134, 136, 150, 212, 215, 257, 267
 in 1 Corinthians, 171
 Amathous curses and, 55–57, 60–62, 87
 in curse tablets, 71
 defining, 9
 incantation and, 239–42
 justice and, 60, 82–87, 88, 89, 267
 Justin's *Apologia* and, 82–87
- Day, Keri, 9n17, 148, 149, 202, 263
De anima (Aristotle), 17
 De Bruyn, Theodor, 34, 62n67
 de Certeau, Michel, 148, 149, 161, 188
 de Jonge, Caspar, 164n46
De musica (Aristides Quintilianus), 222, 223, 235, 242, 259
De musica (Philodemus), 222
De musica (Plutarch), 206, 222, 223
 defigure, 31
- defixio, defixiones. *See* curses
 Defixionum Tabellae (Audollent), 33
 deities and divinities (Greco-Roman, Egyptian)
 Abrasax, 94
 Aphrodite, 52n33, 169n63, 243n130, 243, 245
 Apollo, 81, 130, 136, 162, 207, 231–32
 Asklepios, 53
 chthonic Hermes, 1, 60, 194
 Demeter, 147, 192n144, 192, 194n150, 198, 264
 Fates (Erinyes), 1–2, 52, 193, 194
 Gaia, 105
 Hades (Pluto), 52, 204n4, 246
 Hekate, 52, 93, 104, 123
 Herakles, 93–94, 96, 123
 Hermes, 27n76, 52, 137, 193, 194n152
 Iaō, 37, 52, 61, 93, 107–8, 135
 Isis, 37, 93
 Kore (Persephone), 147, 192n144, 192, 194n150, 198, 264
 Osiris, 93
 Zeus, 72, 82, 234, 248
- Deleuze, Gilles, 180, 254
 Denecker, Tim, 185n119, 185
 Denzey, Nicola, 6n15
 Derbew, Sarah, 20
 The Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul's Passions (Galen), 73
 Dio Chrysostom, 206, 228, 242
 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 40, 140, 158, 164–66, 169–71, 201, 219, 220, 235, 263
 sonic experimentation and, 138
- Dunbar, Paul, 143–46
- Ecclesiastical History. *See* Eusebius
 Edmonds, Radcliffe, 4
 Eidinow, Esther, 25, 185
 Eighth Book of Moses, 176
ekklēsia, 112, 147, 155–56, 158, 164, 167, 176, 232
 Ellis, JJJJerome, 147, 149, 179
 Ellison, Ralph, 12, 39, 97–101, 126, 215
 emotions, 17, 57, 69, 73–74, 89, 122, 135, 197–98, 235, 238–39, 264
 antique philosophical-theological discourses and, 71–72
 curses as technology for managing, 70–72
 politics and, 71–72

