Witchcraft and Magic in Europe

Volume 2. Ancient Greece and Rome

THE ATHLONE HISTORY OF WITCHCRAFT
AND MAGIC IN EUROPE

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The roots of European witchcraft and magic lie in Hebrew and other ancient Near Eastern cultures and in the Celtic, Nordic, and Germanic traditions of the continent. For two millennia, European folklore and ritual have been imbued with the belief in the supernatural, yielding a rich trove of histories and images.

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Ancient Greece and Rome

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Contents

Note on Citations ix
Introduction xi
Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark

PART 1: BINDING SPELLS: CURSE TABLETS AND VOODOO DOLLS IN THE GREEK AND ROMAN WORLDS 1
Daniel Ogden, University of Wales Swansea

The Curse Tablets: An Overview 3
The Development of the Curse Tablets across Time 6
The Process of Manufacture 10
Deposition Sites: Graves and the Dead 15
Other Deposition Sites 23
The Fundamental Nature of the Idiom of Binding 26
The Importance of Twistedness 29
Categorisation 31
  Litigation Curses 31
  Competition Curses 32
  Trade Curses 33
  Erotic Curses 35
  Prayers for Justice 37
The Powers Addressed 44
Voces magicae, Letters, Shapes and Images 46
Amulets, Protection against Cursing and the Magical 'Arms Race' 51
Professionalism and Specialisation 54
Gender 60
Class 67
Voodoo Dolls 71
The Origins of the Culture of Greek Binding-Curses 79
Did Ancient Binding Magic 'Work'? 82
Binding Spells and the Definition of Magic 85
Bibliographical Essay 86

PART 2: WITCHES AND SORCERERS IN CLASSICAL LITERATURE 91
Georg Luck, Johns Hopkins University

Introduction 93
Concepts and Semantics 97
The Conventional Image of the Sorcerer 102
The Sorcerer's Apprenticeship 107
Circe 110
Odysseus in the Land of the Dead 111
Medea 111
Deianira's Involuntary Black Magic 114
The Hellenized Magi 114
Moses the Magician 115
Solomon the Sorcerer 116
Orpheus, Pythagoras and Empedocles 117
Nectanebus 119
The Amateur Witch of Theocritus 120
Nigidius Figulus, Mystery Man 120
Vergil's Witch 121
Dido, the Tragic Queen 121
Canidia, the Love-Witch 122
Witches in the Latin Love Elegy 123
Jesus of Nazareth 124
Simon Magus 125
Apollonius of Tyana 130
Lucan's Superwitch, Erictho 137
Petronius' Sorceress 138
Apuleius' Spiritual Journey 138
Lucian on Magicians 140
Lucian, *Alexander or the False Prophet* 142
Plotinus and the Egyptian Priest 148
Plotinus and the Evil Sorcerer 149
The Theurgist as *Magos* 149
Hecate and the Theurgist 150
Sosipatra, a 'Divine Woman', and Antoninus, her Son 151
A Necromantic Scene in a Love Romance 152
The Sorcerer Unmasked 153
The Bishop Dabbles in Magic 155
Conclusion 156

PART 3: IMAGINING GREEK AND ROMAN MAGIC 159
Richard Gordon

Introduction 161
The Marvellous 168
The Category of Magic and its Practitioners 178
Magic Good to Think 191
Magic as Other – The Magic of Everyday: Love Magic in Action 194
– The Night Witch 204
Magic as Specious and Vain 210
Magic Explained – The Power of Words (1) 220
– Effluences and Atoms 221
– Pulling down the Moon 223
– Daemones 224
– Magic in History 229
– Natural Magic 232
– The Power of Words (2) 239
The Repression of Magic 243
The Greek World in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods 244
The Roman Republic and Principate 253
Bibliographical Essay 266

PART 4: THE DEMONISATION OF MAGIC AND SORCERY IN LATE ANTIQUITY: CHRISTIAN REDEFINITIONS OF PAGAN RELIGIONS 277
Valerie Flint, University of Hull

Introduction 279
Demons of the Classical World 281
The Demons of Jewish Tradition 292
The Apostolic Period of Christian History 296
Monastic Demons 310
Demons, Magic and the World of Late Antiquity 315
Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions 324
Conclusion 347

Abbreviations 349

Bibliography 352

Index 379

Note on Citations

Readers should note that we have not attempted to standardize the citations to classical authors and texts in this volume. The contributors have aimed for consistency within each essay but have been allowed to cite in their preferred manner. This applies in particular to the choice of either Latin or English titles and of either full or abbreviated names and titles.

All secondary works, identified by date, are listed in the Bibliography, which also contains a list of the abbreviations that have been adopted throughout the volume when citing modern source collections or other items common to all the essays.

Introduction

Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark

The chronological scope of this volume ranges from the heroic age of Homer to the late western empire of Augustine and Theodosius, a period of well over a thousand years.[1] Passing through the centuries, our focus of interest will slowly move from the Greek East to the Latin West. In this long millennium the geo-political and cultural landscape of the Mediterranean basin underwent significant changes. Bustling urban centres such as Miletos, Alexandria and Rome developed cosmopolitan attitudes and offered markets not only for commodities and services but also for ideas and beliefs. The melting-pot religious syncretism of the Roman empire is only one aspect of a more general convergence of cultures, languages and mentalities. The political diversity of the early city-states both in Greece and Italy eventually gave way to large uniform commonwealths under military rule and centralized bureaucracies. In succession, the two great empire builders, the Macedonians and the Romans, set their stamp on the history of the ancient world.

The historiography of witchcraft and magic in the ancient world relies primarily on a multiplicity of texts. Most of these written sources have come down to us as part of a glorious cultural and scientific tradition, the 'classical heritage', created by, and for the consumption of, the social élites. Only rarely, indirectly, and probably at times in a biased form, do these narratives deal with the beliefs and practices of ordinary men and women. But some material remains unearthed by the archeologists, and, most importantly, magical papyri and curses inscribed on durable material such as metal sheets, give evidence of the everyday concerns of people all over the classical world, from Egypt to Britannia.

The major groups of sources for the study of magic beliefs and actions in classical antiquity are: (1) fictional literature from Homer and Euripides to Apuleius and Lucian; (2) historical narratives from the Bible and the *Lives* of Christian Saints to historians proper such as Plutarch, Lucan, Porphyry and Suetonius; (3) philosophical and scientific discourses from Plato and Hippocrates to Plotinus and Celsus; (4) religious texts from the Gospels to the Church Fathers; and finally (5) performative sources, i.e. texts created as part of social actions, whether legal (such as court decisions and records), religious (prayers, ritual invocations), or magical (papyri, curse tablets). The four authors in this volume each focus on different

groups of sources: Daniel Ogden on magical inscriptions on curse tablets unearthed by archeologists; Georg Luck primarily on fictional and philosophical discourses; Richard Gordon on legal rulings and court cases as well as literary and philosophical texts in general; and Valerie Flint on biblical and patristic texts.

A fundamental and highly interesting problem is the way in which these various sources relate to each other. To take but one example: Flint demonstrates how dogmatic statements by Church Fathers about the nature of angels and demons can be fully understood only against the background of the ambitions of a church militant in a pagan world where miracles were expected of religious leaders and where theurgists and gnostics were powerful adversaries of Christians. The visibility of this conflict suggests that magic through the centuries and over the wide area of Greek and Roman culture was many different things. Any attempt to circumscribe the area of the occult must be open to the possibility of historical change and fundamental differentiation between regions and classes in the use of, and attitude to, magical practices. The fact that competing creeds and denominations accused each other of sorcery and deceit indicates that magic had a somewhat inferior status as compared with religion proper. Such a classification is, therefore, relative and culturally determined. When used as scientific terms, magic and religion should, perhaps, be based on more universally acceptable criteria. Following a basically Durkheimian tradition Ogden suggests an essential distinction between religion and magic applicable at least to sacrifices and rituals: When they unite the community they are religious, whereas magical operations serve to distance the operator or practitioner from his fellow men. This social/anti-social dichotomy is underlined by the fact that magical practice sometimes defined itself 'by the countercultural cloak that it took on, at least partly of its own accord.' Secrecy, inversion and perversion were important elements of such a countercultural identification. Things were done in the opposite way, objects were twisted and placed upside down, texts were jumbled and juxtaposed. Yet all these operations were made with reference to a concept of 'proper' use; magic, in spite of its rebellious, anti-social nature, was directly dependent on, and formed in accordance with, the norms and values of society itself.

To us the classical heritage is primarily made up of three dominant components – Greek philosophy, Roman law and the Christian religion. But we know history only after the fact, as a closed chapter. When it was still open, numerous other cultural options were available and all kinds of creeds and world-views vied for people's attention. Witchcraft and magic in antiquity should be of particular interest in this perspective. Firstly, they are an integral part of the understanding of Graeco-Roman civilisation.

Magic beliefs and practices held a place in the minds of the ancients and so tell us a good deal about the motives people acted on. The transmission and diffusion of various transcendent ideas was part of a general process of cultural interaction in the Mediterranean region over a period of a thousand years or more. The hegemony of Greek philosophy was never complete even in Greece itself. It developed in competition with old agrarian cults and an emerging cosmopolitan Pantheon. Tensions and oppositions between learned cosmologies and sociologies on the one hand and vulgar creeds on the other is a dominant *topos* in the classical literature studied by Luck in his contribution to this volume.

Secondly, the tradition from antiquity in both philosophy and religion was the basic foundation for medieval and modern European culture. The classical elements were transmitted in a number of ways, both as a precarious cultural, mostly monastic, continuity through the 'dark ages' and also as a result of recurrent 'renaissances' – Carolingian, Arabic and Italian – in which the study of ancient sources was revived. This process of unbroken traditions, discontinuities and rediscoveries occurred in both popular mentalities and scholarly discourses. But for obvious reasons it can be more readily discerned in written texts biased in favour of the learned tradition. Again, the popular substratum of magic beliefs poses a methodological problem to the modern observer.

The continuity of a tradition based on texts would seem to be more secure than that of practices and creeds transmitted only orally, directly from one generation to another. This may be true in principle, but applied as a general methodology it has its limitations. Given the immense geographical spread of the curse tablets within the Roman empire, the overall stylistic uniformity is striking and seems to indicate some form of literary tradition, for example in the form of handbooks. The existence of such magic manuals is well established. Nevertheless, the interpretation of similarities within a given body of archeological finds, such as the deposit of curse tablets in Roman Bath, is also open to suggestions of an established, largely oral culture of magical expertise. A central problem concerning the permanence and durability of mentalities through the centuries, even their transmission from one historical civilisation to another, such as that from antiquity to the medieval West, is that of the relative importance to be given to oral as opposed to written traditions. Scholars, strongly disposed as they are in favour of the literary, have been inclined to emphasise the radical cultural discontinuity caused by the fall of the western empire, such that classical culture had to be rediscovered centuries later in the manuscripts buried in monastic libraries. The striking similarities between ancient and modern Western magic should, according to such a methodology, be regarded as the result of later scholarly interpretations and adaptations from literary sources, not as an oral

tradition of folk beliefs. This position has been challenged, of course, both by ethnologists and historians of religion.

Finally, the ancient world can supply us with material for comparison. What are the similarities and dissimilarities in the encounter with 'otherness' that the Romans experienced in Egypt and Mesopotamia and the early modern Europeans in the New World? How does the political demonisation of magic in the late Roman empire (as discussed by Flint) compare with the association of witchcraft with the Devil that accelerated in sixteenth-century Europe as the combined result of reforming zeal within the churches and the interventionist ambitions of the bureaucracies of the early modern monarchies? Why did magic catch the attention of emperors and princes at all, if not for political reasons? Was it because they were no longer satisfied with ruling over the bodies and labours of their subjects, wanting to control their passions and creeds as well? In developing such Foucauldian ambitions the political order sometimes interfered with the religious. With the differentiation in the late empire of state and church élites, conflicts about the interpretation of magical transgressions emerged. It is interesting to note that the leading churchmen, both in late antiquity and the early modern period, soon found it proper and expedient to soften the harsh commands and ruthless methods of the secular lords in persecuting the crime of magic. The privilege of interpretation was contested and this gave some members of the Christian church a chance to act protectively towards the magical operator and so perhaps to gain friends and converts. To some extent, the 'demonisation' of their practices put magicians in Christian hands, and subjected them to quite different kinds of discipline than the imperial alternatives. Through emphasising the invasiveness and power of demons in matters of magic, Christianity may have meant to bypass the punishment for magic recommended by imperial magistrates, and so to save many of the accused, magicians though a few of them may truly have been. These different interpretations have interesting similarities with those prevailing in early modern Europe, where the secular arm tended to exercise a much harsher justice in witchcraft cases than ecclesiastical legal practice was prepared to accept.

Such an emphasis on similarities may conceal important differences between ancient and early modern mentalities. How was ancient magic affected by the various influences from a multiplicity of 'pagan' gods and cults? The insistence on conformity and the fight against heresy in the Christian churches during the early modern European Reformations offered a market for popular magic which was probably more limited and at least quite different from that in late republican Rome. How deeply rooted were the official and socially approved cults among the general population of, say, Medicean Toscana as compared to Periclean Attica?

We may ask, with Paul Veyne, if the Greeks really believed in their myths – or, by extension, if the ancients were universally credulous. When phrasing the question in such an extreme form, we hesitate to affirm the underlying proposition. It seems more reasonable to assume that the levels of 'truth' and acceptability must have been as varied and as disputed in Plato's days as they are today. This is the constructivist position. Gordon demonstrates how several of the dynamic aspects of magic can be attributed to successive periods and different social settings. In archaic times magic was 'embedded', that is, an integrated part of everyday practice. Nobody thought about it as 'magic'. And it long continued to have this degree of invisibility among ordinary people. The practices of wise women remained unaffected by the processes of rationalisation and modernization of the divine world which set in with the formation of the city state. The cultural and social differentiation that took place in this process alone makes it impossible to speak of a single ancient view of magic. A whole range of representations and claims eventually competed in the marketplace. Gordon identifies five successive transformations in which legitimate knowledge was forced to adapt to new conditions: (1) the formation of the city state; (2) the passage from independent cities to the Hellenistic kingdoms; (3) the emergence of the Principate; (4) the crisis of the third century leading up to the tetrarchy; and (5) the fourth-century transition to a Christian Empire.

Again we must focus on the relationship between continuity and change. On the one hand, there was stability; the case of the stylistic uniformity of the curse tablets should be stressed again here. On the other hand, we find a multiplicity of magical practices and versatile adaptations to changing market conditions. It is noteworthy how certain curses came into vogue (such as erotic spells) only to disappear a few centuries later, superseded by other styles of invocation associated with circus and athletic games or with legal litigation. These changes are clearly linked with more general trends in society and culture. There is also a fairly clear one-directional development from simple, laconic curses to highly elaborate, even verbose, descriptions of the victim and the terrible fate intended for him, indicating stages from the purely verbal to standardised and widely diffused literate invocations, items of a professional magic trade market.

The problem of unbelief in history has been widely discussed. Sometimes it has been defined, rather narrowly, as the informed scepticism of scientifically trained minds – as a kind of positivism. According to this view only the modern West has developed the intellectual tools necessary for such a mentality. Not even the free and audacious heroes of the Renaissance, such as Rabelais, were able to take the final step into agnostic rationalism or downright atheism. Without going further into this

discussion, one thing is abundantly clear: it was indeed possible for the ancients to think in critical terms of gods and mythical lore. Some philosophers were accused of being atheists (the very word is Greek). Thus, the concept of unbelief and the intellectual tools for it were available. It was within the reach of many to imagine a completely immanent world.

It is important to acknowledge this, since it has recently been argued that traditional cultures in the past were so completely embedded – so immersed in their own categories – that it was impossible for their members to step outside of the common beliefs. This is probably not true even in very small, isolated village communities, where life and culture are so tightly linked as to be the same. But it is certainly not true of the 'high' cultures of the ancient world. It was common knowledge that other people had other gods and other beliefs. And even if those others were condemned as heathens and barbarians, many must have had the relativistic insight that 'they' had the same deprecatory thoughts about 'us'. Conversion and proselytising, syncretism and aggressive orthodoxy lived side by side. It was possible to choose, and it was also possible to doubt. But it was not always easy; the pressures toward conformity were strong. Tolerance was not always the companion of multiculturalism.

Diversity, therefore, was long the rule. The repertoire of ancient magic included Persian, Egyptian and Hebrew formulas as well as Greek *grammata* and Roman *sortes*. In Flint's words, the 'daimones' of the classical world offered to humans a tremendous range of employment and exploitation, as they streamed into the world of late antiquity. Only towards the end of the classical period, in the late Roman republic, was political control of magic and religious practice forcefully exercised by magistates. There were mass executions of people accused of magic in the second century BC. The emperors and later the Christian church forcefully interfered with the freedom of magic manipulation. The persecution of witches in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe was a late manifestation of the importance accorded by the powers, both secular and ecclesiastical, to the necessity of unity and control in the face of dark and dangerous enemies threatening the order of Christian republics and pious princes.

Notes

1. The editors would like to thank Richard Gordon for his help with this volume, in particular with the compiling of the Bibliography.

PART 1

Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds

Daniel Ogden

We do not need recourse to the problematic abstraction of 'magic' to define a catalogue for study in this essay.* The curse tablets and voodoo dolls from the Greek and Roman worlds, both of which were used to 'bind' victims in various ways, present reasonably tight syndromes of evidence, even if there are some 'penumbral' cases. The definition of curse tablets generated by Jordan for his survey of the Greek ones runs as follows:

> *Defixiones*, more commonly known as curse tablets, are inscribed pieces of lead, usually in the form of small, thin sheets, intended to influence, by supernatural means, the actions or the welfare of persons or animals against their will. (*SGD* p. 151)

Although the word 'supernatural' here could be considered almost as problematic as 'magic', the definition functions just as well for our purposes even if the 'supernatural' clause is omitted. An evidential syndrome can also be defined for voodoo dolls. Faraone includes figurines in his catalogue of them if they display two or more of the following criteria: (1) the doll's arms or legs are twisted behind its back as if bound; (2) the doll is transfixed with nails; (3) the head or feet or upper torso of the doll has been twisted back to front; (4) the doll is tightly shut in a container; (5) the doll has been inscribed with a victim's name; (6) the doll has been discovered in a grave, sanctuary or in (what was) water (*VD* p. 200).

THE CURSE TABLETS: AN OVERVIEW

More than 1,600 tablets are currently known. Most are in Greek: the *DTA* corpus contains 220, the *DT* corpus 305 in all of which around 166 are Greek (tablets written in multiple languages or vestigially inscribed are difficult to classify), and the *SGD* list 'over 650', making a subtotal of around 1,100. On the Latin side, the *DT* corpus contains around 120, the corpus of Besnier 1920 contains 61, the list of Solin 1968 contains 48, the

* Thanks to Stuart Clark and Richard Gordon for their comments on a draft of this essay. They are not responsible for the views expressed.

Tab. Sulis corpus 130, the Uley cache around 140, and there remain a few tablets not included in any of these corpora or lists, making a subtotal of over 500. Not all of these tablets are currently available for study: some are lost (e.g. the *DTA* corpus, on which see Jordan, 1988b: 274 and 1990: 441 n. 10); others are too delicate to unroll or too damaged to decipher (e.g. the Uley cache). Despite the decline in excavatory archaeology, it is likely that significant numbers of curse tablets will continue to come to light. This is partly due to the identification of likely cache-sites: thus the 130 tablets from Bath represent the fruits of the investigation of merely one sixth of the deposit of the sacred spring, which suggests that there may be 500 or more tablets remaining in it. It is also partly due to the heightened awareness of excavators about the appearance of curse tablets, which is concomitant with the general rise of scholarly interest in the documents. (See *SGD* p. 152; *Tab. Sulis* pp. 59–61 and 100; Faraone, 1985: 153, and 1991b: 22 n. 4 and 30 n. 74; Jameson et al., 1993: 125.)

The earliest batch of Greek tablets is that of 22 from the Greek colony of Selinus in Sicily, dating from the early fifth century BC, with some perhaps from the late sixth (listed at Jameson et al., 1993: 125–6). The great majority of all known curse tablets prior to the imperial period hail from Attica, where they are found in large numbers from throughout the classical, hellenistic and imperial periods. They are found chiefly in the Agora, i.e. the market place and civic centre (there are about a hundred tablets from here alone), and in the Ceramicus cemetary (*DTA*; *DT* nos. 45–79; *SGD* nos. 1–54). Other pre-imperial curses are found in small numbers scattered around various Greek states. The chief concern of classical-period curse tablets that are 'diagnostic' (i.e., that provide information about their subject matter) is litigation, but this subject is relatively rare in them after the classical period. Indeed, all extant Attic litigation examples, of which there are many, appear to be classical. Trade curses and theatrical-competition curses are also found from the fifth century BC, the former not being found much after the hellenistic period. Erotic-separation curses and prayers for justice are found from the fourth century BC. It was the imperial period above all, and especially the second century AD, that witnessed the spread of the curse tablets around the Mediterranean: they are found in every modern country around the sea, and also in Britain. Given the immense geographical spread of the tablets, the overall stylistic uniformity of their texts is striking. From the second century AD onwards many of the tablets are highly syncretistic, with heavy inputs from Egyptian and Jewish culture in particular. From the second century AD also two new curse types appear, erotic-attraction spells and athletic and circus spells, the bulk of them belonging to the third and fourth centuries AD. Circus spells are found predominantly in North Africa and Syria, and they also constitute the subject of the distinctive 'Sethian' batch

of 48 tablets from Rome. This is also the period in which tablets of the prayers-for-justice type came to flourish. The Latin tablets, predictably, are found mostly in the Western half of the Roman empire. Most of them date from the third and fourth centuries AD, and most of them belong to the prayer-for-justice type, this being largely a function of the two major find-batches from the Severn estuary, Bath (*Tab. Sulis*) and Uley. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the tradition of cursing seen in the tablets dies out: it is apparently at some point between the sixth and eighth centuries AD. (See Faraone, 1985: 153 and 1991b: 3, 11–13, 16; Jordan, 1988b: 274; *CT* pp. 27–9, 50, 177 and 244.)