- emotions (cont.)
 Stoic taxonomy of, 70
- enslavement
 and 1 Corinthians, 147, 155–56, 158, 184
 and Princeton University, 39, 43–44, 265
- Ephesia grammatai, 135
- Epictetus, 5, 59, 72, 74, 86
 on political fear, 72–73
- Eunomos, 230–33, 240
- Eurell, John Christian, 181n104
- Eusebius, 26n73, 79, 79n120, 226n74
- Exhortation to the Greeks. *See Proteptikos* (Clement)
- Faraone, Christopher, 3n4, 29, 34, 56n47, 57n51, 124, 137, 209n17, 234n101, 235, 244, 247
- Favorinus, 167–69, 175, 199, 226
- fear, 225
 feminist approaches to, 71
 in Justin's *Apologia*, 86
 political, 70–73, 74
- feminist theory
 assemblages and, 47
 fear and, 71
 hermeneutics and, 41, 261
 historical data and, 191
 materialist theory and, 11
 rhetorical strategies of 1 Corinthians and, 157
- fetish, 44n4
- Forbes, Christopher, 162n41
- Formisano, Marco, 22n60
- Foucault, Michel, 11
- Frankfurter, David, 4–5, 4n7, 25, 31n92, 34, 96, 185, 262
- Fraser, James, 28
- Gager, John, 23, 26n72, 26, 33, 54n42, 54, 261
- Galen, 73–74, 198–201, 199n169, 245
- Gangloff, Anne, 208n17, 243n131
- gem, gemstones, 93–94, 118, 131–34, 139–40, 187, 264. *See also* amulets
- gender. 167n56. *See also* women
 aesthetics and, 172n74, 202
 construction of, 28
 deviance, 199
 instability of in antiquity, 156n20
 management of, 165
 norms, 15
 performance, 156n21, 168n60
 song criticism and, 228–29
 views of speech and, 166–68, 174–75
 voice and, 167
- Glancy, Jennifer, 44n3
- Gleason, Maud, 167n57, 168n61
- glossolalia, 39, 128, 140–42
 in 1 Corinthians, 176
 aesthetic criticism of, 176–79, 181–83, 202
 aesthetics of, 176, 177
 anxiety about, 180
 as enhanced form of language, 188
 as justice seeking, 40
 language norms and, 189–90
 materiality of, 149
 otherwise possibilities and, 141
pneuma and, 180
 questions of authority and, 175–76
 sign and, 149–50
vores magicæ (magical voices) and, 198
 women's speech and, 175–76
- glossopoeisis, 148
- Gordley, Matthew, 216n40
- Gordon, Richard, 25, 36, 113, 187n130
- Gospel Imagination, 213, 215, 227
- Gospel of the Egyptians, 137
- graves, as depository for curses, 63–65, 112
- Gurd, Sean, 184, 217
- Hagia Sophia, 185, 217
- Haley, Shelley, 20
- hamartia*, 200, 201
- Harkness, Nicholas, 140–42, 149, 188, 188n135
- harmonia*, 223–24
- Harris, William, 182n109
- health, healing, 26–27, 129, 222, 234, 236–37, 251. *See also pharmakon*
- magic and, 115–17
 music and, 207
 ritual practice and, 244
 song and, 235–39
 spiritual, 117
 vocal exercises and, 172–74
- hermeneutics
 feminist, 41, 261
 womanist, 41
- Hesiod, 207–8, 238
- historical Jesus, quest for, 20
- historiography, ethical, 3, 7, 262–63
- historiola*, 91–97

- as act of signifying, 96
 authority of curses and, 93
 Babylas curses and, 108–10
 in Chrysostom's sermons, 123
 Chrysostom's view of, 121–23
 creeds as series of, 94
 in images, 93
 as instantiation of myth, 96
 of Lazarus, 116–17
 as material products, 96
 materialization of, 117
 of Pharaoh, 118–22
 scriptural practices and, 95
 Untitled (I am an invisible man) and,
 97–103
 visual, 123
 Hölderlin, Friedrich, 18
 Hollmann, Alexander, 108
 Homer, 16, 33, 56, 129, 165–66, 170–71,
 207, 211, 220, 233–36, 238, 249, 258,
 265
 Homeromanteia, 243

 Iamblichus, 40, 137, 185, 207–8, 223, 234,
 236–39, 241, 253
 Iennys, 204, 207, 208, 224, 259, 264
 Ikeuchi, Suma, 231n91
 incantation, 4, 39–40, 205, 212, 216, 218,
 248, 256, 258, 264. *See also* song
 Aramaic bowls, 37
 centrality of in cultic life, 208
 Clement of Alexandria and, 239
 curse tablets and, 128, 190
 gendered interpretation of, 168
 hexametrical, 235
 historical reconstruction of, 218
 Homeric, 8, 209, 212, 227, 235, 242–52,
 254, 256, 259
 John Chrysostom on, 115
 justice and, 218, 258, 262, 267
 materiality of, 13
 music and, 226
 perfect, 204, 209–10, 224, 232, 259, 264
 as pharmakon, 207
 power and, 142, 203
 problems of historical reconstruction of,
 219
 Pythagorean, 236, 238
 repetition of, 221
 sound of, 5, 10
 stuttering and, 179
 technology of, 254
 tongues and, 184
 vamp and, 215
 vores magicæ (magical voices) and, 198
 voice and, 208
Invisible Man (Ellison), 39, 97–101, 129
 scripturalization of, 126

 Jayne-Graham, Emma, 6n15
 Jennings, Willie, 14, 16n31
 Jerusalem, 40, 64, 76, 161, 203, 209, 212,
 232, 244, 259, 264
 Jess, Tyehimba, 12, 40, 142–46, 254–58
 John Chrysostom, 3, 8, 39, 115, 125
 criticism of magic, 115–17
 finding a magical book, 30
 on *historiola*, 121–23
 historiola in sermons of, 123
 Jones, Brice, 34
 Joplin, Scott, 142–43, 255
 Jordan, David, 34, 57n53
 Josephus, 64
 Julius Africanus, 40, 217, 245–52, 256
 justice, 48–51
 aesthetics of, 6, 50, 84, 89
 Amathous curses and, 53, 63, 67–69
 Babylas curses and, 123, 125
 curse tablets and, 7, 8, 33, 35, 53, 65,
 126, 194, 266
 curse tablets as prayers for, 54
 curses and, 10, 38
 curses as prayers for, 88
 daimones and, 82–87, 89, 267
 discourse of in antiquity, 49–50
 divine, 119
 ethical historiography and, 7
 Fates and, 1–2, 193, 194
 glossolalia and, 40
 incantation and, 218, 258, 267
 in Justin's *Apologia*, 77, 82–87, 128
 music and, 216
 prayers for, 13, 35, 55n43, 67n85n84,
 114, 194n149
 restorative, 48–49
 rituals as means of effecting, 126
 story and, 127
 Justin Martyr, 75, 83
 aesthetic of justice in *Apologia*, 84
 Amathous curses and, 87
 Apologia, 49, 75–82, 87, 89, 128, 261
 Apologia as aesthetic display, 80

- Justin Martyr (cont.)
 Apologia as akin to *minkisi minkondi*, 86
Apologia as assemblage, 78–81, 87
Apologia as petition, 79–81, 84, 87
daimones and, 82–87
 as inventor of heresy, 76
- Kalleres, Dayna, 116
- Kaphar, Titus, 12, 43–48, 88, 265. *See also*
To Be Sold (Kaphar)
- Karpimē Babbia, 1–2, 8, 13, 25, 31, 147,
 192–96, 198–99, 200, 263
katadesmoi, 31, 73, 240
- Keats, John, 18
- Kestoi* (Julius Africanus), 217, 245–52
 musical notation in, 250–51
 philosophical-theological perspective of,
 252
- Klein, William, 182n109
- Konstan, David, 165n50, 172n74
- Kotansky, Roy, 33
- Kritios Boy, 15
- Kyrilla, 8, 204, 207, 208, 224, 259, 264
- Lamont, Jessica, 32n97, 34, 113, 124,
 204n4, 262
- language
 aesthetics of, 201, 202
 ambiguities of, 199, 200
 ancient theories of, 191, 197
 experimental aesthetics and, 164–67
- Lanni, Adriaan, 48, 49
- law. *See also* justice; *nomos*
 of the cicada, 230
 as gift of the Spirit, 178n93
 legal action and, 37
 legal archives and, 78–81, 87, 264
 legal argument and, 38
 legal curses and, 54–55, 59–60
 legal documents and, 52–53
 of Moses, 233
 public legal display and, 66–67
 Roman, 29, 29n85, 48–51, 69–70, 71,
 88, 262
 violence of, 153
- lead, 1, 32, 42, 52, 53, 66, 82, 105, 113,
 114–15, 125, 128, 193, 212
- leadbelly* (Jess), 255
- Ledbetter, Huddie, 255
- LeVen, Pauline, 184, 190, 217, 231n91, 231
- Levitical song, 232–33, 235, 242, 259, 260
- Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis, 29
- Life of the Pythagoreans* (Iamblichus), 40,
 234, 236, 253
 Christian influences on, 237
- Ligon, Glenn, 12, 39, 97–103, 126. *See also*
Untitled (I am an invisible man) (Ligon)
- Lives of the Sophists (Philostratus), 205
- Logos, 8, 225, 227, 232, 233, 234, 240–41,
 244, 256–59
- Lomax, John and Alan, 219–21, 255
- Lord, Albert, 220
- Loveless, Natalie, 11
- magic
 alterity and, 4, 9, 24
 ancient polemic against, 26–27
 in Antioch, 117
 compartmentalization of study of, 3
 developments in scholarly understanding
 of, 25–26
 as deviant, 4, 9
 disenfranchisement and, 27–28
 as distinct from religion, 27–29
 feminization of, 28
 health care and, 115–17
 Homeric verse and, 243
 justice and, 25
 in Justin's *Apologia*, 86
 masculinized sounds and, 169
 as prayers for justice, 13
 and Roman law, 29, 68
 as secret, 24–25
 view of as dangerous, 29–30
- Maillot, Aristide, 14
- Malinowski, Bronislaw, 28
- Manekin-Bamberger, Avigail, 24n65, 37
- Marchal, Joseph, 168
- Marco Simón, Francisco, 68n87
- Martin, Lerone, 91
- material turn, the, 11, 210
- materiality, 10, 124
 of Amathous curses, 52–53
 of curse tablets, 262
 of curses, 5, 90, 114–15, 124, 128, 262
 glossolalia and, 149
 of song, 214
 of sound, 130–42, 146
 sound and, 129–30
 theories of, 11, 47n16
 of *Untitled (I am an invisible man)*
 (Ligon), 100–2