It is unclear what standard term (if any) the ancients applied to these curse tablets. The best Greek candidate is *katadesmos* 'a binding' (plural: *katadesmoi*), which expresses either the physical form of the curses in their rolled up state, or their fundamental function of restraint, or both. The word is classical, being used by Plato (*Republic* 364c), and it is sanctioned by the Greek magical papyri (e.g. *PGM* IV 2176–7). It is derived from a verb that often appears in the tablets, *katadein*, 'bind down.' A possible title given to an early tablet from Selinus is *eucha*, 'prayer.' The best Latin candidate is *defixio* (plural: *defixiones*). This word is only found in one obscure source, a bilingual gloss (See *LSJ* s.v., ii.40). However, it is a derivative of the verb *defigere*, 'fasten,' which is actually found in some British curse tablets (e.g. *RIB* nos. 6–7), and may refer either to the piercing of the curse tablets with nails, as was common, or again to the binding of the victim, or to both. Despite the obscurity of the word *defixio*, it has become the standard technical term for curse tablets in the scholarly literature, although Versnel is anxious that the term should not be applied to the prayers-for-justice category. The British evidence throws up some other candidate terms: *execratio*, 'curse', *devotio*, 'dedication/curse/spell', *commonitorium*, 'memorandum', or *petitio*, 'petition'. Tomlin, however, considers that the likeliest term to have been applied by their users to the British texts, which almost all belong to the prayers-for-justice category, is *donatio*, 'giving/dedication' (i.e. of lost goods or of an offending thief to a god). (See Gow, 1952; ii: p. 37; Preisendanz, 1972: 1–3; Tomlin, 1988: 59; Faraone, 1991b: 21 n. 3; Versnel, 1991 especially 60–3; *CT* p. 30 n. 1; Jameson et al, 1993: 125).

Figure 1 illustrates a unrolled tablet from the Bath cache (*Tab. Sulis* no. 9a); Figure 2 illustrates some tablets from the same cache still in their rolled state.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURSE TABLETS ACROSS TIME

The texts of the curse tablets vary in their elaborateness and informativeness. Three quarters of them either consist of no more than the name of the intended victim or provide no information diagnostic for context. The earliest name-only texts appear to have recorded names in their nominative forms. Some name-only texts imply a verb of cursing by recording the name(s) in the accusative case (e.g. *DTA* no. 34), but since none of the accusative-name-only texts can be positively dated prior to the fourth century BC, they appear to represent an eliptical development of the verb-of-cursing-included texts, rather than an intermediate stage before them. Most of the earliest Attic and Sicilian curse tablets belong to the name-only types. No doubt to know and use a victim's name was itself to exercise power over him, the name probably being seen in some way as an embodiment of the victim. Their use should perhaps be seen as an instance of *pars pro toto* ('part for whole' or 'synecdochic') magic. This basic type of tablet decreases in frequency until it disappears entirely in the first century AD. Of the texts that go beyond the mere listing of (a) name(s), the earlier ones tend to be more succinct, and the later ones more prolix and elaborate. (See Preisendanz, 1972: 5; Jordan, 1980a: 231 with nn.21 and 22; Faraone, 1985: 151 and 1991b: 5 and 10). The main trends in the development of the curse tablets across time may be highlighted by the juxtaposition of an early tablet and a late one. We begin with one of the very oldest Greek tablets, one of the litigation curses from Selinus, from the early fifth or possibly even the late sixth century BC:

> The tongue of Eucles and the tongue of Aristophanis and the tongue of Angeilis and the tongue of Alciphron and the tongue of Hagestratos. The tongues of the advocates of Eucles and Aristophanis. (*SGD* no. 95 = *CT* no. 49 = Jameson et al., 1993: 126 *c* side A)

This is a simple text restraining the author's enemies (with the verb of binding suppressed). A minimal term, 'advocates', tells us that the context of the spell is litigation, and the most relevant and potentially dangerous parts of their bodies, their tongues, are singled out for special restraint. With this may be contrasted a tablet from fourth-century Rome, also written in Greek. It is one of the so-called 'Sethian' hoard (first published by Wünsch, 1898, with elaborate drawings of the texts and illustrations), and it is of the circus-competition type:

> EULAMON, restrain, OUSIRI OUSIRI APHI OUSIRI MNE PHRI, . . . and archangels, in the name of the underworld one, so that, just as I entrust to you this impious and lawless and accursed Cardelus, whom his mother Fulgentia bore, so may you bring him to a bed of punishment, to be punished with an evil death, and to die within five days. Quickly! Quickly!
>
> Spell: You, Phrygian goddess, nymph goddess, Eidonea [=ADONAI?] NEOI EKATOIKOUSE, I invoke you by your . . ., so that you may help me and restrain and hold in check Cardelus and bring him to a bed of punishment, to be punished with an evil death, to come to an evil condition, him whom his mother Fulgentia bore. And you, holy EULAMON, and holy Characters, and holy assistants, those on the right and those on the left, and holy Symphonia [?]. These things have been written on this (EULAMON, restrain, OUSIRI OUSIRI API OUSIRI MNE PHRI) tablet made from a cold-water pipe, so that, just as I entrust to you this impious and accursed and ill-fated Cardelus, whom his mother Fulgentia bore, bound, tied up and restrained, Cardelus whom his mother Fulgentia bore, so that you may so restrain him and bring him to a bed of punishment, to be punished and to die an evil death, Cardelus whom his mother Fulgentia bore, within five days, because I invoke you by the power that renews itself under the earth, the one that restrains the [sc. zodiacal] circles and [more *voces magicae* follow]. (Wünsch, 1898 no. 16 = *DT* no. 155 = *CT* no. 13 side A)

A mere transcription and translation does not do justice to the richness of this tablet (see Figure 3). Firstly, each alternate line is written upside down – in other words the text 'snakes' back and forth across the tablet. Secondly, the tablet is decorated with a number of pictures. In the centre stands an elaborate horse-headed demon holding a whip and a chariot-wheel (?), doubtless one of the powers that controlled chariot-racing. It may also have affinities with the Egyptian god Seth, who could be depicted as ass-headed, whence the 'Sethian' label, or with a 'Gnostic' demon concerned with the punishment of murderers (cf. Preisendanz, 1926: 22–41; Moraux, 1960: 15–23). Beneath him are two figures perhaps representing the 'assistant' demons (*paredroi*), or perhaps even the charioteers themselves. At the top of the tablet, a figure peeps out from his coffin: this may be Osiris, who was murdered by Seth, or it may be a wishful representation of the curse-victim. The dead figure and his coffin are transfixed by nails. At the bottom of the tablet is a horizontal mummy, around which coil two (chthonic) snakes, which attack the head. 'Osiris', the assistant-demons and the mummy are covered in criss-cross lines, which probably represent binding ropes. The tablet is further decorated with Characters and vowel-patterns. The ways in which the second tablet differs from the first may be tabulated:

1. A massive increase in the scale of the text. One result of this is that, for all its formulaicness, the Sethian tablet gives the (probably deceptive) appearance of being a more personal document, into which the 'personalities' of the author and the victim intrude. However, some fifth-century texts can be lengthier than the one quoted (e.g. 'The Great Defixio from Selinus,' *SGD* no. 107 = Dubois, 1989 no. 38 = *CT* no. 50 = Jameson et al., 1993 *f*, on which see Calder, 1963; or, from the Athenian Ceramicus, *SGD* no. 1 = *CT* no. 105).

2. A developed interest in the inherent magical power of letters and writing, evidenced by the 'snaking' of the text and by the vowel-patterns. The use of the Characters, which are broadly comparable in form and complexity with alphabetic letters, also belongs here.

3. The development of a high degree of syncretism (cf. Preisendanz, 1972: 11–13). The tablet invokes a great many powers from a wide range of cultures and types: Greek, mainline and traditional ('Phrygian goddess', i.e. Demeter); Greek, minor but traditional (Nymph-goddess), Greek, new (Symphonia: possibly a Gnostic invention, if the word is read correctly); Egyptian (Osiris, Apis, Mnevis, Ra [garbled at the beginning], Bachuch [and Seth?]); Judaeo-Christian (angels, archangels and Adonai). Other powers invoked are more specific to magical practice itself and less easy to locate in their cultural origins: the dead man in the underworld; Eulamo(n), a great favourite in syncretistic curse tablets, whose origins may be Greek, Egyptian, Semitic or Assyrian (see Youtie and Bonner, 1937: 62; *CT* p. 267); the Characters; the *voces magicae* or 'words of power', which can occupy between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of some of the imperial period tablets (*CT* p. 6).

4. The recourse to a formulary or magical recipe book, as is indicated by the phrase 'The spell:', apparently included by mistake.

5. The use of elaborate, 'persuasive' and emotive descriptions of the victim.

6. The heavy development of repetition, which is already latent in the Selinus tablet.

7. The varied developments of the basic notion of binding and restraining.

8. The identification of the curse-victim by his mother's name, instead of his father's, as was usual in antiquity. This became quite common from the second century AD.

The context of these developments will be picked up in the subsequent discussion. For now it is sufficient to note the apparent difference in mentalities underlying the two texts. The Sethian tablet at first sight appears to be a baroquely alien and bizarre production, but its magical agenda and strategies are paradoxically easier to explain than those of the

Selinus tablet. The Sethian tablet draws much of its magical power from its direct appeal to gods and demons. It finds power too in the counter-cultural: gods and demons that are monstrous, inexplicable words and symbols and maternal (as opposed to paternal) relations. Its repetitiveness is incantatory. It is richly clothed in heavily characterised magical paraphernalia. By contrast the Selinus text is remarkable for its lack of explicit magical paraphernalia. It probably drew its magical power chiefly from the site of its deposit, a tomb of the dead, and through association with the pollution (*miasma*) of a dead man. The Selinus tablet may also have drawn power from the mechanical act of inscription itself: unlike later tablets from elsewhere, it does not pretend that anyone or anything will read it at some point in the future (see Jameson et al., 1993: 128–9).

Two antecedents to curse tablets can be identified: uninscribed metal voodoo dolls and verbal curses. An example of the sort of verbal concoction that preceded written curses may be found in the 'binding song' (*hymnos desmios*) sung by the Furies in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, which has the function of restraining Orestes' success in his trial, a function very much akin to that of litigation curse tablets (line 306; cf. Gow, 1952, ii: p. 39; Faraone, 1985 and 1991b: 4–5). The fifth-century sophist Gorgias was to elaborate notions of verbal cursing into a semi-philosophical justification of rhetoric in his *Helen* (cf. Segal, 1962; de Romilly, 1975; MacDowell, 1982). There is some debate as to how central the principal innovation of the curse tablets, writing, was to their magical identity. It is hard to believe that uninscribed voodoo dolls had been used without accompanying verbal curses: how else were they to be associated with their victim? So perhaps the earliest tablets should be seen as simplified voodoo dolls and vestigial physical accompaniments to verbal curses. Some take the fact that the majority of the earliest curse tablets consist merely of names to indicate the necessity of verbal accompaniment to accomplish the magic (e.g. Petropoulos, 1988: 215; Faraone, 1985: 153 and 1991b: 4; *CT* p. 7). But a small degree of independence from any verbal context should perhaps be conceded to the earliest, nominative-name-only tablets, since the names upon them are inscribed in their 'default' grammatical case rather than in that in which they would have appeared in an accompanying verbal curse, the accusative. At the other end of the tradition the recipes for curse tablets and their activation in the Greek magical papyri still require many 'extraneous' incantations and rituals (see Kotansky, 1991: 108–9; *CT* p. 20). That the introduction of curse tablets was not considered a great conceptual innovation is implied by the fact that the ancient terminology applied to them was not specific to their written nature. Verbal accompaniment was probably necessary in the case of an undated cache of 40 curse tablets, rolled and nailed but blank, deposited at Rom in France (*DT* no. 109).

Nonetheless, writing may have been attributed with some magical power of its own: initially the very act of writing a name, of 'freezing' it permanently in lead, could in itself have been considered a way of tying it down by comparison with the transience of uttering it (cf. Tupet, 1976: 43; Bernand, 1991: 76 and 399–408; Graf, 1994a: 152). An episode of Homer's *Iliad* is often referred to in connection with the magical power of writing in archaic Greece (6. 167–70 = *CT* no. 138). King Proteus sends off Bellerophon to Lycia with a folded tablet on which are written 'many life-destroying baleful signs' in order to kill him. When the Lycian king reads the signs, he realises that he is to contrive Bellerophon's death, and attempts to do so. As is the case with much of the Homeric poems, it is uncertain at what point in the history of the epic tradition these lines were composed. Are they a dim dark-age recollection of the lost Mycenean writing system, Linear B? Or were they composed in the early seventh century, to refer to the newly developed alphabetic writing system? Or do they refer not to writing as such at all, but merely to some dark-age pre-arranged coded picture or symbol? (See Harris, 1989: 48–9 with n. 17; Kirk, 1990 ad loc.) Whichever is the case, it is not certain that a curse tablet or a precursor of one is described: we may simply be dealing with a letter, the contents of which prosaicly ordered the Lydian king to kill Bellerophon. However, the phrase 'life-destroying signs' (*sēmata . . . thymophthora*) does recall a phrase used elsewhere by Homer, *pharmaka thymophthora*, which could be translated 'life-destroying spells', though this too could similarly be translated more prosaicly as 'life-destroying poisons' (Homer, *Odyssey* 2.329).

THE PROCESS OF MANUFACTURE

Almost all extant curse tablets are inscribed on lead or lead alloy. This appears to be due not only to the fact that lead is a more durable medium than some of the others that may have been used, but also to the fact that lead was the medium of choice, because of the specific magical associations that it developed. Lead aside, curse tablets were inscribed in other durable media: bronze (e.g. *DT* no. 196), copper (Jerome, *Life of Saint Hilarion* 23), tin (e.g. *PGM* VII 417–22), ostraca, i.e. potsherds, (e.g. *PGM* ostraca, of which nos. 1 and 2 = *CT* nos. 111 and 35), limestone (e.g. the cache of 51 from Tell Sandahannah near Jerusalem: see Wünsch, 1902 and *CT* no. 107), talc (e.g. the cache from Amathous in Cyprus: Aupert and Jordan, 1981), and gemstone (Bonner, 1950: pp. 103–22). The Greek magical papyri contain recipes for curse tablets in the durable media of other metals, such as gold or silver (e.g. *PGM* X 24–35) or iron (*PGM* IV 2145–2240). It is, however, puzzling that, although many magical texts

inscribed on gold or silver survive, they wholly constitute protective amulets (Jordan, 1985c: 165; Tomlin, 1988: 81; Kotansky, 1994: pp. xv–xvi). The special conditions of the Egyptian environment have preserved some curse tablets in the relatively non-durable medium of papyrus (e.g. *PGM* VIII 1–63 and CIX). An Aramaic spell written on cloth was preserved in the Cairo Geniza (Naveh and Shaked, 1985 Geniza no. 1 = *CT* no. 32). No curse tablets survive in the similarly non-durable medium of wax (although there remain wax voodoo dolls: e.g. *VD* nos. 28–9), but a fourth-century BC Attic curse tablet apparently refers to the phenomenon (*DTA* no. 55a) and literary sources also indicate that they were made, such as Ovid's reference to 'red wax' inscribed with a needle (*Amores* 3.7.29; cf. *CT* no. 142). Ovid's reference to the redness of the wax may be mistaken or misleading, and so indicate that wooden writing-tablets coated with red 'gum lac', like a cache found near Pompeii, could also be used for cursing. A number of curse tablets are made from reused objects. This is obviously true of the ostracon tablets. One of the Bath tablets is inscribed on an old pewter plate (*Tab. Sulis* no. 30). (See Tomlin, 1988: 81; Faraone, 1991b: 7 and 25 n. 30; *CT* p. 3.)

Some of the curse tablets reported to be of lead on the basis of visual inspection may in fact be of lead alloy. This possibility is raised by the systematic metallurgical analysis of the Bath tablets, which were similarly assumed to be pure lead at first sight. The alloyed metal is tin (the tablets are consequently better considered 'pewter'), and a trace of copper is also sometimes present. But it is unsafe to extrapolate from a single cache, and tin in particular was a speciality of Britain, as was, by consequence, pewter (Tomlin, 1988: 82; *CT* pp. 3–4).

Lead was likely to have been used for curse tablets initially because it was cheap and readily available in the ancient world, and provided an easily inscribable surface for a stilus. Already in fifth-century BC Greece it was used for a number of document types: financial documents (Corinth, Nemea, Athens); civic membership tokens (Piraeus, Euboea, Camarina); private letters (Athens, Olbia and elsewhere); questions to and replies from Zeus at Dodona; sacrificial calendars (Corinth). Among these letters and civic membership tokens in particular could be close to curse tablets in form. The superficial resemblance between scrolled lead letters and curse tablets may indicate that curse tablets were initially conceptualised in part as letters to the dead or to infernal powers. At any rate some curse tablets seem to exploit this conceit in their phraseology: one calls itself a letter sent to the demons and Persephone (*DTA* no. 102, Attic, iv BC). Some scrolled tablets carry an address to chthonic powers on their external exposed side, just as if they were letters (e.g. *SGD* no. 62, Attic, iii BC). The superficial resemblance of the name-only curse tablets to various sorts of lead name-tickets that acted as membership or allotment tokens in

Athens and elsewhere should probably not be taken as significant, but it can be unclear to us to which category certain finds should be ascribed (e.g. *DT* no. 45). (See *DTA* pp. ii–iii; Preisendanz, 1972: 7 and 20; Jordan, 1980a: 226–9 with nn.6–13 and 1985b: 212; Tomlin, 1988: 81 and 84; Faraone, 1991b: 4, 22 n. 4 [for *DTA* no. 45] and 23 n. 10; Versnel 1991: 65; *CT* p. 18.)

Despite the banality of lead, in the context of cursing its properties came to be re-rationalised and regarded as providing sympathetic magical power. Some Attic curse tablets request that their victims become as cold and useless (*achrēstos*) as the lead upon which the curse is written (e.g. *DTA* nos. 105–7, iv BC). Another Attic tablet wishes that the victim's tongue should come to resemble lead (*DTA* no. 67, iv BC), and two related tablets wish that the victim's tongue should actually become lead (*DTA* nos. 96–7 [97 = *CT* no. 66], iv BC). Latin tablets sometimes wish that their victim should be rendered as heavy as their lead (e.g. *DT* no. 98, i–ii AD, Germany). A more tenuous analogy is made by an erotic tablet which wishes that Zoilos may be separated from Antheira, just as the lead is in a place separate from humans (*DT* no. 85 = *CT* no. 20, iii–ii BC, quoted below). No tablet explicitly draws the analogy between the oxidised blotchiness of lead and deathly pallor, but the elder Pliny compared the colour of lead to that of death (*Natural History* 11.114) and the body of Germanicus, who was killed with the aid of curse tablets, was said to have been blotchy (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.69 and 74 and Suetonius, *Caligula* 1). A newly inscribed text would have shone out in an alluring silver against this background. Perhaps lead was also thought appropriate for the fact that some of its chemical compounds were poisonous. (See Tupet, 1976: 43; Guarducci, 1978: 240; Jordan, 1985b: 207; Tomlin, 1988: 81–4; Bernand, 1991: 20; Faraone, 1991b: 7; *CT* p. 4; Graf, 1994a: 154–6.)

In the imperial period lead from water pipes seems to have become particularly significant. The Sethian tablet quoted above actually claims to have been made of lead from a cold-water pipe (*psychrophoros*, *DT* no. 155b = *CT* no.13). A papyrus recipe for a curse tablet accordingly instructs that the lead should be taken from a (presumably public) cold-water pipe (*PGM* VII 396–404; cf. also XXXVI 1–34 and Jordan, 1990: 440 for lead 'worked cold'). A recipe from the Jewish spell collection *Sepher ha-Razim* instructs one to take a lead pipe from an aqueduct with which to make the curse tablet (Morgan, 1983: 49 = *CT* no. 114). Since lead was cheap, this suggestion is not made, it seems, to direct the user to a convenient free source of a precious commodity. Rather, lead from a water pipe will have been valued because it was colder even than usual and because of the high importance of (especially underground) water in the activation of curse tablets (for which see below), or simply because the destruction of a public water pipe was a dangerous, antisocial and countercultural act, which in itself conferred magical power on the cursing process. It is common for ancient magical ingredients to be either extremely dangerous or difficult to obtain: thus a Greek magical papyrus spell to attract a lover through wakefulness requires the eyes of a bat (the creature that sees all night), which is then to be released alive (*PGM* IV 2943–66; cf. Luck, 1985: 101).

Despite the *PGM* reference to the working of the lead for a tablet in its cold state, and despite the fact that fire could be unhelpfully purifying (cf. Bernand, 1991: 324), analysis of the Bath cache suggests that there at any rate smelting was employed in the tablets' manufacture. Since no two of the Bath tablets have exactly the same metallurgical composition, it appears that they were made separately, with the metal perhaps smelted in a ladle over a small fire. The sheet could then be made by pouring the metal out over a flat surface. The addition of tin to lead is eutectic and productive of a smoother surface, but all proportions of lead to tin are found in the Bath tablets, and there appears to have been no concerted attempt to produce the most eutectic alloy. If the metal was simply left on the flat surface, its surface tension would cause it to set in a thick blob. Sometimes these were used directly (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* nos. 95–6, iv AD). But finer sheets were usually made. One method was to hammer the metal when set, which would transform the blob's projecting spurs into distinctive 'scallops,' (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* 54, iii AD). Tablets of this type sometimes exhibit 'cold shuts', holes which the molten material had failed to close before setting. Sometimes tablets were used as they came, with their irregular edges, but usually they were trimmed by repeated scoring with a knife, to form more or less regular shapes. Otherwise, the metal could be pressed thin between two flat surfaces whilst still molten. Some Bath tablets display the distinctive flanged edges that reveal that they have been made in a proper, shaped mould (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* 10 and 44, iii–iv AD). (See Tomlin, 1988: 83, qualified by Jordan, 1990: 440.)

The tablet made, it was inscribed with a stilus or similar sharp, pointed object, and then usually rolled or folded over on itself. At Bath the ends of the 'roll' were sometimes brought together too, to form a lump. The rolling may have been initially due to the influence of letters, but in curse tablets its main function was probably not to keep the contents secret. Rather, it was to achieve a sympathetic binding and perhaps a sympathetic confusion of the tablet's contents. It is unfortunate for us that the folding of the tablets can increase their rate of corrosion, and that the process of unfolding or unrolling can consequently be quite destructive. (See Tomlin, 1988: 84; Jameson et al., 1993: 125. A technique for the unrolling and conservation of the fragile tablets by gradually unwinding them onto glued polyester fabric is described by Rosenberg at Jordan, 1988c: 134–40.)