- Matthews, Lydia, 67n85
 Maximus of Tyre, 56n46
 Maynard, Valerie, 46
 Menander Rhetor, 217n42, 227n76, 229, 230n85
 Meyer, Birgit, 17
 Meyer, Elizabeth A., 69n92
 Middleton, Francesca, 245n139, 247n151
 Miletos inscription, 130–42
 amulets and, 132, 133
 materiality of sound in, 130–33
 spell recipes and, 134–37
minkisi minkondi, 44–46, 45n10, 86, 88
mousikē, 222, 222n58, 224, 228, 238
 Murray, Penelope, 222
 music. *See also De musica* (Aristides Quintilianus); *De musica* (Philodemus); *De musica* (Plutarch); *Protreptikos* (Clement) song; sound; voice
 as apotropaic, 241
 Black Church, 212
 of cicadas, 231
 daimonic influence on, 240
 folk, 220
 Greek cosmology and, 223
 harmony and, 224
 health and, 207
 in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 166
 justice and, 215–16
 magical qualities of, 187, 229
 as medical treatment, 238
 power of, 174
 theology and, 254
 as therapy, 238
 Musonius Rufus, 174n82, 174

 nails, 31n93, 39, 43, 44n3, 46, 48, 66, 81, 86, 87–88, 190, 263–64, 266
 Necessity. *See* Anankē
 Neoplatonism, 163n43, 225n67, 252n170
 Newsom, Carol, 163n42
 Ngai, Sianne, 13n25
nomos, 230, 232–33
 Nooter, Sarah, 184

 oaths, 24n65, 37, 45, 67n84, 115
 “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (Keats), 18
Odyssey, 233–34, 235, 250
 “On Fallacies Due to Language” (Galen), 199
On composition (Dionysius of Halicarnassus), 164–66, 169–71, 199

 On the Study of Greek Poetry (Shlegel), 20
 Origen, 118
 Contra Celsum, 118
 on *historiola* of Pharaoh, 120–21
 Orpheus, 227–29, 232, 239
 otherwise possibilities, 9–10, 16, 69, 142, 146, 263
 ekklēsia as, 164
 glossolalia and, 141

Paidagagos (Clement), 225–26
paideia, 77, 84, 172, 215, 222, 243
 palindromes, 187
 Papyri Graecae Magicae, 33, 83, 85n139, 246n149
 Parchman Farm, 219
 Parry, Milman, 220
 Patel, Shaily Shashikant, 30n91
pathē. *See* emotions
 Patterson, Bishop G. E., 254
 Paul. *See* Corinthians, First
 Pentcheva, Bissera, 185, 217
 Pentecostalism, 148, 149. *See also* Blackpentecostalism
 in Brazil, 173n76
 in Japan, 231n91
 Peters, Janelle, 163n44
 petition, 50, 80n125
 Justin’s *Apologia* and, 79–81, 84, 87
Phaedrus (Plato), 231
pharmakon, *pharmaka*, 25, 27, 83, 207, 232–35, 237, 242, 258, 264, 267
 Philip, M. NourbeSe, 12, 40, 151–55, 177, 179, 201
 “Discourse on the Logic of Language”, 151–55
 Philo, 226n72, 243n133
 philosophy
 of language, 199
 political, 74
 religion and, 23
 theology and, 5, 27, 39, 203
 as *therapeia*, 74–75
 Philostratus, 77n117, 167–69
phōnē, 173, 174, 207, 210, 221, 231. *See also* language; voice
Physiognomy (Polemo), 169
 Pinn, Anthony, 11, 11n20, 14n27, 265
 plague, Egyptian, 92, 109–10
 Plato, 188, 197, 199–200, 211, 223, 231
 Pliny, polemic against magic, 26–27

- pneuma*, 155, 164, 171. *See also* breath
 in 1 Corinthians, 172,
 glossolalia and, 180
 in medical literature, 171–72
 Stoic view of, 171
 voice and, 173–74
- poetics, 2, 7. *See also* verse, Homeric
 of Babylas curses, 124
 of binding, 108
 of charaktêres, 197
 of curse tablets, 35, 57, 126, 262
 documentary, 153
 as history, 146
 magic and, 185
 of magical formulas, 13, 123, 124, 193
 of relation, 258
 of ritual objects, 123–26
 stress-based, 131
voces magicae (magical voices) and, 187
- poikilia*, 210, 224, 252
- poison. *See pharmakon, pharmaka*
- Polemo, 167–69
- poluandrioi* (mass graves), 64
- Porter, James I., 21, 215–17, 471–15, 158,
 159–29, 164, 166, 185, 198, 259
- power figures. *See minkisi minkondi*
- Preisendanz, K.. *See Papyri Graecae
 Magicae*
- prisons, 59, 60–61, 72, 73
- Pritchard, E. E. Evans, 28
- protreptic, 203
- Protreptikos* (Clement), 40, 215, 216, 221,
 224, 226–27, 229–30, 232–33, 239,
 242, 258, 259, 260
- Puar, Jasbir, 471–16, 47
- punishment, 49, 51, 73, 84, 86
- Pythagoras, 185, 207, 223, 236–37,
 241–42, 253–54, 264
- queer theory, 47, 71
- in antiquity, 20
- race
 as barred subject, 151–17
 Blackness and, 122–22, 97–103
 colonialism and, 12, 103
 critical theory and, 12–13, 190
 racism and, 10, 153, 202
 racist aesthetic and, 22
 racist politics and, 99
 in translation, 205–5
- white supremacy and, 9, 16, 20, 215
- Rancière, Jacques, 17
- recipes, spell, 32, 134–37
- Reed, Annette Yoshiko, 163–42
- religion, study of, 361–15
- reparative historiography and Black art,
 12–14
- repetition, 19, 87, 103, 110, 132, 187,
 194–95, 204, 209, 211, 212, 213, 215,
 218, 232, 254, 258, 260
 as aesthetic strategy, 126
 vamp and, 214
- rescripts, 38, 75–82, 81–128, 87, 88, 89,
 179, 264
- research-creations, 22, 155, 266
- rhapsodes, rhapsodists, 224, 226, 243, 252
- Richlin, Amy, 191
- ritual objects
 aesthetics of, 7, 190
 ancient Christian literature and, 8
 as assemblages, 41
 magic as, 26
 otherwise possibilities and, 9–10
 poetics of, 123–26
 technology of, 253
- ritual texts, 31, 32, 57, 61, 212
- language of, 4–5
- Rivera, Mayra, 125
- Sacred Tales* (Aelius Aristides), 53
- Salvo, Irene, 67–85
- Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth,
 147, 192, 198, 264
- Sanzo, Joseph, 34, 94
- Sappho, 197–98
- Schäfer, Peter, 163–43
- Schlegel, Friedrich, 20
- scriptural practices, 95–96
- scripturalization, 95, 212
- Invisible Man* in Ligon as, 99
- Second Sophistic, 56, 76, 211, 215, 226,
 235, 243
- shape poems, 140, 255
- Sharpe, Christina, 13, 119
- Shaw, Brent, 50–27, 50–51
- Shaw, Gregory, 101–19
- Shelley, Braxton, 40, 212–19, 213–30, 227,
 254, 258
- similia similibus* formula, 31, 92
- Smallwood, Richard, 212
- Smith, Morton, 35

- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, 95
- song, 205–11
 aesthetic power of, 212
 aesthetics of, 129, 224, 229
 ancient theorization of, 221–24
 blurred boundary with speech, 205, 214
 as divine, 206
 as feminine, 206
 gendered criticism of, 228–29
 healing and medicinal properties of, 235–39
 Homeric epic and, 220
 as interventions of power, 215
 materiality of, 214
 mocking of, 205
 the new, 221, 225, 227, 233, 240, 244, 258
 persuasiveness of, 234
 as ritually powerful, 206
- sonic experimentation, 137–39
- Soranus, 174
- Sotērianos, 8, 55, 57, 59–62, 65, 75, 85, 208, 263–64
- sound
 aesthetic prejudice and, 184–86
 ancient Mediterranean religion and, 8
 ancient theories of, 191
 of Babylonian curses, 110
 of curses, 124
 masculinized, 169
 materiality of, 129–42, 146
 Pythagorean speculation and, 137
 racialization of, 148
 study of in antiquity, 184–86
 technology of, 215–16
- speech
 aesthetics of, 164–66, 176
 ancient theories of, 191
 blurred boundary with song, 205, 214
 gendered views of, 167–68, 174–75
- spirit. *See* Corinthians, First: spirit and; *pneuma*
- spirit possession, 159n27, 171, 171n69, 172
- Steinke, Darcey, 179
- Sterne, Jonathan, 218n43
- Stoicism. *See* emotions; *pneuma*
- story. *See also* *historiola*
 history-writing and, 127
 justice and, 127
- Stout, Renée, 46
- Stowers, Stanley, 36n114
- “Stranger in the Village” (Baldwin), 101–2
- Stratton, Kimberly, 28
- Stromata* (Clement), 225
- Stroud, Ronald, 194n150, 195n155
- stutter, 179–80
- Tacitus, 30, 31, 68
- technē*, 5, 7, 82, 215, 253
- technology
 of curses, 7, 28, 124
 of incantation, 254
 music and, 215
 Pythagoras and, 242, 253–54
 religion as, 11
 of ritual objects, 253
 of sound, 215–16
 vamp as, 258
 vowel-based, 136
- Temple of Apollo, 81
- theodicy
 Amathous curses and, 89
historiola of Pharaoh and, 119–20
- theology
 philosophy and, 5, 27, 39, 203
- theorization of materiality and sound and
 Black art, 10–14
- theurgy, 252
- Thiselton, Anthony, 183n113
- thumokatochon, 135–36
- To Be Sold* (Kaphar), 39, 43–48, 87
 Amathous curses and, 66
 assemblage and, 81
- tongues, 141, 148, 151–55, 160–64, 175, 179, 190, 198, 199, 201, 202, 264
- Tovar, Sofía Torallas, 29
- Tupamahu, Ekaputra, 178
- Tusculan disputations (Cicero), 70
- Ulpian, 75–76
- Untitled (I am an invisible man) (Ligon), 97–103, 129
 materiality of, 100–2
- vamp, 40, 212–19, 254, 258
 ancient incantatory practice and, 213
 as tuning up, 214, 218, 227, 232
- Van der Horst, Pieter, 91
- Verrips, Jojada, 17
- verse, Homeric, 15, 56, 165, 208, 212, 217, 220, 235, 242, 243–45, 258
 in Amathous curses, 55–57

- Versnel, Henk, 13, 25, 34, 54, 55n43, 114,
123, 124, 150n16, 185, 193n149, 262
vocal exercises
 ritual practice and, 172–74
 therapeutic value of, 172–74
voces magicae (magical voices), 1, 6, 10, 32,
 40, 58–59, 62, 107, 128, 129, 136,
 142, 147–49, 155, 186, 190, 191–92,
 195, 196, 198, 200–2, 204, 248, 264
 aesthetic strategies of, 187
 authority of, 188
 glossolalia and, 198
 poetics of, 187
voice, 8, 129, 146, 158, 159, 164, 166,
 173–74, 200, 221, 256. *See also* breath
 aesthetics and, 164
 angelic, 164
 divine, 261
 gendered view of, 167
 Homeric verse and, 220
 incantation and, 208
 as music to the gods, 206
 pneuma and, 173–74
 vamp and, 214
 word and, 185
vowels, 169
 material shaping of, 136–37
 sonic experiment with, 137–39
- Walcott, Derek, 125
- Wallace, Robert, 233n99
- Washington, Booker T., 143–46
- Weheliye, Alexander, 215–16, 215n38,
 253–54, 258
- wells, 112–13, 134
- Wendt, Heidi, 83n131, 84n135
- “Western” thought, 6, 21n57, 21,
 150
- Whitmarsh, Tim, 132–33
- Wilburn, Andrew, 29n85, 34, 35n110,
 52n33, 53n36, 56n49, 64n73, 64,
 66n80, 67n84, 68, 89n148, 112
- Williams, Sylvia, 45n10
- Wilson, Peter, 222, 234
- Wimbush, Vincent, 95–96, 177, 179
- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, 18–20
- Winkler, John, 19n41, 23n63, 23, 24,
 26n73, 28
- Wire, Antoinette Clark, 157
- wisdom, in 1 Corinthians, 155–56, 157,
 159, 182
- women
 characterization of as witches, 28
 in 1 Corinthians, 156n21, 162, 167, 176,
 190–91
 veiling of, 157–58, 199
- writing, aesthetics of, 164–66
- Wynter, Sylvia, 13
- Zehr, Howard, 48



Plate 1 Emma Amos. *Measuring, Measuring*. 1995. 213.4 × 177.8 cm. Acrylic on linen canvas, Kente fragment, batiked hand swatches, African strip woven borders, and laser-transfer photographs. © Emma Amos, Collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art, AL. Courtesy RYAN LEE Gallery, New York.