Curse tablets were often pierced with nails. The prime significance of this was also binding or restraint. Piercing is common among classical tablets, particularly the Attic ones, but rare in the imperial period (no Attic tablet of this period is pierced). One tablet displays no less than five nail holes, and in its text the curser refers specifically not only to 'binding' but to 'nailing down' his enemies (*DT* no. 49 = *CT* no.44, Attic, c. 300 BC). Another tablet asks that the opponent's tongue be 'stabbed' (*DTA* no. 97 = *CT* no. 66, Attic, iv–i BC). Four separate but related tablets with brief texts were found pinned together by a single nail (*DTA* nos. 47–50 [a-d] = *CT* no. 59, Attic, iv BC). A pair of Latin tablets containing a continuous text was nailed together to form a diptych (*DT* nos. 111–12 = *CT* no. 53, Gaul, ii AD). An undated tablet from Aegina was found folded around an iron nail (*SGD* p. 166). The context of nailing may have been different in the case of 'prayers for justice.' One of these has a nail-hole positioned in its middle top, which suggests that it was nailed up in a sanctuary for the thief it intended to punish to read (Dunant 1978 = *CT* no. 90, Asia Minor, i BC–i AD; cf. Versnel, 1991: 74). In the case of hammered or corroded tablets it can be difficult to distinguish a nail-hole from a 'cold shut' (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 61, iii AD; cf. Tomlin, 1988: 84).

Sometimes the nails used could be special. Pamphile, one of Apuleius' fictional witches, maintained a supply of nails from crucifixions (*Golden Ass* 3.17 = *CT* no. 153; cf. Tupet, 1976: 37–9). We are also told here that Pamphile kept the remains of shipwrecks in her workshop, and no doubt ship's nails were prominent amongst these remains: a papyrus recipe requires that a tablet should be written not with a stilus but a copper nail from a shipwreck (*PGM* VII 462–6; cf. Fox, 1912b: 306). The same papyrus tells that magical wicks could be made from the hawser of a wrecked ship (*PGM* VII 593–619; cf. Winkler, 1990: 85–6). Magical power was doubtless conferred on such objects by their association with death and catastrophe as well as by the difficulty of their acquisition. The practice of nailing tablets was in some ways assimilated to the practice of inscribing them: another recipe encourages the curser to drive his stilus through the tablet (*PGM* V 304–69). One papyrus spell gives instructions for the writing of a curse tablet with a 'headless' (*akephalōi*) needle (*PGM* VII 429–58): was the breaking off of the 'head' of the needle a further means of restraint (cf. *VD* no. 7, and the 'headless' demon favoured by the syncretistic tablets, Akephalos)?

The tablet could be aided in its task if it was accompanied by some of the victim's 'stuff' (*ousia*), usually some of their hair of a fragment of their clothing. The underlying notion is that what is effected upon part of the victim may be effected upon the whole of him (*pars pro toto* magic). It was hoped that if a part of the victim was put into a grave with a corpse, it might have a 'deadening' or restraining effect upon the rest of him. This

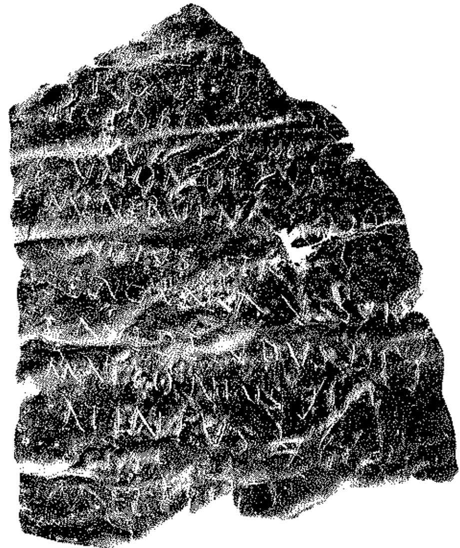


Figure 1: An unrolled curse tablet from Bath (*Tab. Sulis* no. 9a), ii–iii AD.

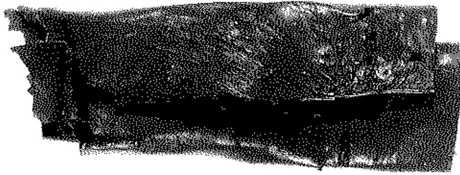


Figure 4: The Louvre voodoo doll, *VD* no. 27, Egypt ii–iii century AD. Reproduced by kind permission of the Musée du Louvre; the help of Mme Catherine Belanger is gratefully acknowledged; Louvre E27145.

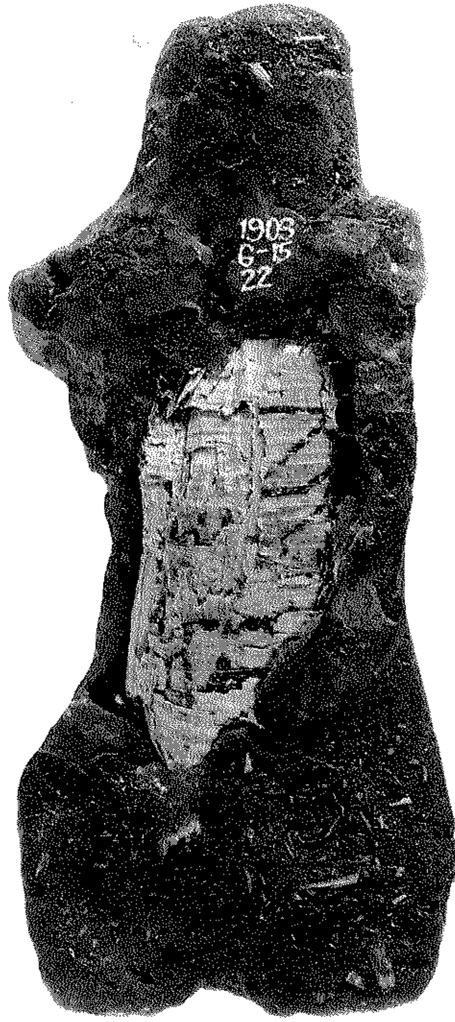


Figure 5: Wax voodoo doll in the British Museum built around a rolled papyrus curse, *VD* no. 31, Egypt, late antique. Copyright British Museum; BM EA 37918.

technique was principally used in erotic spells, whether of attraction or separation. Lucian speaks of an attraction spell which required some of the beloved's hair, a fragment of his clothing or his boots (*Dialogues of the courtesans* 4.286 = *CT* no. 152). Euripides has Phaedra's nurse suggest that she win the love of her beloved by using a lock of his hair or a piece of his clothing (*Hippolytus* 513–15; cf. Barrett, 1964: ad loc.). The most graphic illustration of the way in which this sort of magic works is found in an episode of Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, in which the witch Pamphile's maid brings her not the hairs of her beloved as requested, but the hairs of some old goatskins; when the spell is worked, it is not the beloved but the goatskins that come knocking at Pamphile's door (2.32 and 3.16–18). Some tablets were found wrapped round wads of hair (e.g. *SGD* no. 38, Attica, iii AD), and some make explicit mention of the hair they contain (e.g. *SGD* nos. 155–6 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 51 = *CT* no. 29, Oxyrhynchus, ii–iii AD). Some papyrus curses were also found containing hair (*PGM* XVI, ii–iii AD and XIXa, iv–v AD). (See Jordan, 1985b: 251–2; Winkler, 1990: 85–6 and 228 n. 25; *CT* pp. 16–18; Graf, 1994a: 162–3.)

DEPOSITION SITES: GRAVES AND THE DEAD

The final stage of a tablet's activation was its deposition. There were five major contexts for this: in a grave, in a chthonic sanctuary (usually one of Demeter), in a body of water, in a place of specific relevance to the curse or its victim, or in a non-chthonic sanctuary. A recipe for the manufacture of a curse tablet recommends that it be deposited in 'river, land, sea, stream, coffin or well' (*PGM* VII 451–2; cf. Fox, 1912b: 305–6; *CT* p. 18). Of approximately 625 tablets of which the provenance was known in 1985, approximately 325 came from graves and 60 from sanctuaries of Demeter; approximately 220 could be identified as deriving from underground bodies of water, mainly wells (Jordan, 1980a: 232–3 and n. 23, and 1985b: 207). Since then the discovery of the Bath cache has done much to even up the basic grave/water distribution. It is probable that graves were the first sites used, although both graves and chthonic sanctuaries are already represented in the case of the earliest curse tablets from Selinus (Versnel, 1991: 61; Jameson et al., 1993: 125–9). Deposition in non-chthonic sanctuaries is associated particularly with prayers for justice, which could be addressed to ordinary deities. It is possible that water-deposition was not used at all before the imperial period. Earlier Greek tablets found down wells or in other bodies of water may have been out of their original deposition-context, i.e., typically, thrown down the well as rubbish. Thus a fourth-century BC tablet from a well near the

Dipylon gate in the Ceramicus cemetary may have been dumped there from a nearby tomb (*SGD* no. 14 = *CT* no. 57; cf. Jordan, 1980a: especially 232 n. 24); similarly, 17 hellenistic tablets found down a well in the Agora may have been dumped from the adjacent shrine of Demeter (*SGD* p. 162; cf. Jordan, 1985b: 207–10; Faraone, 1991b: 3 and 23 n. 7; Jameson et al., 1993: 125).

The association of curse tablets with graves and the places of the dead may in part be historical, in that their antecedent voodoo dolls may originally have been placed in graves specifically to lay restless ghosts by binding. But in general the places of the dead were magically useful as imbued with pollution (*miasma*), and the physical contact of the victim's name on its curse tablet with the dead might have been considered to bring the victim himself into some restraining contact with the dead (Jameson et al., 1993: 129; cf. Parker, 1983: 198). The curse tablets were sometimes laid in the right hand of the corpse (e.g. *SGD* nos 1 and 2, Attica, v BC; cf. Jordan, 1988b: 274).

The preferred graves were those of people that had died by violence (*biaiothanatoi*) or at any rate died untimely (*aōroi*). The souls of the dead (*nekydaimones*) of these categories were supposed to remain restless until they had reached the occasion of what would have been their natural death from old age, and wander about their graves and cemetaries, particularly at night (Plato, *Phaedo* 81cd; Hippocrates, 1.38; cf. Jordan, 1980a: 234). Such souls were thought more likely to give help, through an enhanced degree either of animation or of bitterness. Their bitterness stemmed either from resentment towards their killers or regret at their deprivation of the joys of love and the prospect of progeny. (See Tertullian, *De anima* 56–7, on which text specifically see Waszink, 1947 ad loc., and Nock, 1950, and see more generally *DT* pp. cxii–xv; Wide, 1909; Rohde, 1925: 593–5; Cumont, 1945; Waszink, 1954a; Ter Vrught-Lentz, 1960; Schlörb-Vierneisel, 1964; Tupet, 1976: 82–91; Guarducci, 1978: 242; Bravo, 1987: 196; Jordan, 1988b: 273–5; Bernand, 1991: 131–55; Faraone, 1991b: 22 n. 6; *CT* pp. 19). Magicians sought to redirect the souls' bitterness towards a source of their own choosing. Thus a tablet binds Cercis and others 'with dead bachelors' (*DT* no. 52 = *CT* no. 73, Attica, iii–ii BC; cf. Bravo, 1987: 201). Whenever the age of the occupant of a grave in which a curse tablet is found can be estimated, it proves to be young (Jordan, 1988b: 273, pace Graf, 1994a: 152 and 174). A graphic literary illustration of the value of the untimely dead in this way is provided by Virgil's Dido, who, in cursing Aeneas, burns an effigy of him (perhaps a bust) alongside his possessions (*ousia*) and adds herself to the pyre so that her ghost will pursue him as an avenging demon (*Aeneid* 4.641–65; cf. Delcourt, 1939; Tupet, 1976: 232–66; Luck, 1985: 29). So too the boy killed by Horace's Canidia and her fellow witches in the

course of the manufacture of a love potion exploits his own death to lay a curse upon the women (*Epode* 5; cf. Tupet, 1976: 316–17). It was believed that some magical practitioners actually went so far as the manufacture their own *nekydaimones* for their various projects by child-'sacrifice' (e.g. Cicero, *In Vatinium* 14) or even by ripping foetuses from wombs (e.g. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.558–9; cf. Tupet, 1976: 87–91 and 206–9).

A variation of the idea of depositing curse tablets in graves was to deposit them on a battlefield or in a place of execution. The 200 or so fragments of tablets from Amathous in Cyprus were deposited in a particularly appropriate site (some of the tablets are published at *DT* nos. 22–7, ii–iii AD; see Aupert and Jordan, 1981; *SGD* p. 193; Jordan, 1985b: 207 n. 3; Faraone, 1991b: 23 n. 11). They were found at the bottom of a shaft under a mass of human bones. These circumstances themselves suggest that the shaft was a mass grave and therefore the home of the prematurely dead, but the tablets also state as much explicitly: 'I invoke you, demons (*daimones*), many men buried together, and dead by violence, and dead before your time, and deprived of burial . . . you who lie here below, dead before your time and nameless . . .' (*DT* no. 22 = *CT* no. 45). (This text, incidentally, constitutes a problem for those who suppose that the tablets were deposited significantly prior to and separately from the dumping of the bones on top of them.) The fact that the corpses go unidentified is one of the inadequacies of their burial (see below on *ateleia*) and probably contributes to the ghosts' restlessness:

> Demons beneath . . . the earth and demons whoever you are, fathers of fathers and mothers, equals of men, male or female, demons, whoever you are and whoever lie here, having left life with all its cares, whether dead by violence, or alien, or native, or dead before your time, or denied burial, whether you are carried away from the outermost part of the stars [*or*: cities] or wander about in the air, and you [singular] who lie here below. (*DT* no. 25 = *CT* no. 46)

A third-century BC Olbian tablet actually draws its sympathetic power from the author's very ignorance of the exploited corpse's identity: 'Just as surely as we do not know you, so surely will Eupolis and Dionysius, Macareus, Aristocrates and Demopolis, Comaios, Heragores come to court for a terrible thing' (*SGD* no. 173 = Bravo, 1987: 189 and cf. 194–6).

It was no easy or pleasant task to open a grave, presumably at night, insert something into it carefully and close it again without being caught. Danger was courted on two fronts. First, one risked provoking the wrath of the ghost itself or the infernal powers. The Greek magical papyri include a hymn to accompany an erotic spell explicitly begging off the anger of the exploited dead man from the curser himself (*PGM* IV 449–56 = *CT* no. 27; cf. Gow, 1952, ii: p. 43; Graf, 1994a: 173). A prayer for

justice opens and closes by begging off the wrath of the powers from the curser that is troubling them with the explanation that he is forced to do so by thieves (*SGD* no. 21 = *CT* no. 84, Attica, i AD; cf. Versnel, 1991: 72–3). Another prayer for justice asks the powers to 'preserve the one that struck the lead' (*DTA* no. 100, Attica, iv BC; cf. Jordan, 1990: 440). That the powers may have been ill-disposed towards magicians in particular may be implied by the paradoxical use of the slander in some of the Greek magical papyri that the intended victim is a witch or magician (e.g. *PGM* IV 2574–601; cf. Winkler, 1990: 91). Secondly, one – normally – risked the wrath of the corpse's relatives and the outrage of decent citizens. There seems to have been at the least strong social disapproval of the exploitation of corpses in this way throughout antiquity (Versnel, 1991: 63; Faraone, 1991b: 17). Imperial-period inscriptions from a number of places around the Greek world (Thessalonice, Thessaly, Attica, Lesbos, Attica, Asia Minor) show that those who interfered with tombs were often liable to a fine, payable either to the tomb's family or to the authorities (be it city, temple or guild) charged with protecting it. However, these interdictions appear to envisage the primary threat as being one of the eviction of the corpse and/or the insertion of another one into the grave rather than the abuse of the corpse for magical purposes (Bernand, 1991: 364–9). But in 359 AD Ammianus Marcellinus wrote that those that dug up graves for magical purposes were executed (19.12.14).

The unpleasantness and danger of opening graves doubtless enhanced the magical efficacy of tablets deposited in this way. Life was made easier for magical practitioners exploiting Greek graves in the Roman period by the development of the custom of building offering pipes leading down into them. A curse tablet could easily be dropped down one of these to the corpse: a short curse tablet was dropped down just such a pipe in Messina in Sicily (*SGD* no. 114 = *CT* no. 116, ii AD). The grave of a Roman official in Carthage contained seven separate curse tablets (*DT* nos. 233, 235, 237, 239–42 [241 = *CT* no.12], i–iii AD): perhaps access to his grave was particularly easy – or perhaps the ghost had proven to be a successful agent.

Cursers normally avoided naming themselves on their tablets, except in the cases of prayers for justice and erotic-attraction spells. This was doubtless to avoid retribution from both the living and the dead. The existence of (victim's) name-only tablets highlights the danger of depositing one's own name with a ghost in any context whatsoever. Nor would one wish to nail one's own name inadvertently (Versnel, 1991: 62–3).

Graves could themselves be protected by curses displayed at them, usually inscribed on wood or stone. These were particularly common in imperial-period Asia Minor, where more than 350 survive. The language of grave-protection curses has much in common with that of the tablets,

although their aim was to bring peace rather than disturbance to the dead. Like the tablets, grave-protection curses also commonly refer to the gods of the underworld, before whom, they proclaim, violators will be impious. But, unlike the tablets, grave-protection curses were inevitably open-ended, and did not define any particular target, focusing as they did on hypothetical grievances in the future rather than actual ones in the past or the present. However, it may have been that, as with the fines for tomb violation, grave-protection curses were primarly targetted against those that were considering casting another corpse into the grave on top of the original one rather than against tablet-inserters. Thus a Cilician curse: 'We adjure you by the god in heaven [Zeus] and Helios and Selene and the underworld gods who have received us that no-one [. . .] should throw another corpse on top of our bones' (Keil and Wilhelm, 1915: 46–7, cf. Bernand, 1991: 153 and 369–79; Strubbe, 1991: esp. 35; *CT* pp. 177–8). But they did also protect against grave-robbers, and magicians could fall into this category in an unusual way: alongside the curse tablets concealed in the house of Germanicus were parts of human bodies (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.69); Apuleius' description of the contents of the witch Pamphile's workshop accordingly includes, alongside pre-inscribed curse tablets, exhumed pieces of human bodies and, magically economical alternatives, crucifixion nails with gobbets of flesh still clinging to them (*Golden Ass* 3.17 = *CT* no. 153). No doubt those inserting tablets into graves took the opportunity to avail themselves of supplies for future spells. Lucan paints a vivid picture of the horrid witch Erichtho, who is introduced to perform necromancy for the younger Pompey (*Pharsalia* 6.438–830). In a memorable paradox she puts the living into graves but takes the dead out of them (529–32). Her plundering of tombs, pyres and gallows for body-parts is lovingly dwelt upon. She is keen that battle be fought in Thessaly, so that she can avail herself of an abundance of magical supplies. As we learn from Apuleius' entertaining account of Zatchlas and the Thelyphrons, Thessalian witches snatched facial parts from corpses even before their burial (*Golden Ass* 2.28–30). Libanius accuses a magician of 'roaming around the graves and from them bringing doom upon people doing him no wrong, troubling the corpses, and refusing to let the souls remain in their own accustomed homes' (41.7; cf. Bonner, 1932a: 41). The distinctive Mnesimachos voodoo doll was found in a grave in the Athenian Ceramicus beside the pelvis of a corpse that had been mutilated and disturbed (*SGD* no. 9 = *VD* no. 5 = *CT* no. 41, c. 400 BC; see Trumpf, 1958 with plates 71–2, and below). Perhaps body-parts were particularly useful for accompanying tablets deposited in places other than in graves, as in the case of those concealed in the home of Germanicus (but see Graf, 1994a: 193 for a different interpretation). In these instances the body-parts function as the counterparts of the victim's 'stuff': in the one case a piece

of the victim is brought into proximity with the corpse, in the other a piece of the corpse – the corpse's *ousia* – is brought into proximity with the victim (cf. Tupet, 1976: 85).

Cremation did not inhibit a corpse's usefulness, as can be seen from Erichtho's raiding of pyres. Curse tablets are accordingly found in urns alongside ashes: thus a group of three Latin tablets was found in three adjacent urns (Solin, 1968 nos. 26–8 = *CT* no.52, Spain, 78 AD). One of the Sethian curses was similarly found in an urn (*DT* no. 187 = *CT* no. 15).

The evidence discussed so far indicates that cursers generally preferred to exploit dead people that they did not know and that did not know them, and that the last corpse one would wish to disturb with curse tablets was that of a relative or friend. But there was also a surprising contrary trend. The text of the distinctive tablet cursing the gates of Rome implies that it was deposited in the grave of the curser's own brother (*SGD* no. 129 = *CT* no. 79, Rome, iii AD, quoted below; cf. Guarducci, 1978: 253). More generally, Libanius refers to the possibility that a magician may use the ghost of his son, who is about to be sacrificed to deliver a city from pestilence, as a familiar spirit to carry out his work (41.51; cf. Bonner, 1932a: 41–2). In such cases no doubt curse tablets were inserted into the grave with relative ease at the time of burial. We may suppose that when individual graves were used (in contrast to the mass graves of the unidentifiable dead), the dead person was often known at least vaguely to the curser, since the curser had to be sure both that the exploited corpse was fairly recently dead and that he had died before his time. This degree of acquaintance may be implied by direct addresses to the corpse, a striking example of which is found in a ii–i BC curse from Megara:

> Whenever you, O Pasianax, read these words – but neither will you ever, O Pasianax, read these words, nor will Neophanes ever bring a case against Aristander. But just as you, O Pasianax, lie here ineffectually, so may Neophanes also become ineffectual and nothing. (*DT* no. 43 = *CT* no. 43, ii–i BC; cf. Bravo, 1987: 199–200)

But some such addresses to the corpse may be based upon nothing more than the reading of the corpse's name on the tombstone: 'Whoever you are, Kames, spirit of the dead' (*SGD* no. 156 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 50, Oxyrhynchus ii–iii AD).

Sometimes a curse promises to 'free' the spirit of the dead person from its restlessness if it does the curser's bidding (*SGD* no. 152 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 47 = *CT* no. 28, Antinoopolis, iii–iv AD; cf. Erichtho's promise to the corpse she exploits for necromancy at Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.762–5; see Graf, 1994a: 218). Another curse promises an excellent grave-gift to a

corpse that successfully restrains (*SGD* no. 173 = *CT* no. 48, Olbia, iii–1 BC).

It is not always clear whether the restless souls are supposed to carry out the action of restraint themselves, or merely convey the curse to a greater infernal power, since they hover between the two worlds (*CT* pp. 19–20). Poor Pasianax was too helpless even to read, but the frequent placing of the curse-tablet in the right hand of a corpse implies that the dead person was indeed intended to read it (e.g. *SGD* nos. 1–2, Attica, v BC; cf. Jordan, 1988b: 273–4; Faraone, 1991b: 4 and 23 n. 14; Graf, 1994a: 151–2). More was expected of other corpses. In the Olbian tablet just cited the dead man is asked to carry out the curse directly himself. In a late circus curse actually addressed to the Characters, the spirits (*daimones*) of those that have died prematurely or violently are asked to make a very direct intervention and to materialise to frighten the horses at the starting gate (*SEG* xxxiv no. 1437 = *CT* no.6, Apamea, v–vi AD; cf. *SGD* p. 192).

The dead were also of particular use from the sympathetic angle, since a corpse presented a paradigm of lifelessness and uselessness for those attempting to restrain the actions of the living. Thus we find requests that victims be rendered as wordless as the corpses addressed (*DT* no. 25 = *CT* no. 46, Amathous, iii AD); that they be rendered as harmless as a dead puppy accompanying the tablets (*DT* nos. 111–12 = *CT* no. 53, Gaul, ii AD); that they be 'deeply buried' (*SGD* no. 48 = *CT* no. 56, Attica, iv BC); that their bodies be chilled, doubtless to resemble corpses (e.g. *SGD* nos. 22–38 [31 = *CT* no. 21], Attica, iii AD, on which see Jordan, 1985b); that they become as idle as the corpse (the curse addressed to Pasianax, quoted above); and that a circus horse should perish and fall, just as the addressed corpse lies there dead before his time (*DT* no. 295 = *CT* no. 11, Hadrumentum, late Roman). A third- or second-century BC tablet from Boeotia is particularly rich:

> Just as you, Theonnastos, are powerless in any act or exercise of (your) hands, feet, body . . . to love and see maidens (?) . . . so too may Zoilos remain powerless to screw Antheira and Antheira (remain powerless toward) Zoilos in the same way, of beloved Hermes (?) . . . the bed and the chitchat and the love of Antheira and Zoilos . . . and just as this lead is in some place separate from humans, so also may Zoilos be separated from Antheira with the body and touch and kisses of Antheira and the love-makings of Zoilos and Antheira . . . the fear of Zoilos (?). I inscribe this blocking (spell) with a seal. (*DT* no. 85 side A = *CT* no.20 (trans.); cf. Bravo, 1987: 202 and Faraone, 1991b: 13–14)

Of importance here is the concept of *ateleia* or 'unfulfilment,' as it is usually awkwardly translated (it has adjectival derivatives, *atelēs* and *atelestos*,

'unfulfilled'), a state often wished upon curse victims or their designs (*SGD* nos. 94, 97, 99, 100 and 108 = Jameson et al., 1993: 126 a, b, g, h, and i, Selinus, v BC, and *SEG* iv 93, Italian Cyme, v BC). In an Attic tablet the root is used to express a notion of uselessness and fruitlessness that sympathetically associates the corpse with the victim and her deeds:

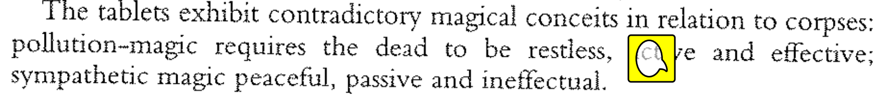
> And as this corpse lies here 'unfulfilled' (*atelēs*), so let all that comes from Theodora, both her words and her actions, towards Charias and towards other people, be 'unfulfilled'(*atelesta*). I bind Theodora before Hermes of the underworld and the 'unfulfilled' (*atelestoi*) and Tethys. (*DT* no. 68b = *CT* no. 22 = Jameson et al., 1993: 130, iv BC)

But the significance of unfulfilment here goes further than the simple conceit of restraint. The *atelestoi* are the dead that have not received the due rites (*telē*). Such spirits, like the ones of those that have died by violence or before their time, cannot achieve rest: Plato explains that those who arrive in Hades without due rites (*atelestoi*) will be left to lie in mud (*Phaedo* 69c). They are therefore bitter and troublesome: in the *Odyssey* the ghost of the unburied Elpenor warns his comrades that if he is not given a proper burial and the due rites, he will occasion the wrath of the gods against them: 'Accomplish (*telesai*) these things for me', he bids Odysseus (Homer, *Odyssey* 11.72–9). The *miasma* or pollution that arises from one that has not received the due rites is famously explained by Teiresias in Sophocles' *Antigone* (998–1032; cf. Parker, 1983: 43–8). The dead without due rites are therefore particularly desirable magical allies. (See generally *DT* on no. 68b, Jameson et al., 1993: 129–31 and Graf, 1994a: 153 and 174.) Death by shipwreck disastrously deprived one of the possibility of the due rites of burial, and this (together with the difficulty of its acquisition) no doubt accounts for the popularity of shipwreck material among the magician's paraphernalia (cf. Bernand, 1991: 140 and 154). An interesting suggestion has been made in connection with the recently discovered classical sacred law from Selinus, which attempted to free the state of *miasma*:

> While curse tablets are not mentioned in the [sacred law], their quantity at Selinous, and in particular in the *Campo di Stele* [where the law was probably discovered], suggests that the deliberate manipulation of *miasma* by means of them may have been one of the reasons why the law was written. (Jameson et al., 1993: 131)

The earlier curse tablets did not usually seek to kill their victims, even when wishfully comparing them to a corpse. But in the later tablets this aim is more frequently expressed: e.g. 'Let him perish and fall, just as you lie (here), prematurely dead' (*DT* no. 295 = *CT* no. 11 [trans., quoting

Jordan], Hadrumentum, late Roman). (See Gow, 1952, ii: p. 40; Bravo, 1987: 201 and 206; Faraone, 1991b: 8 and 26 n. 38.)

The tablets exhibit contradictory magical conceits in relation to corpses: pollution-magic requires the dead to be restless,  ve and effective; sympathetic magic peaceful, passive and ineffectual.

OTHER DEPOSITION SITES

The progression from grave to chthonic sanctuary as a deposition site is easy and explicable: the chthonic gods, like the dead, dwelt under the earth, but could be expected to be much more reliable and powerful. Most of the tablets that have been identified as having been deposited in sanctuaries of the chthonic gods hail from sanctuaries of Demeter: thus 10 from Demeter Malophoros at Selinus (v BC), 13 from Demeter's Cnidian sanctuary, 10 from her Morgantina sanctuary, 14 from her Corinthian sanctuary, and 12 from an Attic well, apparently dumped from an adjacent Demeter sanctuary (Jordan, 1980a: 231–1 and n. 23; cf. Faraone, 1991b: 22 n. 7; Jameson et al., 1993: 126–7).

In the imperial period if not before 'underground' bodies of water in particular came to be favoured as sites of deposition. Water, like lead, developed sympathetic significance: underground water was usually cold, and wells were normally used for refrigeration, so they were useful for 'chilling' the tablet and its victim (Guarducci, 1978: 254–5; Jordan, 1985b: 241–2 and 1990: 440). One of the Bath tablets prays that its victim should become as liquid as water (*Tab. Sulis* no. 4; cf. Tomlin, 1988: 81). Perhaps such bodies of water were initially seen as channels of communication leading to the infernal powers. Older scholars believed that water brought the tablets into contact with the ghosts of those that had died by shipwreck (*DTA* p. iv and Fox, 1912b: 301). The most important batch of curse tablets found in underground water are those from Bath, but these constitute a marginal case, since they are prayers for justice addressed to the 'respectable' goddess Sulis Minerva and deposited in her sacred spring. Perhaps more typical is the cache of twelve Latin tablets found near a spring at Gaulish Raraunum, which are addressed to obscure infernal powers (*DT* nos. 109–10 = *CT* no.16, iii AD). A Latin tablet from Spain is actually addressed to the spring in which it was deposited: 'O Mistress Spring Foyi . . .' (*AE* 1975 no. 497, ii AD; cf. Versnel, 1991: 60). A number of imperial-period tablets have been found deposited in wells in the Athenian Agora (e.g. *SGD* nos. 22–38; see inventory at Jordan, 1985b: 209).

A iv BC Attic tablet confusingly speaks of its own deposition both in water and in tombs: how could it be deposited in both? Perhaps the tablet

was destined for one site, and the accompanying wax doll referred to in the text for the other (*DTA* no. 55 = *CT* no. 64). However, the shaft that contained the mass grave at Amathous in Cyprus discussed above may actually have been a well in origin, in view of its depth (Jordan, 1985b: 207 n. 3). Such a site exploited the best of both alternatives, and was particularly desirable as a deposition site for curse tablets. It is possible that another tablet addresses a ghost that inhabits a well (*SGD* no. 35, Attica, iii AD; cf. Jordan, 1985b: 231). A group of nine lead tablets from Morgantina in Sicily combine water with chthonic sanctuary as their site of deposition: they were found in a well-altar within a chthonic sanctuary (*SGD* pp. 79–80 = *CT* no. 117, i BC). A tablet which was not itself deposited in water implies that the victim's stuff was separately submerged: 'The stream in which the hair now lies awaits the head whence it came' (*DT* no. 210, Salerno, ii AD; cf. Fox, 1912b: 303–5; Fox has many interesting cross-cultural parallels for the use of water-deposition in magic).

Tablets could also be deposited at a site specific to their subject or their victim. A trade curse against bronze smiths was found in the wall (it may originally have been under the floor) of a building in Athens' industrial quarter, which exhibited traces of metal-working and which was therefore likely to have been the victims' workshop:

> I bind Aristaichmos the bronze-smith before those below, and Pyrrhias the bronze-smith, and his business and their souls and Sosias from Lamia and his business and his soul and Alegosi [an attempt to scramble 'Agesion'?] and powerfully and powerfully and Agesion, the woman from Boeotia. (*SGD* no. 20 = *CT* no. 71, iv BC; cf. Faraone, 1991b: 23 n. 9.)

The curse against the Libanius, which consisted of a chameleon voodoo doll, was concealed in his lecture room (see below).

It is quite common to find second- and third-century AD competition curses designed to bind opponents or their horses in chariot races nailed to or buried under the floor of hippodromes adjacently to the starting gates, where they would have the greatest effect, or buried in the central reserve, the *spina* (e.g. *DT* nos. 234–44 and *SGD* nos. 138–9, Carthage; *DT* no. 272–95 and *SGD* no. 144, Hadrumentum; *SGD* no. 149, Lepcis Magna; *SGD* no. 166, Damascus; *SGD* no. 167, Beirut; cf. Faraone, 1991b: 13 and 28 n. 56; *CT* pp. 18–9, with a photograph of an unpublished tablet that is folded like a handkerchief and transfixed by a large nail that formerly secured it to the floor of the Carthaginian circus, near the starting gates).

The victim's home was often used. Perhaps the most famous literary example of the use of curse tablets concerns the discoveries in the house of the imperial heir-apparent Germanicus in 19 BC:

> And there were found in the floor and the walls the exhumed remains of human corpses, incantations and curses and the name of Germanicus cut into leaden tablets, ashes half-burned and smeared with putrefied flesh and other evil apparatuses, by which it is believed that souls are dedicated to the infernal powers. (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.69 = Luck, 1985 no. 13 = *CT* no. 148; cf. Goodyear, 1981: ad loc. and Dio Cassius, 58.18)

Another, rather later, literary account tells of the siting of an erotic curse:

> Therefore after a year, having been taught by the priests of Asclepius, who does not cure souls but destroys them, he came in eager anticipation of illicit sex. He buried under the threshold of a girl's house certain monstrous words and monstrous figures carved into sheets of bronze from Cyprus. The virgin immediately went mad. (Jerome, *Life of St. Hilarion the Hermit* 23 [= *PL* vol. 23 col. 38] = *CT* no. 163, iv–v AD)

Similarly Sophronius tells how Theodorus of Cyprus was made lame by magic. A saint appeared to him in a dream and told him to look under the threshold of his bedroom. There he found a 'wicked instrument of a sorcerer', which perhaps included a tablet or a voodoo doll. We are further told that on the removal of the instrument the sorcerer was immediately destroyed and made to disappear (Sophronius, *Account of the miracles of Saints Cyrus and John* at *PG* vol. 87.3, col. 3625 = *CT* no. 166, vi AD; cf. Gow, 1952, ii: p. 47 for the importance of doors in magic).

The following rather ambitious third-century AD curse, apparently made by a slave anxious to escape Rome and go home, was found in a grave, but one appropriately adjacent to Rome's Adreatina gate:

> Restrain Artemidoros the doctor of the Third Praetorian Cohort. The brother of the dead Demetrios is his servant, who now wants to go out to his own fatherland. Therefore do not let him [i.e. do not let Artemidoros stop me], but restrain the Italian land, knock out the gates of the Romans. (*SGD* no. 129 = *CT* no. 79)

Here we have another strategic combination of deposition sites. Similarly, some Latin tablets binding baths were found in a spring adjacent to the remains of baths: the curser was probably attempting to exploit both the water-site and the trade site (Solin, 1968: 31 = *CT* no. 82, Carthage, ii–iii AD).

THE FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF THE IDIOM OF BINDING

The chief magical idiom employed by the texts is one of binding and restraining. We have already discussed their physical 'binding' and 'nailing'; here we turn to their use of binding language. Although the conceit of binding may initially appear to be of restricted exploitability, in practice it can be addressed to a wide range of problems in different areas of life: it is simply a matter of re-thinking the structure of the problem and representing it in the tablet as one that can be solved if the action or designs of (a) person(s) or object(s) can be restrained. The corrollary of this is that the real motivation for some of the tablets may not be immediately apparent from their text. This is particularly likely in the case of the erotic tablets, a category which ultimately deviated more than any other from the binding idiom under the pressure of their authors' real agenda.

The most basic form of tablet, and doubtless the earliest form, simply contains the name(s) of the victim(s) in the nominative. Any words of binding applied must have been verbal. Then came the addition of a simple verb of binding, with the name(s) made direct object and put into the accusative. In the Attic tablets the verb is *katadeō*, in the Boeotian *katadidēmi* (dialectal variants of the same root), which literally mean 'bind down'. Graf has interestingly argued that the *kata*-prefix, 'down', refers significantly to the desired association of the victim with the world below (1994a: 142–3 and 149, with particular attention to *DT* no. 49 = *CT* no. 44). Some of the earliest tablets, including some of those from Selinus, use a verb not of 'binding' but of 'inscribing,' such as *engraphō*, *katagraphō* or *enkatagraphō* (Jameson et al., 1993: 128, on their *f*, *h–j* and *r*). This again may imply that the act of inscription itself was seen as a kind of binding. However, these terms are usually related to a group of others found in the tablets, such as *apographō*, *katatithēmi* and *paradidōmi*, and explained as quasi-legal formulas for 'registering' the victim with a divinity or power, so that the power can do the act of binding (Faraone, 1991b: 5 and 9–10 and 24 nn. 20 and 24; cf. Bravo, 1987: 197; Tomlin, 1988: 70–1; Versnel, 1991: 71–3; Graf, 1994a: 146–7). One of the most distinctive tablets consists of a flattened voodoo doll with a curse-text written on it, the so called 'gingerbread man' (Euboea, iv BC):

> I register (*katagraphō*) Eisias, daughter of A(u)toclea, before the Hermes who restrains. Restrain her and keep her with you!
> I bind Eisias before the Hermes who restrains, her hands, the feet of Eisias, her body. (*SGD* no. 64 = Faraone, 1991b: 3 = *CT* no. 19)

The tablets soon developed more varied and indirect ways of expressing binding, going beyond the simple use of a verb such as *katadeō*, which Faraone categorises as the 'direct binding formula.' We find also 'prayer formulas' in which the gods or powers are asked to do the binding on the curser's behalf and 'wish formulas' ('*May* . . .') (Faraone, 1991b: 5). Tablets using the direct binding formula often repeat the word of binding many times, or apply it separately to different parts of the victim's body. A brief tablet includes a list of the most commonly bound parts:

> I bind Iphemythanes and Androsthenes and Simmias and Dromon. I bind their hands and feet before Hermes the restrainer; so too their soul, tongues, work and profits. (*DTA* no. 86 = *CT* no. 67, Attica, iv BC)

The parts of the body singled out are sometimes specifically relevant to the theme of the curse (Preisendanz, 1972: 10–11). Thus tongues are often singled out for binding in curses against opponents in lawsuits. We have already referred to a number of such curses (e.g. *SGD* no. 95 = Jameson et al., 1993: 126 *c* = *CT* no. 49 and *DTA* 97 = *CT* no. 66). A very early curse tablet requests that the tongue of Selinontios be twisted to the point of uselessness (*SGD* no. 99 = Dubois, 1989 no. 37 = *CT* no. 51, Selinus, early v BC). The 'binding song' sung by the Eumenides against Orestes before their suit against him in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* perhaps reflects an oral forerunner of tongue-binding curses in Attic trials (line 306; cf. Faraone, 1985). Many of the classical Attic litigation curses bind tongues, such as that against Androsthenes et al. quoted above. A noteworthy literary example of the phenomenon was that to which Thucydides son of Melesias was subject in the course of a trial which possibly took place in the early 420's (Aristophanes, *Wasps* 946–8 with scholiast; cf. Faraone, 1989). In Rome Cicero told that his opponent Curio claimed that he had been made to dry up in pleading a suit by drugs and incantations (*Brutus* 217, cf. *Orator* 129; cf. Tupet, 1976: 204–5; Graf, 1994a: 71, 139 and 189). Ovid imagines an old woman teaching girls how to bind hostile tongues using lead, thread, beans, and the head of a small fish which has been sown up and sealed with pitch and pierced with a bronze needle (Ovid, *Fasti* 2.571–82 = *CT* no. 144; cf. Tupet, 1976: 67 and 409). A Latin grave inscription records how a beloved wife, Ennia Fructuosa, was killed by curses which first rendered her mute (*CIL* viii no. 2756 = *CT* no. 136, Numidia, iii AD+). The most distinctive case of a binding spell used against a tongue was that worked against the orator Libanius, who fell ill and could not speak before his students. The cause was discovered to be a chameleon voodoo doll concealed in his lecture room: its head had been chopped off and stuffed between its hind legs; one of its forefeet closed its mouth, to symbolise silence; its other

forefoot had been chopped off, to deprive Libanius of his gesticulating hand. Once the chameleon was removed, Libanius recovered (Libanius 1.245–50, iv AD; cf. Bonner, 1932a: especially 38–9; Bernand, 1991: 255–6; Faraone, 1991b: 29 n. 70). An interesting variation on this theme is provided by an inscription from Delos, which recounts how Serapis preserved his new temple by binding the tongues of litigants that threatened it (*IG* xi no. 1299 ll. 85–90, iii BC; cf. Engelmann, 1975). But the parts singled out for binding are not always of obvious relevance: why, for example, the nose of a silversmith's bellows-operator (*SGD* no. 3 = *CT* no. 72)?

Animals also can be bound, such as the horses in chariot races (e.g. *SGD* no. 167 = *CT* no. 5, Syria, ii–iii AD). So too can significant objects: another way of hindering a rival in a chariot race could be to bind his whip (*SEG* xxxiv no. 1437 = *SGD* p. 92 = *CT* no. 57, Syria, v–vi AD). Even abstractions can be bound: a Greek competition curse binds not only the legs of opponents, but also their bounding and their running (*DT* no. 241 = *CT* no. 12, Carthage, i–iii AD).

A number of techniques were available for expanding the usefulness of binding curses. The possibility of binding objects itself extended the range of problematic situations to which binding curses could be applied: the curse applied to the gates of Rome by the homesick slave, cited above, illustrates the point. A particularly useful sort of binding was the prevention from eating, sleeping and drinking. Sometimes this could be an end in itself: thus a tablet directed against athletes requests 'Keep them up all night long and keep them away from all nourishment, [so that they will have no strength] but fall behind' (*SGD* no. 157 = *CT* no.8 [trans.], Oxyrhynchus, iv AD). But more often this type of binding is conditional, and intended to torture the victim until they act in accordance with the ultimate goal of the curse. It is often used in erotic spells to force the beloved to come to the arms of his or her admirer (e.g. *SGD* no. 152 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 47 = *CT* no. 28, Antinoopolis, ii–iii AD; cf. the closely related *PGM* IV 354–75). Similarly, prayers for justice sometimes deprive thieves of sleep until they surrender the stolen goods (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* nos. 10, 32 and 52, iii–iv AD). Another Bath tablet is quite determined: it forbids the thief to drink, eat, defecate or (probably) urinate before returning the goods (*Tab. Sulis* no. 41, iii AD). Yet another is unforgiving: on Tomlin's interpretation, the victim is to be deprived of sleep until he measures out equal quantities of cloud and smoke – an impossibility (*Tab. Sulis* no. 100, iv AD).

We perhaps get an idea of what it was supposed to feel like to be the victim of binding magic from the (unsuccessful) attempts of the sorcerer Olympius against Plotinus: though proof against the magic, he confessed that his body had felt like a purse, the strings of which had been drawn

tight, and that his limbs had felt squeezed (Porphyry *Life of Plotinus* 53–5 = Luck, 1985 no. 31; cf. Merlan, 1954).

THE IMPORTANCE OF TWISTEDNESS

Closely related to the notion of binding is the notion of twistedness, which likewise operates in a sympathetic manner and restrains through confusion and 'hobbling'. The notions are associated in voodoo dolls which are often both bound and twisted (see below). But twisting and confusion have other significances too in a magical context. Twisting was seen as something inherently magical, and for that reason the Magician-god, Hephaestus, was often portrayed with twisted legs (Delcourt, 1957: esp. 110–36; Detienne and Vernant, 1978: 259–76; cf. Faraone, 1992: 119 and 133–4).