Plate 2 Titus Kaphar. *To Be Sold*, 2018. Oil on canvas with rusted nails. American, born 1976. Princeton University Art Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund. © Titus Kaphar



Plate 3 Power Figure (Nkisi N'kondi). Nineteenth to early twentieth century. Wood with iron, cloth, mirror, leopard tooth, fiber, and porcelain. $45.7 \times 20.3 \times 8.9$ cm. Yale University Art Gallery 2006.51.246.



Plate 4 Side view of Renée Stout. *Fetish #1*. 1987. Monkey hair, nails, beads, cowrie shells, and coins. $30.8 \times 8.89 \times 8.57$ cm. Dallas Museum of Art 1989.128. Photo: Dallas Museum of Art.



Plate 5 Renée Stout, *Fetish # 2*, 1988. 64 in. (1 m 62.56 cm). Mixed media. Dallas Museum of Art, Metropolitan Life Foundation Purchase Grant, 1989.27. © Renée Stout, Washington, D.C. Photo: Dallas Museum of Art.



Plate 6 Valerie Maynard. *Mourning for Maurice*, ca. 1970. Wood and nails. 28 × 20 × 24 in. (71.1 × 50.8 × 61 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art. Purchase with exchange funds from the Pearlstone Family Fund and partial gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., BMA 2020.57. Photo: Mitro Hood.



Plate 7 Selenite (gypsum) tablet inscribed with a curse in alphabetic Greek characters. Cyprus. Length: 13.97 cm, Width: 8.89 cm. British Museum 1891,0418.50.



Plate 8 *Defixio* against Babylas the Greengrocer, recto. Lead. Width 6.82cm, height 12.9 cm. Princeton University Art Museum: 2011-145 a-c.



Plate 9 Red-jasper amuletic gem with Herakles and Hekate. 50 × 31 × 7.5 mm. Image-ID10456 © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo: A. Mastrocinque.



Plate 10 Archangel Inscription, Miletos Theater. © Livius | Jona Lendering.



Plate 11 Cameo on a medallion of glass paste. Found in a sarcophagus around the neck of a deceased young woman, Aquincum (Budapest, Hungary). 2nd–3rd cent. CE. Budapest History Museum, Aquincum Museum. Budapest, Hungary.

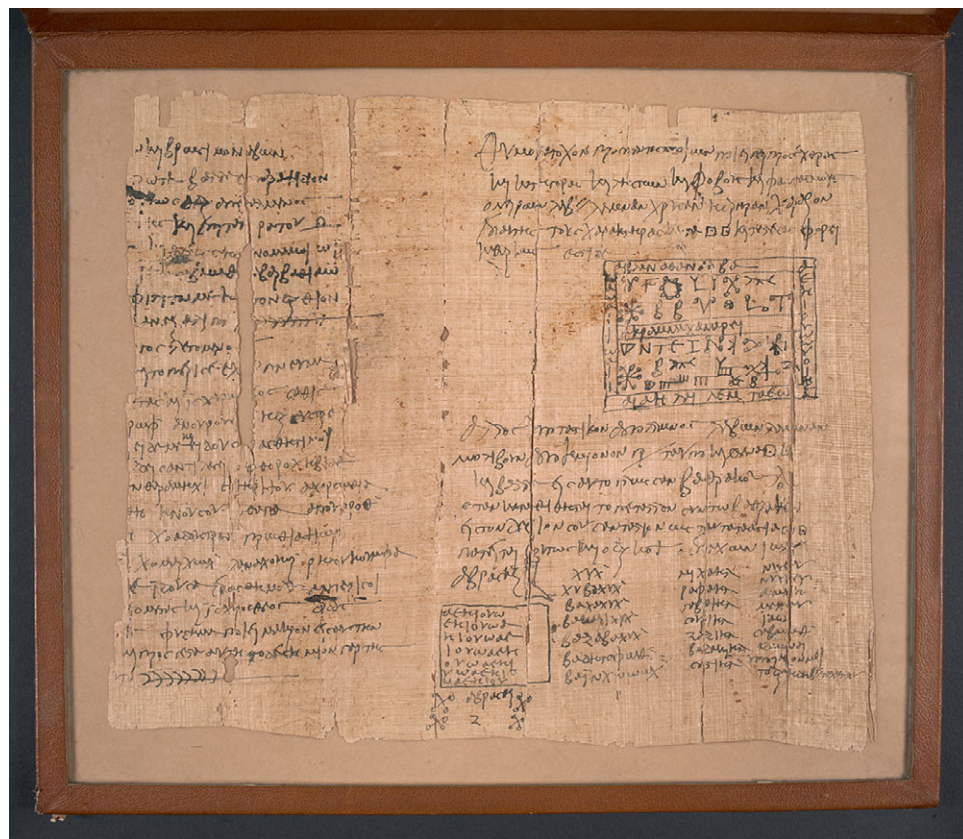


Plate 12 British Library Papyrus 124 (PGM X.24-35) © British Library Board.

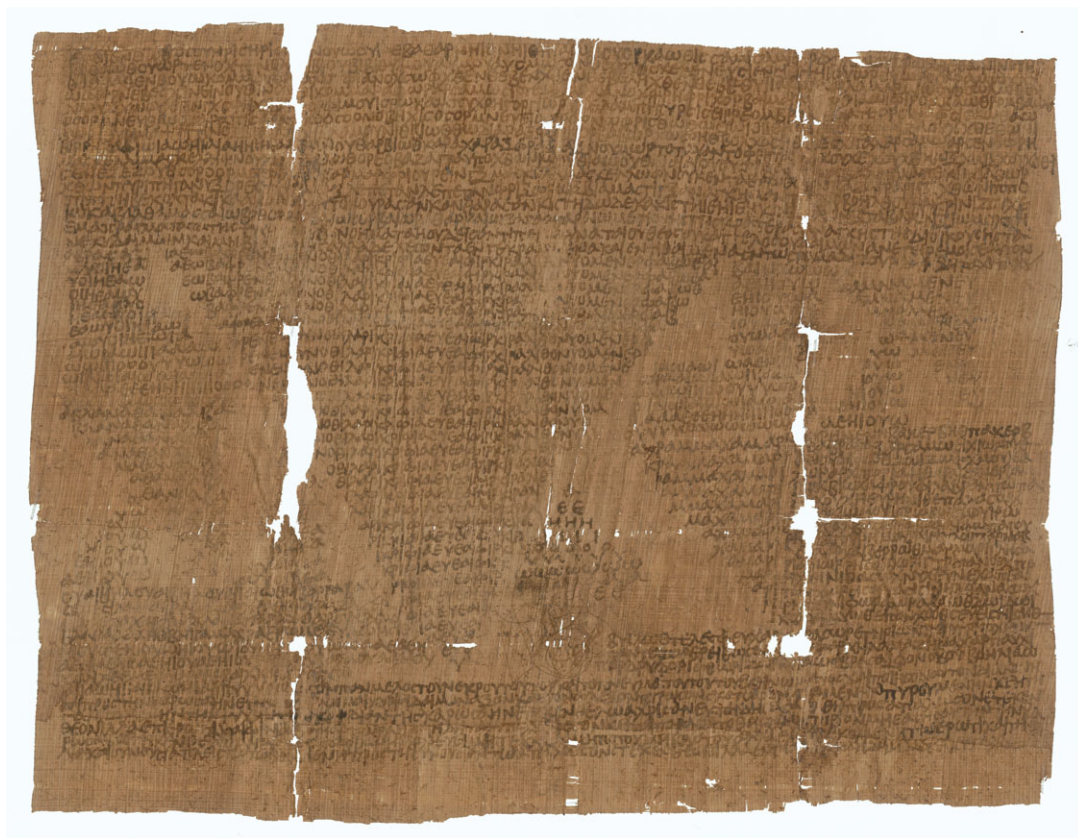


Plate 13 Berlin papyrus 9909 = Betz PGM XIXa.1-54. Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
Scan: Berliner Papyrusdatenbank, P 9909 recto.