Magical texts are twisted in a number of ways. The distinctive rolling of the lead sheet gives a physical twist to the text in one dimension, but the texts themselves were often written in twisted fashion. It is quite common for texts to be written in 'boustrophedon' form, i.e., with lines written alternately from left to right and from right to left, following the pattern of the 'turns of an ox' (e.g. *DTA* nos. 33 and 34, iii BC). This had been an unremarkable form of writing in the archaic period. Its preservation in curse tablets may have been due to magic's taste for the maintenance of its arcane rituals (Faraone, 1991b: 8 and 12, with n. 35), but the inherent 'twistedness' of the style probably also played a part in securing its magical future. To this type the tablets were to add many more versions of twisted writing. A variant closely akin to boustrophedon is found in the Sethian tablet quoted above: alternate lines are written upside down and in different directions, to produce a snaking effect (*DT* no. 155 = *CT* no. 13, Rome, iv AD; see Figure 3). The tablet is appropriately illustrated with (among other things) a pair of snakes that wind back and forth around a mummy in a similar fashion. Another way to twist text was to spiral it, so that it resembled a cross-section of a rolled tablet. This is found on two early round tablets (*SGD* nos. 99 and 100 = Jameson et al., 1993: 126 *h* and *i* and cf. p. 128 [99/*h* = *CT* no. 51], Selinus, v BC); the Theonnastos text quoted above is similarly arranged (*DT* 85 = *CT* no. 20, side B, Boeotia, iii–ii BC).

The names of the individual(s) to be cursed, which in the earliest name-only tablets stood very directly and sympathetically for the victims themselves, are often singled out for distortion. The simplest and most systematic distortion of names is reverse-spelling; sometimes the victims' names are listed in reverse spelling, and followed by a line of text written normally (e.g. *DT* no. 60 = *CT* no. 42, Attica, iv BC). Or the letters of

the names could be jumbled in an otherwise normal text (e.g. *DTA* no. 95 = *CT* no. 39). Sometimes the jumbled versions of the names are written in addition to undistorted versions (e.g. *SGD* no. 105 = Jameson et al., 1993: 127 *o*, Selinus, v BC, and *DTA* no. 55 = *CT* no. 64, Attica, iv BC). These last examples indicate that it was the purpose of letter-jumbling to achieve a sympathetic confusion of the bearers of the names rather than to conceal the identity of the victims. One tablet makes this explicit, requesting that just as the names have been jumbled, so may the victims' words and deeds be (*SGD* no. 40, Attica, v–iv BC). Perhaps unjumbled forms were included alongside jumbled ones out of an anxiety that the powers might not be able to decipher the jumbled ones. Another tablet perhaps attempts a different kind of sympathetic debilitating operation upon its victims' names: they have been written and then erased (*SGD* no. 22, Attica, ii–iv AD).

The entire text of a curse can also be distorted, and there are many variants available here. These techniques are particularly associated with later classical Attic tablets (Faraone, 1991b: 7). It is common for the entire text to be spelled out backwards, letter by letter (see *CT* p. 5). Sometimes with this technique the letters still face right (e.g. *DTA* no. 24 = *CT* no. 58, iv BC), sometimes they too are reversed to face left (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 61, iii AD, with resulting copying-errors). A variation of this technique reverse-spells the text line by line (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 44 = *CT* no. 95, iii AD). Sometimes the general flow of sentences is in the left-to-right direction, but the individual words within them are reverse-spelled, to read right-to-left (*DTA* no. 86 = *CT* no. 67, v–iv BC, and *Tab. Sulis* no. 4, iii–iv AD). The sympathetic function of retrograde writing is likewise made explicit in one tablet: 'Just as these words are cold and right-to-left (*eparistera*), so too may the words of Crates be cold and backwards' (*DTA* no. 67, Attica, iv BC; cf. Faraone, 1991b: 7).

A variation on the theme of twisted language may be found in twisted thought. In the two tablets addressed to the corpse Pasianax the thought changes direction dramatically: it begins 'Whenever you, O Pasianax, read this letter . . .', but then abruptly breaks off and begins again in contradictory fashion '. . . but neither will you, Pasianax, ever read this letter' (*DT* nos. 43–4 = *CT* no. 43, Megara, ii–i BC; the former is quoted above). That this structuring of the text does not merely reflect second thoughts during a careless writing is indicated by the fact that these phrases appear separately on both tablets.

CATEGORISATION

The curse tablets cover a moderately wide range of subjects and situations, but the vast majority of them fall into quite definable categories. The most recent scholars of the tablets employ the following sorts of categories:

1. litigation curses (including political curses)
2. competition curses
3. trade curses
4. erotic curses (separation and attraction)
5. prayers for justice

Thus divide Jordan (at Versnel, 1991: 62), Faraone (1991b: 10 and 16), Gager (1992: 42–199) and Graf (1994a: 141–2), superseding Audollent (1904: lxxxix), Kagarow (1929: 50–5), Preisendanz (1972: 9–10 and 22), Faraone's earlier division (1985: 151) and Tomlin at *Tab. Sulis*, p. 60.

Faraone has argued that the earlier Greek tablets are linked by a common theme: competitiveness or rivalry. This is particularly clear in the case of the tablets that address themselves to theatrical competitions. But the litigation curses appear to be addressed against opponents in lawsuits, the trade curses against competing traders, and the earlier erotic curses, the separation ones, against rivals in love. The competitive or 'agonistic' spirit is one of the characteristic features of classical Greek civilisation, a feature visible not only in the classical Greeks' athletic and theatrical competitions, but also in their legal, military and literary culture. The cultural context of the earliest curse tablets may therefore be characteristically Greek (Faraone, 1991b and Graf 1994a: 176). Bernand similarly sites the culture of Greek magic as a whole in the context of a related, wider Greek phenomenon, that of envy (*phthonos*) (Bernand, 1991: 85–105 and passim). However, the apparent degree of competitiveness (and envy) underlying the tablets may be deceptive, since their dependence upon the idiom of binding or restraining a rival forces the curser to structure his problem in a competitive fashion. Thus if a trader wishes to use magic to become rich, he can only do so by finding trade-rivals to restrain. The eventual development of erotic-attraction spells may suggest that some of the earlier separation spells were written by people whose chief aim was to attract, but in deference to the binding idiom went about this by restraining a 'rival'.

Litigation Curses

So far there are around 67 Greek and 46 Latin published examples of litigation curses (*CT* p. 117). The earliest extant curses, from Selinus, belong to this category, and it was a popular one in classical Athens. It is

now believed that the curses were usually prepared prior to or during the trial, and were designed to influence the effectiveness of speeches made in its course: their purpose was deliverance, not revenge (Moraux, 1960: 42–4; Calder, 1963: 171; Faraone, 1985: 151 and 1989: 156–7 n. 21 and 1991b: 29 n. 67). It is also believed, on the basis of technical legal vocabulary found in the tablets, that curses relating to criminal cases were only made by defendants (i.e. the people with something to lose), although there is no obvious reason why a prosecutor should not have used a tablet to secure a conviction, especially if the prosecution was, as so often, malicious. But in a civil case either side could feel threatened and so make a tablet (*CT* pp. 117–18). We are seldom told what the subject of the relevant legal dispute was, but one late curse informs us that its dispute concerned slaves, property and papers (*SGD* no. 179 = *CT* no. 54, provenance unknown, iii–iv AD; cf. Moraux, 1960: 12–14 and 46–8).

In the early Selinuntine curse against Eucles and others (*SGD* no. 95 quoted above) we already see the chief elements of the litigation curse: the identification of the legal opponents, and the specific request that their tongues should be bound (see above for discussion of the latter phenomenon). These elements are found in the many classical Athenian litigation tablets (e.g. *DTA* no. 95 = *CT* no. 39). Classical Athens was and knew itself to be an extraordinarily litigious city: the point was well made by Aristophanes' buffoon Strepsiades, when he refused to believe that Athens had been identified for him on a map of the world, since he could not see any jurors there (*Clouds* 208; cf. Dover, 1968: ad loc.).

The forensic speeches of the Attic orators show that Greek prosecutions often had a wider political agenda. In tablets where large numbers of prosecutors and (obviously hostile) witnesses are cursed, it may be that a political faction is involved. One Athenian tablet appears (without specific legal context) to attempt to curse an entire political party: it contains a protracted list of names, some of which are known from literary and other epigraphic sources, and some of which, interestingly, are women (*SGD* no. 48 = *CT* no. 56, 350–25 BC; cf. *CT* p. 119).

Competition Curses

The earliest trace of a curse of the competition type is found in a passage in Pindar: 'Poseidon . . . bind the bronze spear of Oenomaus!' (*Olympian* 1.75–8, composed 476 BC). Surviving pre-imperial competition curses address theatrical rather than sporting competition:

> All the choral trainers and under-trainers with Theagenes, both the trainers and the under-trainers. (*DTA* no. 34 = *CT* no.1, Attica, iv–iii BC)

A group of imperial-period curses against athletes was deposited in a well in the Athenian Agora, directed against the wrestler Eutychian and others (*SGD* nos. 24–9; cf. Jordan, 1985b on nos. 1–6 and p. 214 for a list all known curses against athletes). The majority of curses falling into this category are the distinctively Roman circus (i.e. chariot-racing) curses dating from the second century AD onwards. The most important batch of these is the 'Sethian' one from Rome itself (Wünsch, 1898 = *DT* nos. 140–87, of which no. 155 was quoted above). The circuses were taken very seriously in the Roman empire: the extremity of the passions they aroused often led to riots between the supporters of the universal Blue, Green, Red and White factions. Since charioteers were also commonly the clients of local aristocracies, support for them also often had a social or political significance. As Brown has observed, charioteers were often 'undefined mediators' in urban society. Betting money could also be at stake. Doubtless both charioteers themselves and their supporters resorted to the tablets. An imperial decree of 389 AD required that those known to be using magic in the circus be publicly exposed (*Theodosian code* 9.16.11), and charioteers were punished under it on three recorded occasions (Ammianus Marcellinus 26.3.3, 28.1.27 and 29.3.5). Cassiodorus, writing in 507–11 AD, refers to a charioteer, Thomas, who was so successful that his enemies attributed his victories to magic (*Variae Epistolae* 3.51). It is curious that even in the Latin west circus curses tend to have been written in Greek: perhaps because most charioteers came from the Greek east. (On the circuses generally see Brown, 1970: 17–46; Cameron, 1973 and 1976; Segal, 1981; Humphrey 1986. On circus curses see Wünsch, 1898; Preisendanz, 1972: 15 and 22; Humphrey et al., 1972–3: 97; Jordan, 1988c: esp. 119; Faraone, 1991b: 10–13; *CT* pp. 42–77).

Trade Curses

Trade curse tablets are almost entirely confined to the classical and hellenistic Greek worlds. The best examples tend to come from classical Athens. A distinctive antecedent to them is found in the 'Homeric' or 'Hesiodic' hexameter poem *Kiln* in which the poet calls down the wrath of a series of appropriately named demons on the work of potters, Crusher, Smasher, Shatterer, Unquenchable and Unbaked-pot-destroyer, and asks that their pots be ground to dust as if in the jaws of a horse (Homer, *Epigram* 14 at [Herodotus] *Life of Homer* 32 = Hesiod F302 MW. See Milne, 1966; Faraone, 1991b: 11 and 1992: 47 and 56; *CT* p. 153; Griffiths 1995: 87–8).

Trade curses appear to have been generally made between rival tradesmen. Hesiod again provides an insight into the sort of trade rivalries in the archaic period that would go on to generate the curses we find in the classical:

> Neighbour envies neighbour as he races for wealth. This is a good kind of strife for men. And potter bears grudges towards potter, and joiner towards joiner, and beggar envies beggar, and singer envies singer. (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 23–6 [trans. Evelyn-White (Loeb)])

Apart from potters (*SGD* no. 44 = *CT* no. 70), the trades recorded in discovered Greek tablets from Attica between the fifth and the third centuries BC include: innkeepers/shopkeepers (*DTA* no. 87 = *CT* no. 62), pipemakers, carpenters (both in *DTA* no. 55 = *CT* no. 64), bronze-workers (*SGD* no. 20 = *CT* no. 71), netmakers (*SGD* no. 52 = *CT* no. 60), frame or rope makers, fabric sellers (both in *DTA* no. 87 = *CT* no. 62), helmet makers, goldworkers (both in *DTA* no. 69 = *CT* no. 63), painters, flour sellers, scribes (all three in *SGD* no. 48), silversmiths' bellows-workers (*SGD* no.3 = *CT* no. 72, v BC and possibly the oldest extant tablet from the Greek mainland), brothelkeepers and prostitutes (both in *DT* no. 52 = *CT* no. 73). Curses are also found against shield makers (*DTA* no. 12, undated), doctors (*SEG* xxxiv no. 1175 = *SGD* no. 124 = *CT* no. 81, Metapontum, iv–iii BC), helmsmen (*SGD* no. 170, from Panticapaeum in southern Russia, undated) and seamstresses (*SGD* no. 72, unknown provenance and date). Free and slave, male and female workers are victims alike. (Cf. *CT* pp. 151–74.).

The innkeepers' profession predominates, which is gratifying in view of their ancient literary reputation for obstreperousness and vulgar abuse; often the distinction between innkeeper and brothelkeeper was vague, and often they were women (Faraone, 1991b: 27 n. 46). The following Attic tablet gives pride of place to innkeepers:

> I bind Callias, the local shopkeeper/innkeeper, and his wife Thraitta, and the shop/inn of the bald man, and the shop/inn of Anthemion, which is adjacent to . . ., and Philon the shopkeeper/innkeeper. Of all these people I bind their soul, work, hands, feet and shops/inns. I bind Sosimenes (and?) his brother, and Carpos his slave, the linen-seller, and Glycanthis, whom they call Malthace, and Agathon the shopkeeper/innkeeper, the slave of Sosimenes, of all these people I bind their soul, work, life, hands and feet [etc.] (*DTA* no. 87a = *CT* no. 62, iv BC)

The following Attic curse almost certainly targets amongst other people a pimp and his prostitutes:

> Cercis, Blastos, Nicander, Glycera. I bind Cercis and her words and the actions of Cercis and her tongue before the unmarried (dead); and whenever they read this, may utterance be denied Cercis. I bind [name lost] himself and his girls/prostitutes and his trade and his capital and his business and his speech and his actions. Underworld Hermes, restrain these things by all means until they lose their minds. (*DT* no. 52 = *CT* no. 73, iii–ii BC)

Perhaps definitions of some individuals on curse tablets as pimps should not be taken literally, but as abuse, as ritual slander to give the powers particular reason to attack the victims (e.g. *SGD* no. 11 again; cf. Versnel, 1991: 95 n. 23).

The elder Pliny indicates that curse tablets were used still in the Roman world in connection with trade, again specifically with reference to the crushing of potters' wares (*Natural History* 28.4.19). There are two reasonable Roman-period examples of trade curses: one from Nomentum dating from the first century AD or possibly even from the late republic (*DT* no. 135 = *CT* no. 80; cf. Solin, 1989: 196–7), and one from Carthage dating from the second or third century AD (Solin, 1968: 31 = *CT* no. 62).

Erotic Curses

Erotic or amatory curse tablets are of particular importance, not only because around a quarter of classifiable extant tablets fall into the category, but because they constitute the category of tablets mostly clearly forced to evolve under the pressure of the circumstances in which they were made and because of their general relevance to the study of gender relations, which is currently the prime focus of interest in Greek social history. (On erotic curses see primarily Maltomini, 1979 [reviewing unpublished work by Moke]; Jordan, 1985b: 222–3 [for a concise survey]; Petropoulos, 1988; Winkler, 1990; *CT* pp. 78–115.)

There are literary indications that the Greeks had used magic in erotic contexts at least since the archaic period: the most famous example is the 'girdle' or 'band' of Aphrodite, which Hera borrows as a love charm with which to seduce Zeus (Homer, *Iliad* 14.198–223 and 292–351; cf. Bonner, 1949 and 1950: 115). More directly antecedent to erotic tablets is the series of temporary verbal spells through which the demi-goddess Calypso detains Odysseus on her island, making him 'forget' his homeland and wife, even though he still really longs for them (Homer, *Odyssey* 1.51–9 and 5.148–59; cf 9.94–5 and 10.236 and 12.184–5 for other magical 'forgetting'; see Petropoulos, 1988: especially 128–20; Heubeck, et al., 1989 on 10.213). However, erotic curse tablets only appear first in the fourth century BC, well after the establishment of the other major types of binding spell. Perhaps this was because the binding idiom did not seem immediately useful for situations of love, and it was indeed the rather specific erotic circumstance of the presence of a rival (real or feigned) for the beloved's affections, an 'enemy' in love, that first brought curse tablets into the erotic sphere. It was not until the second century AD, when

curse tablet culture had become mature, complex and syncretised, that tablets were finally used for attraction, initially in North Africa and Syria. Although the language of binding was still used in these tablets, the binding was of a type that violated the original idiom: to 'bind' a lover to oneself is not really to restrain them. The distinction between the first and second types is usually rendered in terms of 'separation curses', known in Greek as *diakopoi* (but often now referred to under the German term 'Trennungszauber'), and 'attraction' or 'aphrodisiac curses', known in Greek as *agōgai*. Separation curses disappeared in the iii AD, attraction in the fourth. (See Gow, 1952,ii: p. 37 and Faraone, 1991b: 13–15 for this development and terminology; cf., for further subcategorisation, Petropoulos, 1988: 216; Winkler, 1990: 94; *CT* pp. 79–80.)

The majority of extant erotic tablets are written by men in pursuit of women, but examples of all four sexual permutations survive. An example of a man (we assume) in pursuit of a woman is found in the separation curse addressed to the corpse Theonnastos quoted above (*DT* no. 85 = Gager no. 20, Boeotia, iii–ii BC). Women (we assume) are seen in pursuit of men in another undated separation curse from Boeotia:

> (*Side A*) I assign Zois the Eretrian, wife of Kabeira, to Earth and to Hermes – her food, her drink, her sleep, her laughter, her intercourse [probably including sexual], her playing of the kithara and her entrance [perhaps with some sexual overtones], her pleasure, her little buttocks, her thinking, her eyes . . .
> (*Side B*) and to Hermes (I consign) her wretched walk, her words, deeds and evil talk. (*DT* no. 86 = *CT* no. 18 [trans.])

Women are seen in pursuit of women in a lead attraction curse from Egypt:

> By the means of this corpse-demon set on fire the heart, liver, the spirit of Gorgonia, whom Nilogenia, bore for desire and love for Sophia, whom Isara bore. Drive Gorgonia, whom Nilogenia bore, to the bath-house, and you (corpse-demon), become a (female) bath-attendant. (*SGD* no. 151 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 42, Hermoupolis, iii–iv AD)

The corpse-demon is to heat up Gorgonia with love, as a bath-attendant would heat up her customers with warm water. Bath-houses were appropriately believed to be favoured haunts for ghosts (see Bonner, 1932b and *Suppl. Mag.* ad loc.). Egypt has produced other homosexual curses on papyrus: a further lesbian one (*PGM* XXXII) and three male-homosexual (*PGM* XXXIIa and LXVI and *Suppl. Mag.* no. 54).

Winkler argued that attraction spells may sometimes have had a less romantic purpose than first appears. Some tablets appear to wish not simply to make the beloved reciprocate love, but actually to turn the

tables on her, and make her suffer the torments of unreciprocated love for the curser. Winkler sees this process as a therapeutic one of transference and projection, in which the primary goal is not a relationship with the beloved but deliverance from the torments of desire, and in which the process is akin to sending away a disease onto another (Winkler, 1990: 87–91; cf. *CT* pp. 81–2). The archaic Lesbian poetess Sappho's hymn to Aphrodite had arguably attempted to achieve the same (F1 Voigt, early vi BC; cf. Winkler, 1990: 166–76 and Bernand, 1991: 294–7). However, many tablets do explicitly ask for a relationship (see below).

The curse tablets' custom of binding those parts of the body specifically relevant to the matter in hand and their taste for the countercultural gave rise to the use of frank and vigorous sexual language in erotic tablets, as illustrated by the curse against Zois quoted above. An Egyptian tablet is particularly full:

> I bind you Theodotis, daughter of Eus, to the tail of the snake and to the mouth of the crocodile and the horns of the ram and the poison of the asp and the hairs of the cat and the 'appendage' of the god, so that you may not ever be able to have sex with another man or be screwed or be buggered or give oral sex or take pleasure with another man, except me alone, Ammonion the son of Hermitaris . . . so that Theodotis, the daughter of Eus may no longer make trial of another man apart from me alone, Ammonion, taken in slavery, driven hysterical, searching for Ammonion son of Hermitaris, flying through the air, and so that she may bring her thigh near to thigh and genitals near to genitals for eternal sex for all the time of her life. These are the pictures. (*SGD* no. 161 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 38 = *CT* no. 34, ii AD)

The accompanying pictures include a crocodile and a kissing couple; it is possible that an obscure figure represents with appropriate explicitness a penis entering a vagina (see *CT* ad loc.). A papyrus formulary for an attraction spell similarly expresses its purpose: '. . . so that you may bring me woman X and fix head to head, and fasten together lips with lips, and fix stomach to stomach and bring thigh near to thigh, and fasten black together with black, and may woman X accomplish her own love-making with me, man Y, for all the length of time' (*PGM* IV 400–5 = *CT* no. 27).

Prayers for Justice

Prayers for justice constitute the most distinctive category of curse tablets. The specific sort of justice that most of them seek is the restitution of stolen goods. The category is dominated by the large Bath cache, the importance of which for our understanding of the 'prayers for justice' genre is further increased by the exemplary nature of Tomlin's analysis of

them (*Tab. Sulis*). All but one of the 130 tablets in this cache seek restitution of stolen goods, as do at least 20 of the other 30 British tablets. By contrast only 20 tablets prompted by theft are known from the rest of the ancient world: the British ever, it seems, valued private property above all else. (Theft tablets from outside Bath are listed at *Tab. Sulis* pp. 60–2.)

The prayers-for-justice category is so distinctive that some scholars now insist that they should not be classed with curse tablets at all (e.g. Versnel, 1991). But we should not lose sight of the similarities:

* Both are usually written on lead, rolled and transfixed by nails (cf. *Tab. Sulis* p. 59).

* Prayers for justice conform to the latter part of Jordan's definition of curse tablets: '. . . intended to influence, by supernatural means, the actions or welfare of persons or animals against their will' (1985a: 151).

* Prayers for justice are typically deposited in sanctuaries or sacred springs, as are many curse tablets.

* A significant number of cross-over cases, which share elements both of traditional curses and prayers for justice, prevents categorical differentiation between the two groups. Excluding the Bath tablets, which all derive from a single local practice, there are, according to Versnel's classification, 20 examples of 'pure' prayers for justice and 18 examples of 'border area' cases (1991: 61 and 64–75, esp. 68; cf. *CT* pp. 179). Since the size of the 'border area' group is of a similar order of magnitude to the 'pure' type, it cannot be argued that 'prayers for justice' belong to a radically independent group. Of particular interest in this 'border area' is a tablet with a fairly traditional curse on one side, and a prayer for justice on the other, both directed to the same end (*SGD* no. 58, Delos, i BC–i AD; cf. Versnel, 1991: 66–7).

Nonetheless, the following criteria may be employed towards the construction of a syndrome for prayers for justice:

* They do not use the distinctive binding formula of words, but rather simply pray for just treatment from the god. Nor do they contain *voces magicae* or 'words of power' (*Tab. Sulis* p. 62).

* They are normally addressed to major or respectable deities, although there can still be a preference for those with chthonic connections, such as Mercury (= Hermes, as in the Uley cache: see *Tab. Sulis* p. 61 nos. 13–16), or Demeter (as in *DT* nos. 2–3, 6, 11–12 and *SGD* no. 60 = *Tab. Sulis* p. 61 nos. 2–7). However, the Athenian prayers for justice are addressed to the demons of the underworld (*DT* nos. 74–5, *SGD* no. 21 and p. 162 = *Tab. Sulis* p. 62 nos. 9–12). The Bath cache is addressed to Sulis, identified with Minerva (= Athene). While Minerva

had no chthonic associations, Sulis' sacred spring was a body of underground water.

* Concomitantly, the tone of the language of prayers for justice evinces greater humility and deference towards the powers invoked than that of binding curses. Taking these first three points together, many of the prayers for justice seem to have much more in common with ordinary pious religious practice than 'magic' (*Tab. Sulis* p. 62).

* Since most of the 'prayers for justice' seek the restitution of stolen goods, the petitioner is usually unaware of the identity of the one that wrongs him, with the result that the victim is usually unnamed, in contrast to traditional curse tablets, which in their most basic form consist solely of names. Some prayers for justice do, however, name suspected thieves (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 15, iii–iv AD, 'Concordia'), while others include a convenient shortlist of suspects, to expedite the god's work (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 90 [cf. p. 95] = *CT* no. 96, iii AD, with 18 names appended). On the other hand, the petitioner usually names himself in prayers for justice, and this again is in contrast to traditional curse tablets (except erotic attraction spells), in which self-identification may even have courted danger from both the living and the dead. In prayers relating to theft self-naming helps identify the stolen goods for benefit of god and thief alike, but it is common also in non-theft prayers for justice (*Tab. Sulis* pp. 62 and 100, Versnel, 1991; *CT* pp. 179 and 189).

* Whereas other types of curse are open-ended and supposedly permanently effective, the curses in prayers for justice tend to be conditional and of finite duration, and are to be lifted when the desired justice has been achieved (e.g. *DT* no. 212 = *CT* no. 92 [and cf. p. 189], Bruttium, iii BC, quoted below).

The basic conceit of the prayers relating to theft is a quasi-legal one. The Bath tablets have been compared in the legalising of their language to appeals for the restitution of stolen property made before Roman magistrates (*Tab. Sulis* pp. 70–1; cf. Versnel, 1991: 71–2; *CT* pp. 175, 179). Usually, the stolen goods are transferred into the ownership of the deity: thus a crime of theft against a mortal is transformed into one of sacrilege against a god (temple-robbery was one of the most heinous crimes in the ancient world). Not only did a god have the power to identify a thief, but he also had the power to inflict terrible (if indirect) punishment, via illness, accident or death, and that too for a crime now far greater than mere theft (cf. Versnel, 1991: 73–4, 80, 85). Here is an example from the Bath cache, which is on the whole typical (although the vivid detail that the thief is to return the cloak 'in his beak' is unique):

> I, [. . .]eocorotis, have lost my (Italian) cloak, (Greek) cloak, (Gallic) cloak (and) my tunic. I have given [it/them to] Sulis, so that the thief may deliver it in his beak within nine days, whether free or slave man, whether free or slave woman, whether boy or girl. [Let him] deliver the horse-blanket, [whether slave or free man, whether] slave or free woman, whether boy [or girl] in his beak. (*Tab. Sulis* no. 62, iii AD)

A Latin tablet from Corsica comes right to the point. Omitting preamble about the actual theft from the petitioner and the petitioner's donation of stolen goods to the god, it begins:

> . . .]ulus, avenge yourself. Whoever harmed you, avenge yourself [etc.] (Solin, 1981: 121 = Versnel, 1991: 82–3, undated)

It was quite usual to profess that one was 'giving' to a god in other contexts: one would have done this in making temple dedication, a regular sacrifice, and conditionally when making a vow. Sometimes it is not the stolen goods that are given to the deity, but the thief himself directly (cf. Versnel, 1991: 80). The Bath curses are further associated with ideas of sacrifice in that they often demand that the thief should pay for his crime with his blood (see *Tab. Sulis* p. 70; cf. Versnel, 1991: 89). In the following curse from Bath, anger or wit leads the petitioner to associate the spilling of the victim's blood with the stolen object, and in a way that is particularly reminiscent of sacrificial procedure:

> The one that has stolen my bronze bowl is accursed. I give the person to the temple of Sulis, whether woman or man, whether slave or free, whether boy or girl, and may the man who did this pour his own blood into the very bowl. I give you that thief who stole the item itself, for the god to find, whether woman or man, whether slave or free, whether boy or girl. (*Tab. Sulis* no. 44 = *CT* no. 95, iii AD)

In the following Bath tablet both property and thief are given:

> A message from Docca to the goddess Sulis Minerva: I give to your power the money that I lost, i.e. 5 denarii, and I give the one that stole the money, whether slave or free, whether man or woman. Let the person be forced to . . . (*Tab. Sulis* no. 34, iii AD)

People that know the identity of the thief but refuse to reveal it can be cursed too (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 97, iv AD; cf. p. 62 and Versnel, 1991: 89). A Latin tablet from Pagans Hill in Britain curses a named thief-couple, but then the author takes the opportunity to attack old enemies whilst he is about it, and asks for their names to be cursed also (*Tab. Sulis*: 61 no. 9; cf. p. 95).

On the (doubtless rare) occasions on which a stolen object was found, what then became of it? A range of options was available. One was to promise to give the god a specified fraction of the (value of the) property on its return. We find this in some British curse tablets, though not at Bath. Here is a Latin example from Kelvedon:

> Whoever has stolen the property of Varenus, whether woman or male, may he pay with his own blood. Half of the money he pays is dedicated to Mercury and to Virtue. (*Tab. Sulis* p. 61 no. 17 = *CT* no. 97, iii–iv AD)

The half-back deal is also offered in Silvianus' tablet (*DT* no. 106 = *Tab. Sulis* p. 61 no. 28 = *CT* no. 99, quoted below). A tablet from Uley offers a third part of the value of the recovered goods to the successful god (*Tab. Sulis* p. 61 no. 14; cf. Versnel, 1991: 87). Another British tablet, from Redhill, offers Jupiter a tenth of 112 stolen denarii (*Tab. Sulis* p. 61 no. 24 = *CT* no. 98). Another option was for the recovered item to be deemed to belong to the god, whilst its erstwhile human owner retained the right to use it. Petronius' fictional nouveau-riche Trimalchio, who had vowed to Mercury a thousandth of his profits, may be broadly compared: this dedication did not sit idly in Mercury's temple, but constituted a ten-pound gold bracelet on the donor's arm (*Satyricon* 67; cf. *Tab. Sulis* p. 70, Versnel, 1991: 84; *CT* pp. 193–4). Are we to suppose that such objects were to be returned to the goddess when worn out or broken, or on the death of their mortal keepers? But if one had promised to donate the recovered property to a god, without further qualification, as was normal at Bath, was it not ungrateful or even sacrilegious to continue to make use of it? The possibility should not be excluded that the deity was often to get not only the ownership but also the use of any stolen property that was recovered, and that the original owner effectively despaired of recovering the goods for himself, and therefore wrote the curse primarily out of a wish for revenge upon the thief (cf. Versnel, 1991: 83–4). In all cases stolen goods were to be returned in the first instance to the temple (cf. *Tab. Sulis* p. 70 and Versnel, 1991: 75–7).

A unique Greek tablet from Bruttium may be particularly vindictive. It seeks far more than the simple restitution of the goods:

> Collyra dedicates to the attendants of the goddess the dusky coat which Melitta took and has not given back and . . . and she uses it and she knows . . . it is. May she dedicate to the goddess 12 times its value along with a half-medimnus of incense as is law in the city. Let the possessor of the cloak not release her soul until she makes dedication to the goddess. Collyra dedicates to the attendants of the goddess the three pieces of gold that Melitta took and is not giving back. May she dedicate to the goddess 12 times their value along with a medimnus of

> incense, as is law in the city. Let her not release her soul until she makes dedication to the goddess. But if [Collyra] were to drink or eat with her without realising it, may she be preserved, and similarly if she were to go under the same roof. (*DT* no. 212 = *CT* no. 92, iii BC)

But perhaps part of Collyra's purpose here is to magnify the incentive for the god to pursue the crime. One of the Uley tablets similarly asks for restitution of the stolen goods to Mercury and also requests that the god choose an extra 'devotion' of his own to receive from the thief (*Tab. Sulis* p. 61 no. 13; cf. Versnel, 1991: 88).

The Bath tablets (all third- to fourth-century AD) record the theft of a wide range of things: coins (*Tab. Sulis* nos. 8, 34, 54, and 98), jewelry (*Tab. Sulis* nos. 15, 59 and 97), pots and pans (*Tab. Sulis* nos. 44, 60 and 66), a ploughshare (*Tab. Sulis* no. 31), gloves (*Tab. Sulis* no. 5), a cap (*Tab. Sulis* no. 55), cloaks and capes (particularly popular: *Tab. Sulis* 10, 32, 43, 55 and 61–4) and blankets (*Tab. Sulis* nos. 49 and 62). Two tablets curiously do not specify the goods stolen, whether through carelessness, or, as Tomlin suggests, because the goddess already knew (*Tab. Sulis* nos. 99–100). The ploughshare apart, everything could have been stolen in the baths themselves. Roman baths were notoriously subject to thieves (see, e.g., Catullus 33 and Seneca, *Letter* 56.2). It is possible that some of the lost jewelry was not in fact stolen but accidentally dropped by its owner in the actual baths: the drains from the baths at Bath and Carleon have revealed a large number of rings and gemstones (*Tab. Sulis* pp. 79–81).

The elaborate so-called 'confession inscriptions' from second- to third-century AD Asia Minor, of which there are more than eighty, are often invoked in the elucidation of the mentality behind prayers for justice, and as evidence of their effectiveness. Some of them are believed to have been motivated by the use of prayers-for-justice tablets. The following is one such:

> The god [Men] was angry with the thief, and after some time made him bring the cloak to the god, and he confessed. Therefore the god commanded, via an angel, that the cloak be sold and that he should inscribe his powers on a pillar. (*TAM* v.1 no. 159 = *CMRDM* i no. 69 [cf. *CT* p. 176])

(See Lane, 1971–8, iii: pp. 17–38; *Tab. Sulis* pp. 103–5; Versnel, 1991: 75–9; *CT* p. 176; Mitchell, 1993, i: 191–5). Some tablets from the temple of Demeter at Cnidus in Asia Minor also require that the guilty party publicly confess his guilt, in a gesture typical of the religious mentality of the area (*DT* nos. 1–13, i–ii AD).

A British tablet of the second half of the later fourth century AD, from

the temple of the minor Romano-British god Nodens at Lydney Park, is of particular interest:

> To the god Nodens. Silvianus has lost his ring. He has given half its value to Nodens. Among those that possess the name of Senicianus do not allow good health until he brings it right to the temple of Nodens. (*DT* no. 106 = Versnel, 1991: 84 = *CT* no. 99)

A golden ring from the same period was found in a field at Silchester, 30 miles away. It has two inscriptions: the first, on the bezel, is a simple pagan one: 'Venus'. The second is a Christian one, on the band: 'Senicianus, may you live in God!' It is hard to believe that this is not the pagan Silvianus' ring, re-customised by a Christian Senicianus. We cannot be sure that Silvianus did not get his ring back, but if he had done, it would have been natural for him to obliterate the Senicianus inscription. Taken together, these two finds perhaps constitute the earliest document of British Christian hypocrisy. (See Bathurst, 1879: 45–7 with Plate 20; Goodchild, 1953.)

Sometimes prayers for justice are unconnected with theft and merely seek vengeance upon an enemy. The following example from Sicily (i AD) is to the point:

> Lady, may you eliminate Eleutheros. If you do justice for me, I will make a silver bough, if you eliminate him from the human race. (*SGD* no. 115 = *CT* no. 93)

Here the goddess appears to be employed almost amorally as a contract killer. Another prayer for justice of a more general kind, albeit dealing with an issue akin to theft, is the following tablet from Amorgos (ii BC–ii AD). It is perhaps the most narrative of any of the surviving tablets, thus providing a valuable insight into social life in ancient Amorgos. The purpose of the detailed and petulant narration seems to be to make it clear to Demeter that the petitioning couple has been subjected to a concerted campaign of victimisation by the wicked Epaphroditus. The tablet is also of interest for itself containing accusations of magic against its victim (cf. Versnel, 1985: 252–3):

> Lady Demeter, my queen, I am your suppliant. I fall before you as your slave. One Epaphroditus has lured away my slaves. He has taught them evil ways. He has put ideas into their heads, he has given them advice, he has seduced them. He has laughed at me, he has given them wings to waste time in the marketplace. He gave them the idea of running away. He himself bewitched my slavegirl, so that he could take her to wife against my will. For this reason he bewitched her to run away

along with the others. Lady Demeter, being the victim of these things, and being on my own, I take refuge with you. May I find you propitious, and grant that I should find justice. Grant that the one that has done such things to me should find no peace in body or mind anywhere, whether still or moving. May he not be served by slaves or slavegirls, by small people or a large person. May he fail to accomplish his aims. May a binding(-curse) (*katadesmos*) seize hold of his house and hold it fast. May no child cry (?). May he not lay a happy table. May no dog bark. May no cockerel crow. May he not harvest after he has sown . . . May neither the land nor the sea bear fruit for him. May he not have blessed joy, and may he himself perish miserably, and all that is with him.

Lady Demeter, I beseech you as the victim of injustices. Help me, goddess, and make a just choice, so as to bring the most terrible things and even harsher terrible things upon those who contrived such things and laughed at us and inflicted griefs upon both myself and my wife Epictesis. Queen, heed us in our plight and punish those who are glad to see us in such a condition. (*SGD* no. 60 = *CT* no. 75)

THE POWERS ADDRESSED

In addition to the dead themselves, a wide range of powers is invoked in the tablets. In the earlier tablets the powers appealed to are, understandably, particularly chthonic gods. Hermes, the escorter of souls to the underworld (*psychopompos*), and Persephone or Kore, the bride of Hades, are popular already in the early Attic tablets. Hades himself and the underworld witch-goddess, Hecate, were also appropriate powers to appeal to, as were the Furies, the avengers of those that died by violence. Earth-mother goddesses in all their manifestations were important too, such as Demeter (mother of Persephone) and Ge/Gaia ('Earth'). The Roman equivalents of these were popular in Latin tablets, such as Pluto (Hades) and Mercury (Hermes). Prayers for justice were less strongly associated with chthonic powers, and were often given to the main local god. In the imperial period the curses, particularly those found in Egypt, tended to become extremely syncretistic: Alexandria was the chief melting pot for the various religious cultures, with large contingents of Greeks, Egyptians, Jews and others (Fraser 1972: i 192–3). In these tablets are found: Egyptian gods – e.g. Thoth (also identified with Hermes), Osiris (ruler of the Egyptian underworld) and Seth (commonly identified with the Greek Typhon; cf. Kees, 1923; Moraux, 1960: 15–19); Jewish gods and powers – e.g. Iao (= Yahweh/Jehovah), Adonai and cherubim; other Near Eastern powers – e.g. the Babylonian Ereschigal. Iao was often

identified in the syncretistic tablets with Seth (possibly because *Iaō* was considered similar to *eiō*, Coptic for 'ass', the animal particularly associated with Seth: see Procopé-Walter, 1933; Moraux, 1960: 23–37; Jordan, 1985b: 245–6). The demonic *voces magicae* and Characters which were also developed in this period will be discussed below. (See the catalogue of powers at Kagarow, 1929: 59–75; cf. Preisendanz, 1972: 6–9, 11–13 and 20–1; Faraone, 1991b: 6; Versnel, 1991: 62 and 64; *CT* pp. 5–6 and 12–13, with ranking in terms of popularity.)

Interestingly, it appears that some powers could be invoked in shrines belonging to others: thus in the sacred spring of Sulis were found tablets addressed to Mercury (*Tab. Sulis* no. 53) and Mars (*Tab. Sulis* nos. 33 and 97; cf. p. 70).

It is surprising that the Greeks' magician-god, Hephaestus, his feet twisted like a voodoo doll (see above), makes very little impact in the tablets. He appears only in one late tablet from Syria (*SGD* p. 192 = *CT* no. 6, v–vi AD), and is otherwise mentioned only in one of the Greek magical papyri (*PGM* XII 177–8). On the other hand, a quite unexpected deity appears in a Latin prayer for justice from Austria: it is addressed to 'deceitful Cacus' (Versnel, 1991: 83–4 = *CT* no. 101, c. 100 AD). This is presumably the Roman thief-monster made famous by Virgil's *Aeneid* (8.193–305): a curious case of setting a thief to catch a thief, or perhaps of 'fighting fire with fire' (cf. Faraone, 1992: 36–53).

The act of invocation could itself be considered to have magical effect, as is apparent from some of the later tablets which are taken up with little else. Behind this usage again lurks the conceit that to know the name is ipso facto to exercise power over the one denoted. The special power of invocation is guaranteed by the difficulty and obscurity of some of the demonic names. Some tablets, in their anxiety to use the correct name for the demon addressed, somewhat undermine themselves by adding to their addresses 'or if you wish to be addressed by any other name' (e.g. *DT* nos. 129b [Arretium, ii AD] and 196 [Cumae, undated]; cf. *Tab. Sulis* pp. 95–6).

A wide variation of tone and attitude is adopted towards the powers addressed. We discussed above a curse that expressed extreme diffidence towards the dangerous powers it disturbs ('Have respect for me the writer and destroyer, because he does this not willingly but under the compulsion of thieves': *SGD* no. 21 = *CT* no. 84, Attica, i AD). In the Bath tablets Sulis is sometimes deferentially and indirectly addressed via her 'majesty' (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 32, iii AD; cf. p. 70). In the Amorgos tablet against Epaphroditus the curser shows extreme humility towards Demeter: 'Lady Demeter, my queen, I am your suppliant. I fall before you as your slave' (*SGD* no. 60 = *CT* no. 75, ii BC–ii AD).

Apparently rather high-handed in tone is the following argument

presented to encourage Cybele's co-operation in a Phrygian prayer-for-justice tablet, despite the usual humility of the category:

> I dedicate to the mother of the gods all the gold coins which I lost, so that she will seek them out and bring them all to light and punish those that have them in a way that is appropriate to her power, and so that she will not be a laughing stock (*katagelaston*). (Dunant, 1978 = *CT* 1992 no. 90, i BC–ii AD; cf. Versnel, 1991: 74)

An imperative tone towards the powers appears in the imperial period (Versnel, 1991: 94 n. 7). Some tablets from Egypt import the Egyptian practice of actually threatening them if the wishes of the curser are not carried out, e.g.: 'If you do not obey me, and do not quickly bring to pass what I say to you, the sun does not set below the earth, and neither does Hades nor the universe exist' (*PGM* CI = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 45 = *CT* no. 30, v AD; cf. *PGM* XXXIV and LVII; see Faraone, 1991b: 18 and Betz, 1992: lvii).

Sometimes the maker of the spell identifies himself with the terrible powers that he invokes in order to strengthen the expression of his will in the spell: thus in the tablet against Theodotis partly quoted above, the curser asserts, 'I bind you, Theodotis . . . For I alone am LAMPSOURE OTHIKALAK AIPHNOSABAO STESEON UELLAPHONTA SANKISTE CHPHURIS ON' (*SGD* no. 161 = *Suppl. Mag* no. 38 = *CT* no. 34).

A curious tablet from Bath, although addressed to the pagan Sulis in the usual way, curses the thief of stolen money, whether pagan (*gentilis*) or Christian (*Tab. Sulis* no. 98, iv AD). *Gentilis* would normally indicate the language of a Christian, so we may have a Christian here using a pagan cursing technique. If so, it is interesting that just as the Christian feels able to cross over and make use of pagan powers, so too he perceives that Sulis has the power to chastise her own and unbelievers alike.

VOCES MAGICAE, LETTERS, SHAPES AND IMAGES

We have seen that the notion of twistedness is fundamental to the curse tablets, and that this has many implications for the organisation of language upon them. In this section we turn to some other facets of their magical language.

Voces magicae or 'words of power' are rare before the imperial period, but common thereafter. In translations they are usually transliterated in small capitals. These are mysterious words which are not *obviously* or *immediately* meaningful in Greek or any other language. The most important group of *voces magicae* are the six so-called 'Ephesian letters' (*Ephesia grammata*). It is doubtful whether in origin they had any special association with Ephesus (the name may derive from the Babylonian *epêšu*, 'bewitch'). In their usual order they are: *askion, kataskion, lix, tetrax, damnameneus* and *aision* (or *aisia*), but they can be rearranged into a hexameter. Some of these words do closely evoke some Greek words, and Damnameneus was reputedly one of the Idaean Dactyls, dwarf helpers of the magician-god Hephaestus. Despite the fact that they are only found on curse tablets from the first century AD, they are known to have been in circulation since at least the fifth century BC, and their earliest attestation is in a curse-related context, an inscription from near Mycenae apparently giving thanks for vengeance:

> The Ephesian vengeance (*mēnysis*) was sent down. Firstly Hecate harms the belongings of Megara in all things, and then Persephone reports to the gods. All these things are already so. (Jeffery, 1955: 75; cf. *CT* p. 6)

Words reminiscent of the first *Ephesia grammata*, fully meaningful in context, are found in a hexameter on an unpublished fourth-century BC tablet from Selinus, perhaps modelled on a fifth-century original: *eske kata skie[rōn] oreōn* . . . 'when under the shadowy mountains . . .' (Jordan, 1988a: 256–8). The *Ephesia grammata* could have protective qualities that made them suitable for amulets: a fragment of Menander reveals that they were used to ward off spells from newly marrying couples (F313 Körte). (See McCown, 1923; Preisendanz, 1962; Kotansky, 1991: 111–12, 126 n. 21 and 127 n. 27; *CT* pp. 5–7.)

Contradictory attitudes were probably employed towards the intelligibility of the *voces magicae*. At one level they were considered unintelligible to mortals, and for that reason powerful: in around 300 AD Iamblichus argued that 'foreign names' (*barbara onomata*), by which he may mean, or among which he may include what we call *voces magicae*, lost their power when translated into Greek, i.e., when they were rendered intelligible (*On the mysteries of Egypt* 7.5; cf. 3.14 for a similar view on the Characters). The use of *voces magicae* in the Greek magical papyri from Egypt may evidence their unintelligibility in one respect, as the Graeco-Egyptian professionals garbled phrases from the old languages, and progressively broke up the metrical patterns in which they had originally been composed (Betz, 1992: xlvi–xlvii; cf. *CT* p. 9, with modern anthropological parallels).

On the other hand, most of them were initially corruptions of things recognised as the names of deities or demons in some or other mortal language. And the more the individual *voces magicae* were used, whatever their origin, the more familiar they became; and the more they came to be addressed as powers themselves, and correspondingly personalised into the names of demons, the less 'unintelligible' and the more genuinely

meaningful they would have become (cf. Graf, 1991: 188–97). Professionals probably came to feel quite at home with them (in contrast to their clients?). Thus it is actually possible to construct sketchy descriptions of some of the demons connected with individual *voces magicae*. ABRASAX (who appears in, e.g., *SGD* no. 152 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 47 = *CT* no. 28, Egypt, ii–iii AD) was a cock-headed, armoured demon with snakes for legs, this last quality giving rise to a Latinate title, 'the Anguipede'. He was associated with the number 365 (based upon the numerical value of his name's constituent letters) and hence with the sun, and was particularly popular as an illustration on amulets (Bonner, 1950: pp. 123–39 and D162–88, with plates viii–ix; Barb, 1957; Merkelbach and Totti, 1990 and Merkelbach, 1992; further images at *LIMC* i.2 pp. 2–7). Strings of *voces magicae* in formulas were perhaps more proof against a debilitating familiarisation, but then again it is possible that specific uses or properties came to be associated with particular formulas. And, as with the *Ephesia grammata*, parts of the later *voces magicae* formulas can seem semi-translatable: thus in the formula MASKELLI MASKELLŌ PHNOUKENTABAŌ OREOBAZAGRA RHĒXICHTHŌN HIPPOCHTHŌN PYRIPĒGANYX the last three words are evocative, in Greek terms, of 'Bursting-forth from the earth, horse-earth and fire-spring-master' (e.g. *DT* no. 38 lines 27–9, Egypt, iii AD; cf. *CT* p. 268 and Betz, 1992: 336).

The 'Characters' (*charaktēres*) are a series of magical figures which broadly resemble alphabetic letters in form, but are slightly more complex in design. They only begin to appear in curse tablets in the second century AD, but from that time on they are very common in magical texts and on magical objects of all sorts. They were sometimes addressed directly as powers in their own right in curses; sometimes indeed they are the only powers invoked, as in a curse in which they are drawn above the text (*SGD* no. 163 = *CT* no. 106, Israel, iii–v AD). A fine set of 38 of them is drawn out on a pair of tablets from Apamea in Syria (*SGD* p. 192 = *CT* no. 6, with illustration, v–vi AD). Some Characters are found also in Sethian tablets, fitted in around the other elaborate images (*DT* no. 155 = *CT* no. 13, Rome, iv AD, quoted above). No doubt their effectiveness too lay in their mysteriousness, in the fact that they signified, if not nothing, then something otherwise inexpressible. They may have had an astrological origin. Their use was not always covert and personal: seven of them are found inscribed on the wall of a theatre in Miletus, with an accompanying inscription which asks them to protect the city (Grégoire, 1922 no. 221). (See Van Rengen, 1984; *CT* pp. 10–11)

The letters of the alphabet in their own right, removed from the trammels of words, could also be magically effective. Thus on some curse tablets we find the alphabet or part of it written out. Of particular interest is one of the Bath tablets, which contains only the legend ABCDEFX, where the unexpected X may associate -DEF- with the word *def(i)x–io* (*Tab. Sulis* no.1). It was the vowels above all that were held to be powerful. In the imperial period these are often found written out in series and patterns (e.g. *DT* no. 155 = *CT* no. 13, quoted above). The Greek vowels were usefully seven, a number held to be of mystical significance; they were further associated with planets, angels and sounds (*CT* p. 34 n. 40). In a papyrus curse from Egypt, found together with wax voodoo dolls, we find a long list of *voces magicae* each beginning with a different letter of the Greek alphabet in order (*PGM* CI = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 45 = *CT* no. 30, v AD).

Another means of playing around with alphabets was to employ both Greek and Latin, or in various ways to confuse Greek and Latin in the same tablet. Some tablets from Hadrumentum employ passages of Latin text written in Greek script (e.g. *DT* nos. 267 and 269–71 [271 = *CT* no. 36], iii AD), or blend the two languages (*DT* no. 291, iii AD), or, within a Latin text, record the *voces magicae* and most of the names of the horses to be cursed in Greek, this alphabet apparently being considered more powerful (*DT* no. 295 = *CT* no. 11, late Roman). A less obvious case of alphabetic perversion is constituted by a circus tablet from Carthage, on which the text is written in Greek, but the names (which are Latin) in Latin (*DT* no. 241 = *CT* no. 12, i–iii AD).

It is common to find *voces magicae* arranged into shapes: squares, triangles (isoceles), 'wing-forms' (*pterygoeidea*, i.e. right-angled triangles), and occasionally diamonds (the equivalent of two isoceles triangles). A word-square made from the word/name Eulamo, one of the commonest *voces magicae*, is found on a number of tablets: in each of the six rows one letter is transposed from the front of the word to the end, with the result that 'Eulamo' can be read down the first column too (e.g. *SGD* no. 157 = *CT* no. 8, Egypt, iv AD). Triangles are made by repeating a word beneath or above itself in aligned rows, omitting a letter from either end each time. 'Wings' are similarly made by omitting a letter each time from one end of the word. The entire, lengthy text of a Carthaginian tablet is written out in the form of a large wing (*DT* no. 237 = *CT* no. 9, late Roman).

One sort of *vox magica* well suited to the curse tablets was the palindrome: such words remained magically proof against the retrograde writing common on the curse tablets. They appear in various lengths, but they are often very long indeed, and are favourite bases for the formation of isoceles triangles, since they retain their symmetry and palindromic nature at each stage of reduction (e.g. *SGD* no. 154, Egypt, iii AD). Sometimes the palindromes functioned at the level of sound rather than that of letter, with, for example, mirroring diphthongs appearing in the same orientation in their opposite halves of the palindrome (Bernand, 1991: 325).

In one Egyptian tablet we find all the sorts of figure discussed here: the Eulamo square, a retrograde Eulamo triangle (in which letters are lost from the beginning and end of the name for three lines, with a single A on the bottom line), and two complementary Eulamo wings, the first of which loses a letter from the end in each line, the second of which a letter from the beginning. There is also a long (imperfect) palindrome triangle, which Gager regards as representative of a grape-cluster (*SGD* no. 162 = *CT* no. 115, iv–v AD). One of the Greek magical papyri is also noteworthy for its highly elaborate palindrome-triangle, squares, wings and a vowel-series diamond (*PGM* XIXa).

The later tablets are also often decorated with pictures, and in this regard they can draw near to voodoo dolls. Many images are not securely decipherable. The purpose of those that are can usually be understood as sympathetic. Pictures of mummies or otherwise bound figures are common. Often these figures are transfixed by nails. Snakes, chthonic animals par excellence, are frequently found too, coiled around the bound figure or biting it. A Beirut curse includes a strangely rotund bound figure, whose body is criss-crossed with lines apparently representing ropes, and whose legs are oddly crossed too, perhaps representing further binding. The dots that cover the body seem to represent nail-heads, and protruberances from the head may do likewise. The figure is attacked by a creature, which may be a snake, but which looks rather vulturine, and may be intended to provide a bird's head to accompany the two adjacently inscribed Eulamo 'wings' (*SGD* no. 167 = *CT* no. 5, ii–iii AD). The Sethian batch is particularly well illustrated, an exemplary tablet of which was discussed above (*DT* no. 155 = *CT* no. 13, reproduced as Figure 3).

Images of the demons invoked were popular. These too can be seen as sympathetic in a broad sense, in that the drawing of the demon was perhaps felt to help reify his presence (cf. *CT* p. 11). A famous, albeit insecurely deciphered, image on a 'prayer for justice' tablet from a well in the Athenian agora has been variously thought to represent a 'bat with outspread wings', a 'six-armed Hecate' and 'three-winged Hecate'. Hecate is at least invoked by the tablet (among other powers). To the present author the image appears to be six armed, with the top pair brandishing torches aloft, the middle pair holding whips, and the bottom pair terminating in snakes (somewhat akin to the Angipede). The central part of the image is obscured by 'binding lines' and nails, but it is possible to see it as a large head, face-on, with large eyes, bulbous nose, and a broad smile. As often, nails project from the top (*SGD* no. 21 = *CT* no. 84, i AD; cf. Elderkin, 1937: 394; Jordan, 1980b).

AMULETS, PROTECTION AGAINST CURSING AND THE MAGICAL 'ARMS RACE'

How did one go about protecting oneself and one's property from the effects of these secret curses? Preisendanz thought that one could not protect oneself (1972: 6–7), but this view has not found support. The chief means would have been by wearing a protective amulet (*periapta* or *periamma*, literally denoting something 'fastened round' a person). Inscribed versions appear in the archaeological record from the fourth century BC, the earliest being a Cretan one inscribed with the *Ephesia grammata* (McCown 1923); uninscribed amulets can be difficult to identify as such. Amulets came to flourish in the imperial period. The most distinctive type, based on Punic and Egyptian models, consisted of a roll of inscribed papyrus or gold or silver lamella ('foil sheet') hung round the neck in a copper tube and flourished between the first century BC and the sixth century AD. Inscribed gemstones were also popular. (See Bonner, 1950 [for gemstones] especially 1–21; Delatte and Derchain, 1964 [also gemstones]; Kotansky, 1991 and 1994 – [a systematic publication of the lamellae-amulets] esp. xv–xix; *CT* pp. 218–42.)

Most amulets were designed either to give their wearers general protection or protection specifically from a named disease, such as stomach trouble, cholic, fever, eye-disease and or sciatica (see Bonner, 1950: 45–94). But some amulets explicitly declare their purpose to have been the warding off of curse tablets. A Beirut amulet protected its owner, Alexandra, from demons, spells and curse tablets (Jordan, 1991 = *CT* no. 125 = Kotansky, 1994 no. 52, iv AD; cf. Bonner, 1950: 101–2). An amulet from Asia Minor (i AD–i BC) begs of its demon-addressee:

> Drive away, drive away the curse from Rufina. And if anyone harms me in the future, turn the curse back upon him. (*CT* no. 120 = Kotansky, 1994 no. 36)

According to Gager's interpretation the Greek term used for 'curse' here (*hypothesis*) refers specifically to the deposition of a tablet. This amulet appears then to have been made both to respond to an already exisiting curse and to be generally protective against any other curse that might be made in the future (Kotansky, however, interprets *hypothesis* here as 'lawsuit'). Another amulet protected against magic in general:

> Free Juliana from all witchcraft (*pharmaka*) and all suffering and all magical influence and demonic manifestations by night and by day. (Kotansky, 1994 no. 46, Beroia, ii–iii AD)

The Greek magical papyri include instructions for making amulets to protect against spells, one of which itself requires inscription of and drawing on lead (*PGM* XXXVI 178–87 = *CT* no. 129); the drawing prescribed is not that which is then drawn on the papyrus, which is of a bound and nailed figure carrying a disembodied head and accompanied by a dog-like animal. Another of the papyri contains a recipe for an amulet consisting of an iron lamella inscribed with three Homeric verses (*PGM* IV 2145–240, esp. 2219–26; Homer, *Iliad* 10.564, 10.521 and 10.572). The amulet can be used for a number of purposes, including the restraint of other binding spells. In this case it is to be used in conjunction with a sea-shell buried in the grave of someone untimely dead, which is itself similarly inscribed with the same verses and some *voces magicae* besides.

The availability of protective amulets not unsurprisingly led to a magical 'arms race': a Syrian tablet, aimed at a pantomime, begins by explicitly cancelling the effects of any protective amulets that the victim might be wearing (*DT* no. 15 = *CT* no. 4, iii AD). Perhaps this was also the purpose of a much earlier tablet, which insists that it 'will bind Anticles and not let him go' (*SGD* no 16 = *CT* no. 102, Attica, iv BC).

Other curative measures could be used once one had fallen victim to a curse. The ideal way to put an end to it once and for all was to locate and remove (and presumably destroy) the tablet. In practice this must have been very difficult unless the tablet was concealed in one's own home, or one had definite information of its whereabouts (see below on the Tuder incident). Another solution was to put a binding curse of one's own on the binding curse to which one was subject: another example of the magical 'arms race.' Thus, a limestone tablet from Tell Sandahannah in Israel:

> I bind Philonidas and Xenodicus, thinking it right that I should take revenge upon them and have requital against those that had me thrown out of Demetrios' house because I have headaches and other pains. If they uttered a binding spell (*peridesmos*) to envelop me, so may obscurity take it. Philonidas . . . may they be chatterless and voiceless and have no sex. (Wünsch, 1902 no.34 = *CT* no. 107, ii AD)

A group of five Roman tablets attempts to bind every part of Plotius' anatomy, listed in systematic detail. He has deposited a curse against the author, and while this is not itself cursed, it is no doubt presumed to be rendered ineffective by the restraint of its depositor (see Fox, 1912a = *CT* no. 134 [in part], i BC). The Amorgos curse against Epaphroditus discussed above seeks a magical revenge for, amongst other things, the erotic spell Epaphroditus cast upon a slave-girl (*SGD* no. 60 = *CT* no. 75). A spell for releasing from bonds in the Greek magical papyri may also have been useful against binding magic, although it seems to focus particularly on the release from physical bonds (*PGM* XII 160–78). A single literary reference shows that herbal antidotes could be concocted to curse tablets:

> If someone should be charmed and cursed (*devotus, defixus*) this is how you can release him: cook seven pedeleonis plants, without roots, when the moon is decreasing and without using water; cleanse it as well as yourself, as you do this before the threshhold outside the house on the first night; burn and fumigate the birthwort plant; then return to the house without looking behind you and you will release him (from it). ([Apuleius] *Herbarium* 7.1 = *CT* no. 131 [trans.])

A first-century BC curse from Cnidus uses magic to protect its author not against magic, but (almost paradoxically) against the accusation of it:

> I dedicate to Demeter and Kore the one that said against me that I was making poisons/spells (*pharmaka*) for my husband. (*DT* no.4 = *CT* no. 89)

Another means of protecting oneself against an accusation of magic was, again perhaps paradoxically, to make a public conditional self-curse, with the curse to be implemented if one were foresworn. This is exemplified by a confession inscription from Asia Minor, set up by the descendants of Tatias, who doubtless wished to avert the anger of the gods from themselves. The narrative reveals that Tatias had fallen under suspicion of having cast a spell when her son-in-law Iucundus went mad. In order to vindicate herself she placed conditional self-curses in the temple, but the gods then sent punishment upon Tatias herself, and also on her son, who dropped a sickle on his foot, so that it was 'proven' that she was guilty all along. The gods are then duly praised for their powers in exacting justice. But as the commentators note, one cannot help wondering whether Tatias was indeed innocent after all (*TAM* v.1 no. 318 = *CT* no. 137 = Petzl, 1994 no. 69, ii AD; cf. *Tab. Sulis* pp. 103–4; Versnel, 1991: 75–9; Graf, 1994a: 184–5).

Another example of this sort of magical 'arms race' is found in the frequent request of curse tablets that the victim be deprived of the ability to sacrifice successfully: this was a means of ensuring that he was unable to approach the gods to avert the effects of the magic (e.g. *DT* no. 110 = *CT* no. 16, Gaul, iii AD; cf. Versnel, 1985; Strubbe, 1991: 43).

A further 'arms race' development may be found in a curse which first asks the powers to prevent the runner Alcidamos from passing the starting line at a coming festival race. But the curse goes on to ask that, should Alcidamos after all get past the starting line, he should be made to lose his direction (*SGD* no. 29, Attica, iii AD). The writer of the curse is then well aware that magic did not always work, or could be thwarted, and

thought it safer to have a double try (cf. Jordan, 1985b: 221–3 and 243; Faraone, 1991b: 12–13). A recipe for a similar 'try-and-try-again' spell appears in the *Sepher ha-Razim* (Morgan, 1983: p. 28).

Akin to the magical 'arms race' is what might be termed magical 'gamesmanship'. According to Versnel's reading of one of the Bath tablets, Annianus, after cursing the thief of six silver coins, asks the goddess still to punish the thief even if he has by some deceit returned the coins to his possession without his knowledge (*Tab. Sulis* no. 98, iv AD, [cf. p. 95] and Versnel, 1991: 90). If the interpretation is correct, it implies that one might deliberately trick another into making an 'unjustified' curse against oneself, presumably so that the curser might incur the anger of the justice-bringing deity for making a false accusation. Also, such a surreptitious restoration would leave the curser indebted to the goddess in his ignorance, and liable again to her anger for cheating her of her due portion.

One means to enlist the enthusiasm of the powers against a victim was 'ritual slander' of them, as in the following tablet from Messina:

> (I bind) Valeria Arsinoe, the nymphomaniac, the worm, Arsinoe, evil-doing and idle.
> (I bind) Valeria Arsinoe, the evil-doer. Sickness and decay attack the nymphomaniac! (*SGD* no. 114 = *CT* no. 116, ii AD)

In the Amorgos spell against Epaphroditus the curser accuses his victim of having used magic against him (*SGD* no. 60 = *CT* no. 75, quoted above). Ritual slander against a curse victim as himself a magician is a feature of ancient Near Eastern cursing (see below; for further ritual slander in the Greek curses see also *SGD* no. 22, *PGM* IV 2471–92 and XXXVI 138–44; cf. Eitrem, 1924b; Preisendanz, 1972: 24; Winkler, 1990: 89–91).

PROFESSIONALISM AND SPECIALISATION

Was binding magic the province of specialists, in other words 'witches' or 'magicians', or of amateurs, non-specialists, ordinary people who performed magic for themselves as and when they needed it? No clear pattern emerges: there were apparently significant amounts of specialisation and amateurism in different places, at different times and in different contexts.

The specialisation issue is complex. While many curse tablets were probably made, activated and deposited by amateurs on an ad hoc basis, there were opportunities for the involvement of different kinds of specialists, not all of whom need be perceived as 'magicians', at four separate stages in the process (cf. *Tab. Sulis* p. 98):

1. The drawing up of the curse text, with advice on any accompanying verbal procedures
2. The manufacture of the tablet
3. The inscription of a tablet
4. The deposition of the tablet, especially if in a grave

1. The simplest and commonest form of curse text, that which consisted simply of the name(s) of the victim(s), presumably did not require professional input in drafting, although any attendant verbal incantations may theoretically have done so. The simple additional texts that are found in curse tablets until the fourth century BC vary greatly, which suggests that they are mainly home-made compositions without recourse to formularies (Faraone apud *CT* p. 123 n. 11). But the long, complex texts of the imperial period, with all their obscurantist *voces magicae* etc., will often have depended upon handbooks. Sometimes the tablets explicitly acknowledge that they have their origin in some authoritative pre-existing paradigm. One of the Bath texts ends with the assertion 'The written page has been fully copied out' (*Tab. Sulis* no. 8 = *CT* no. 94, iii–iv AD): we can feel it implied, 'so this must work!' A Syrian tablet opens with a line that was clearly the title of the spell in a formulary and not intended to be copied onto any actual tablet: 'For restraining horses and charioteers' (*SGD* no. 167 = *CT* no. 5, iii AD). A tablet of similar date and provenance appears to be confused in its language because of the incompetent adaptation of a formulary (*DT* no. 15 = *CT* no. 4). Another curse is arranged in an unconventional way: the names of the cursed are written separately in a column on the left, whilst the text of the curse itself is written in a column on the right, using only pronouns to refer to the victims (*DT* no. 92 = *CT* no. 76, Crimea, iii BC). Perhaps this represents a lazy refusal to integrate the relevant names into a model text. (Cf. also the Sethian tablet *DT* no. 155 = *CT* no. 13 discussed above.)

We are fortunate to have as the bulk of the Greek magical papyri (the *PGM* corpus) a superb collection of magical handbooks and recipes from Egypt, products of a fairly homogenous Graeco-Egyptian cultural syncretism. They mostly date from between the first century BC and the fifth AD, and particularly from the third and fourth centuries AD, although they often reflect hellenistic material. The core of the *PGM* corpus first came to the attention of modern western scholarship after it was acquired by Jean d'Anastasi, who was the Armenian-born consular representative of Sweden at the court of the Pasha of Alexandria in the earlier nineteenth century. The uniformity in style of six of the major papyri in the Anastasi collection suggests that they may have belonged to a single ancient collection: they probably represent the discovery of a temple library or a magician's tomb near Thebes (Nock, 1929; Fowden, 1986: 72; Betz,

1991: 249 and 1992: xli–iii and xlvi). Greek magical handbooks are also refracted in the Hebrew magical handbook, the *Sepher ha-Razim*, which, though preserved in medieval manuscripts, seems to date back to the third or fourth century AD (see Margalioth, 1966 for text and Morgan, 1983 for translation).

There are numerous references to collections of such magical books in antiquity, mostly in connection with attempts to eradicate them: Augustus had 2,000 magical scrolls burned in 13 BC (Suetonius, *Augustus* 31.1); Paul's Ephesian converts burned their own magical books, altogether worth 50,000 pieces of silver (*Acts* 19:19). Such attempts at suppression guaranteed the power of the books.

The *PGM* corpus includes models for curse tablets and instructions for their manufacture and deposition, mainly from the fourth century (e.g. *PGM* IV 329–433, V 304–70, VII 394–422, 429–58, 459–61, IX, XXXVI 1–35 and 231–56 and LVIII 1–14; cf. Jordan, 1985b: 234 and Faraone, 1985: 151, 1989: 155 and 1991b: 22 n. 5). It is gratifying that there are some close correspondences between the texts of extant curse tablets and those of recipes in the corpus: thus four Egyptian tablets (*SGD* nos. 152–3 and 155–6 [of which 152 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 47 = *CT* no. 28; 153 = *SEG* viii no. 574], ii–iii AD) are similar to one recipe (*PGM* IV 329–433), whilst a tablet probably from Rome (*DT* no. 188, iv–v AD) is similar to another (*PGM* LVIII 1–14). While it is easy to conclude in these cases that the curser probably used a handbook, it is difficult to conclude in any specific case that a curser definitely did *not* use a handbook, because one simply does not know what may have been in lost handbooks. (See Jordan, 1985b: 234 and 1988a: 246–7; Faraone, 1985: 151.)

In the imperial period especially, general similarities between curse texts and manifest formulaic style can suggest that handbooks underpinned many of them. But the Bath cache sounds a warning: the texts in this group are remarkably similar and formulaic in appearance, but none are exact formulaic duplicates. This suggests that the Bath texts are not generated directly from paradigms in handbooks, but from an established, largely oral culture of expertise, which may itself have been indirectly supported by handbooks with paradigms occasionally brought down from the magician's self (cf. *Tab. Sulis* pp. 62–74 and 99). A group of tablets by the same writer from a well in the Agora can be shown to be derived from a formulary by juxtaposition, but it is also clear that the writer, whilst not being a magical expert himself, has varied and invented his phraseology to a small degree (*SGD* nos. 24–35, iii AD; 24 = *CT* no.3). However, some extant formularies themselves record alternative readings (Jordan, 1985b: 233–47, especially 234–5; *CT* p. 50).

In the Bath tablets there are many errors of the sort that are best explained as due to copying, such as dittography, e.g. *qui iuraverunt qui iuraverunt* (*Tab. Sulis* no. 94, iv AD; cf. pp. 98–9). This is not, however, evidence that a formulary has been used, simply that a prior 'rough copy' of the tablet text has been made (perhaps in disposable form, as on a wax tablet), which then serves as a model for the fair one. A prior stage is particularly useful if one is planning to pervert the line of writing in some way (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 44). Long texts are particularly likely to have been written out in advance: this was useful not only for planning the structure of the curse, but for calculating how much text one would have to fit onto one of the relatively small sheets.

Since obscurity and difficulty were important sources of 'power' for ancient magic, it may have been more satisfying to visit a professional, one of supposedly arcane knowledge and mysterious skills, for the text of a tablet, however easy it was to devise one oneself. The development of the large and complex *voces magicae* in the imperial period was no doubt gratifying to client and professional alike: the former was given access to something the magical nature of which was guaranteed by its incomprehensibility, while the latter had a means of protecting his trade from the incursions of casual amateurs, a means of 'status enhancement' (*CT* p. 10). In this connection, it is curious that, while we do find binding spells used against binding spells, we do not, with the improbable exception of the Epaphroditus curse discussed above (*SGD* no. 60 = *CT* no. 75, Amorgos, ii BC–ii AD) appear to have anything resembling a trade spell cast by one magician against another: honour among thieves?

2. As we have seen, anyone could make a tablet with the simple and readily available equipment of a bit of scrap lead, a flat surface and a hammer (and possible also a fire and a ladle). The lead/tin ratio is different in all the tablets from Bath, which indicates that the tablets tended to come from small-scale individual smeltings. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the tablets were made in DIY fashion by the individual cursers as and when they needed them: it may have been usual for metalworkers to turn any pewter scraps they had left over into writing tablets for sale (*Tab. Sulis* pp. 82–3). Professional metalworkers were perhaps responsible for the tablets from Bath with flanged edges that reveal them to have been pressed in a purpose-made mould (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* nos. 10 and 44, iii–iv AD; cf. p. 82). But a professional maker of lead tablets was not ipso facto a magician: lead tablets functioned as common note-paper. We can be confident that a Bath curse inscribed on a pewter plate was not acquired from any manufacturer of purpose-made curse tablets (*Tab. Sulis* no. 30, iii AD).

3. The variation in handwriting styles (twistedness etc. apart) even in tablets of similar provenance is enormous. The issue of the degree to

which professionals were involved at this stage is entwined with the problem of literacy (cf. Faraone, 1991b: 23 n. 10). Some tablets are barely literate (some indeed are actually illiterate: see below), and in these cases at any rate it seems likely that their inscribers were not professionals of any kind. Other tablets are produced in highly literate fashion and in beautiful script, whether it be in block capitals, plain or calligraphic, or in one of the cursive hands. One tablet is said to resemble a public monument in the fineness of its lettering (*DTA* no.55 = *CT* no. 64, Attica, iv BC). Editors describe a number of hands as 'scribal' or 'secretarial', but the implication of this may be that the inscribers were clerks instead of or at any rate as well as 'magicians'. A cache of third-century AD tablets found in the Agora adjacent to civic scribal offices appears to be written in a civic scribal script and suggests that the local scribes may have 'moonlighted' (Jordan, 1985: 235 and 1989; *CT* p. 32 n. 24 and 123 n. 12). The group of third-century AD tablets from a well in the Agora mentioned above, which was clearly underpinned by a formulary, is written out in the same beautiful hand, but there is a series of telling copying errors in the *voces magicae* (detectable by comparison between tablets) which makes it clear that the writer was not intimately familiar with the material he was reproducing. So here too was someone that could be described as a professional scribe with access to a formulary, but not necessarily as a professional magician (*SGD* nos. 24–35, with the discussion at Jordan, 1985b: 234–5 and n. 20). The same scribe evidently pre-inscribed tablets to sell 'off the peg': another tablet in his hand has its names squeezed into the inadequate spaces that had been allowed in basic the text (*SGD* no. 38; cf. *CT* p. 14).

The cache of 200 or so fragments of tablets from the common grave at Amathous in Cyprus has only been selectively read and published, but of those that have, most seem to employ identical formulas and *voces magicae*, and to be written in the same hand (*DT* nos. 22–37, ii–iii AD; cf. *SGD* p. 193; *Tab. Sulis* p. 99; Faraone, 1991b: 23 n. 11; *CT* no. 45). Even though it is unclear from how many original complete tablets these fragments derive, their writer appears to be the most prolificly preserved inscriber of spells from antiquity (Aupert and Jordan, 1981). Multiple tablets from the same hand are also found amongst the Sethian cache (*DT* nos. 140–87). In an early Sicilian tablet the writer curses in the first person, but says he is doing it on behalf of another, Eunikos (*SGD* no. 91, c. 450 AD).

The Bath tablets sometimes give reason to suppose that they were written out by someone other than the curser. The involvement of professional scribes is revealed by the occurrence of such scribal terms as *id est* (*Tab. Sulis* no. 34, iii AD) and *infrascriptis*, 'written below' (*Tab. Sulis* no. 32, iii AD, cf. p. 71). Sometimes the name of the curser is spelt wrongly, which would be unusual if the curser were the writer (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 60, iii AD, *Ocnea* for *Oconea*; cf. p. 100). Sometimes too tablets are headed by the name of the curser apparently in a different hand from that of the main text, in which case we appear to have a 'signature' (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* nos. 5 and 66, iii–iv AD). A puzzling tablet from Bath seems to contain five different scripts, which probably, but not necessarily, indicates that it was inscribed by five different people (*Tab. Sulis* no. 14, iii–iv AD). Little more can be said of this puzzling text, since, while its letters are perfectly clear, the text is undecipherable, and probably written in Celtic (the only example of written British Celtic).

However, despite the presence of many beautiful and practiced hands among the 116 inscribed Bath tablets, no hand is found on more than one tablet, save on a pair of name-only blobs that apparently belong together, and this does appear to be statistically significant within the sample (*Tab. Sulis* pp. 86, 88 and 98–100; the blobs are nos. 95 and 96, iv AD). It is therefore unlikely that there was a small number of individuals that specialised in writing out tablets for Sulis: those that did not write out their own tablets must have been able to draw upon a wide range of literate helpers, perhaps the temple priests in the first instance. Tomlin concludes that a respectable number of people could write in Roman Bath, and that most people wrote their own tablets there (*Tab. Sulis* pp. 85–6 and 100–1; cf. in general *CT* pp. 4–5 and 118.) The Bath tablets were all prayers for justice, to the making of which no shame or danger attached, so that the finding of a willing literate helper by illiterate petitioners will have constituted no great difficulty. Greater discretion may have been needed in selecting people willing to write out curse texts of a more nefarious and surreptitious nature.

The tablets exhibit the full range of degrees of literacy (for poor literacy see, e.g., on the Greek side, *DT* no. 85 = *CT* no. 20 [Boeotia, iii–ii BC, quoted above], *SGD* no. 48 = *CT* no. 56 [Attica, c. 323 BC], *SGD* no. 107 = *CT* no. 50 [Selinus, c. 450 BC] and *SGD* no. 173 = *CT* no. 48 [Olbia, iii BC]; and on the Latin side Solin 1968 nos. 26–8 = *CT* no. 52 [Emporia, 78 AD] and *Tab. Sulis* nos. 6, 16 etc., iii–iv AD, with p. 84). However, they are a difficult source for the distribution of literacy in antiquity, since one can hardly ever be sure that the curser (about whom one may be given some social information) is the actual inscriber of the tablet (about whom one is not). An interesting exception, bearing upon female literacy, is a tablet from fourth-century BC Attica by Onesime, which is basically a prayer for justice, but also uses binding language: she asks the powers to preserve 'the one that struck the lead' (*tē]n molybdokopon*), who is probably therefore herself, even if we cannot actually read that the gender of the article here is feminine (*DTA* no. 100; cf. Versnel, 1991: 65–6).

Some of the Bath tablets are touching: their texts consist of strings of repetitive marks, such as repeated 7's or crosses or short vertical lines (*Tab. Sulis* nos. 112–16; cf. pp. 86 and 247–8). They clearly represent the attempts of illiterate people to imitate writing (and in so doing incidentally inform us of the appearance of writing to the illiterate). This could indicate one or more of a number of things: the inscribers did not wish to impart their curse to another; they felt it important (magically preferable?) that the curse be written out by the curser in person; they could not find anyone to write for them; they were proud. The mysteries of writing perhaps added to the magic of the tablets for the illiterate. The 'religiously preferable' option may also account for the 'signatures' discussed above. An illiterate inscriber may have trusted that the goddess had the ability and grace to make sense of his marks, but such an attitude can not have been shared by the literate petitioners who fussily overdescribed their lost belongings (cf. *Tab. Sulis* pp. 100 and 247–8). Other tablets without any inscription were thrown into the sacred spring, perhaps by illiterates who placed more trust in an accompanying verbal curse than in pretend writing (e.g. *Tab. Sulis* no. 118, iii–iv AD).

4. No documentary evidence relates directly to specialisation in the deposition of curse tablets. No doubt little difficulty attended their deposition in bodies of water, or perhaps in chthonic sanctuaries. But deposition in graves was as dangerous as it was unpleasant, as we have seen, and for this reason was doubtless often left to bold professionals. Skill would also be required to conceal tablets in significant places, such as the victim's house (cf. *CT* p. 10).

It is improbable that four different specialists were normally involved in the creation and deposition of curse tablets. Many were no doubt made and deposited entirely by the amateur curser himself, and many were no doubt made and deposited entirely by professionals on behalf of others (see *Tab. Sulis* p. 100 and *CT* p. 5). Plato's reference to professionals who would make a curse tablet for a fee implies, for want of further definition, that he had in mind people that took the whole operation under their control (*Republic* 364bc; the existence of professionals is also implied by *Laws* 933a; see Faraone, 1989: 156 and *CT* nos. 140–1).

GENDER

The curse tablets raise a number of important issues for gender in the ancient world, as will already have become apparent from our treatment of erotic curses. Women's names appear frequently in the tablets, alone or with those of men (witness the frequency with which 'Women's names' are noted in *SGD*).

Women are often present even in tablets that appear to address disputes entirely between men, in that individuals in the tablets are often identified not by their father's name (patronymic), as was usual and proper in the ancient world, but by their mother's name (matronymic). The phenomenon flourished between the second and fifth centuries AD, but there are some earlier examples (*DTA* no. 102, Athens, iv BC; see catalogue at Jordan, 1976: 128–30 and n. 7). Matronymics appear in many of the examples already quoted, and are particularly noticeable in the 'Sethian' curse against Cardelus quoted above, in which the charioteer is repeatedly identified as 'Cardelus, to whom his mother Pholgentia [= Fulgentia] gave birth' (*DT* no. 155 = *CT* no. 13). There is no single convincing explanation of the phenomenon, but a few suggestions may be made. Early Egyptian and Babylonian spells employ maternal parentage and the custom may have been borrowed from them. Or matronymics may have been used because maternal parentage is much more secure than paternal (*pater incertus, mater certa*), and it was felt important to identify the individuals to be cursed as accurately as possible for the binding powers. Yet the formula was felt to be so important that it came to be included in a variant form even when the identity of the mother was not actually known. We find a number of expressions of this type, of which the abbreviated Latin version *q(uem) p(eperit) vulva*, 'whom a womb bore' is the most striking (*DT* no. 300). It is perhaps for similar reasons that a fourth-century BC Attic tablet identifies as its victim 'Pataikion whom Epainetos claims to be his daughter' (*DTA* no. 55 = *CT* no. 64). Or matronymics may simply constitute another example of magic's preference for the countercultural. The custom may specifically have been adopted from slave culture (such an adoption would certainly have been countercultural), since slaves were regularly identified by their mothers. (See Jordan, 1976; Bernand, 1991: 31; *CT* p. 14.) But the slight evidence for the use of matronymics elsewhere in the ancient world indicates that they tend to appear in the context of distinctively female discourse, be it the gossip of women in the hellenistic poets, or the inscriptions of female-dominated cults (Christophilopoulos, 1946: 130–9; Cameron, 1973: 157–8; Ogden, 1996: 94–6). This might, prima facie, suggest that by the second-century AD cursing language thrived particularly within female discourse, i.e., that it was primarily an instrument of women. Other evidence, however, obstructs such a hypothesis, but also indicates that cursing was particularly associated with women at the ideological level (see below); thus the use of matronymics in cursing may have been due to the supposition that cursing was a particularly female thing, or to an attempt to give it a countercultural veneer by representing it as such (cf.

Graf, 1994a: 149). A fifth-century BC Sicilian tablet presents an interesting compromise between traditional and curse-tablet practice: most of the men are given patronymics, most of the women matronymics (*SGD* no. 87, v BC).

It is amongst the curse tablets that some of the most important documentation of women's initiative in the ancient world is found (*CT* p. 79). The actual words of women of antiquity (women's 'voice'), unfiltered through male sources, are rarely found. Little remains beyond such things as the tantalising fragments of the archaic Greek poetess Sappho and some charming private letters between the wives of Roman soldiers at Vindolanda on Hadrian's wall, the latter only recently discovered (for these see Bowman and Thomas, 1994 nos. 291–4, 'correspondence of Lepidina'). It is possible that some of the curse tablets contain the actual words of women, but we must remember that they are largely formulaic, and we can never be sure that even an apparently personally worded tablet written in the interests of a woman was not composed with the aid of or simply by a male (professional or otherwise).

The 'mismatch' between the literary evidence and the curse-tablet evidence for witchcraft in antiquity may be revelatory of the nature of gender ideology and control in those societies (see Winkler, 1990: 71–98; *CT* pp. 80 and 244; Graf, 1994a: 200, the last of whom observes the 'autonomy' of witch-portrayals in the literary tradition from actual magical practices). Almost all the detailed and distinctive portraits of witches in mainstream classical literature are of women (cf. Tupet, 1976: 164 and Graf, 1994a: 211; pace Winkler, 1990: 90), often old ones, and their prime concern is usually the acquisition of love or vengeance for love taken away. Literary female witches concerned with love include, on the Greek side: Circe (Homer, *Odyssey* 10.203–47 = Luck, 1985 no. 1, vii BC?), Deianeira (Sophocles, *Trachiniai* especially 531–812, 420's BC), Medea (Euripides, *Medea* especially 1136–1230, 431 BC; and Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 3–4 passim, early iii BC), Antiphon's 'Clytemnestra' (*Against a stepmother for poisoning*, a highly fictionalised if not actually fictitious speech, late v BC), Simaetha (Theocritus, *Idyll* 2, early iii BC) and Lucian's old Syrian woman (*Dialogues of the courtesans* 4.286 = *CT* no. 152, i AD [and cf. 4.281]). On the Roman side are: Virgil's Amaryllis (if that is her name, *Eclogue* 8.64–109 = Luck, 1985 no.8, mid i BC) and Dido (*Aeneid* 4.450–705 = Luck, 1985 no.9, late i BC), Horace's Canidia (*Epodes* 5 and 17 and *Satire* 1.8, late i BC), Seneca's Deianeira (*Hercules on Mount Oeta* especially 449–72 and 784–841, of which the former passage = Luck, 1985 no. 10) and Medea (*Medea* especially 6–23 and 670–843 = Luck, 1985 no. 11, mid i AD), Lucan's Erichtho (*Pharsalia* 6.438–830 mid i AD, including a 130 line digression on Thessalian witches) and Petronius' 'hag' (*Satyricon* 131 = Luck, 1985 no. 12, mid i AD). Apuleius' *Golden Ass*

is particularly rich: Meroe and Panthia, the terrible Thessalians (1.5–19), Pamphile (2.32 and 3.15–8 [partly = *CT* no. 153]) and an unnamed old woman (9.29 = *CT* no. 154, mid ii AD). The association these narratives make between love potions and poisons is striking, particularly in the cases of Deianeira and Antiphon's 'Clytemnestra' (and cf. Tupet, 1976: 57 and 203; Graf, 1994a: 57–61). In around 360 AD St. Basil could make the general observation that it was typical of women to attempt to attract love to themselves through spells and tablets (*Epistles* 188.8 = *CT* no. 161). More general magical practice is rooted within female culture by Ovid's vignette showing an old woman teaching magic to a group of three young girls: they are taught to bind tongues with the aid of the demon Muta Tacita, 'She that is mute and silent' (*Fasti* 2.571–82 = *CT* no. 144, early i AD; cf. Tupet, 1976: 408–16).

It is difficult to find a comparable literary portrait of anyone resembling a male witch in mainstream classical literature, let alone one with erotic concerns. The best we can do is to point to archaic Greek 'shaman' figures, such as Aristeas of Proconessus (Herodotus 4.13–16, Pindar F271, Pliny, *Natural History* 7.174 etc., early vii BC) or Epimenides of Cnossus (Diogenes Laertius 1.109–15 etc.; sources at *DK* no.3, floruit c. 600 BC?), whose principal achievement was the transmigration of the soul (cf. Dodds, 1951: 135–78), or to the later Greek miracle-workers such as Apollonius of Tyana (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*; cf. Dzielska, 1986). However, the *PGM* recipes usually assume that their users are going to be male (Graf, 1994a: 211) and historically identifiable herbal specialists were almost all men (see Scarborough, 1991: 140, 161–2 and 166 n. 38). Apuleius himself was prosecuted for using erotic magic in order to persuade a rich widow to marry him in Tripoli (*Apology*, mid ii AD). (For literary portraits of magical practitioners in Greek and Latin literature in general see Lowe, 1929; Graf, 1994a: 199–230; and especially Tupet, 1976: 107–64 and 223–420, and Bernand, 1991: 159–257.)

It is only occasionally possible to discern the gender of authors of curse tablets, since they tended to avoid identifying themselves (see above). There are two broad exceptions to this rule: prayers for justice, which were less dangerous to the curser, and in which the author's name helped identify the goods stolen (cf. *Tab. Sulis* p. 95), and erotic-attraction curses, where one had to identify the person to whom one wished the beloved to cleave (Faraone, 1991b: 29 n. 65). Of those cursers whose gender can be identified, either because the author's name is supplied or because of some gender-specific reference, some are indeed women, and women are found among the authors of erotic curses. But this should not disguise the fact that the vast majority of all curse tablets, including erotic ones, are written by men. Thus, in Winkler's collation of erotic curses there are 25 extant examples of curses by men in pursuit of women (counting multiple

cases involving the same curser and beloved as one example), 3 cases of men in pursuit of men, 6 cases of women in pursuit of men, and 2 cases of women in pursuit of women. Thus 28 male examples as against 8 female: almost four times as many curses by men as by women (Winkler, 1990: 90 and 229 n. 32). Winkler is undoubtedly right about the scale of male involvement in cursing in comparison to female, but his collation of the relevant evidence now needs to be revised for a number of reasons: first, a significant number of relevant curses are omitted from his list (understandably, since he apparently did not have access to *SGD*); secondly, Winkler sometimes guessed precariously at the sex of the author of a curse (thus *PGM* LXVI, which seeks to separate Philoxenos the harpist from two men, may have been written by another man in pursuit of Philoxenos, but it may equally have been written by a woman in pursuit of him); thirdly, Winkler mistakenly included *DT* no. 271 in both the categories of 'male in pursuit of female' and 'female in pursuit of male' (it belongs in the latter only). Nonetheless, an updated and more careful count would doubtless arrive at a comparable gender ratio of erotic-curse authors. Of the Bath cache of third- and fourth-century AD prayers for justice 7 are definitely male-authored (*Tab. Sulis* nos. 10, 31–2, 57, 66 and 98–9), a further 4 probably male-authored (nos. 5, 34 and 62–3), and 5 are definitely female-authored (nos. 54, 59–61, and 97): a probable female/male ratio of around 1:2.

How then are we to account for this 'mismatch' in the evidence? It is theoretically possible that women were more active than men in magic as a whole and erotic magic in particular, but less active than men in the specific area of curse tablets: note Theocritus' reference, in an erotic context, to 'old women that know *incantations*' (2.91). What factors could have influenced an under-representation of women in the tablets? If one were to take the view that curse tablets were largely home-made affairs by the individual cursers, then women could have been discouraged from making tablets by more limited access to the (admitedly low) level of technology required to make lead tablets (although as we have seen, the tablets did not have to be made of lead). Perhaps a lower level of literacy among women also discouraged them. It has been suggested that the circumscribed lives of women made access to magical professionals socially more difficult for them, but this was surely only an important consideration if most professionals were male, which may have been the case, but we should not beg the question here (cf. Winkler, 1990: 90). Perhaps women had less spare cash to spend on such things as tablets, although the indications are that they were very cheap. These suppositions may go some way towards lessening the mismatch, but they do not go all the way. It seems preferable to conclude that the general association of women in particular with witchcraft in ancient Greece was primarily an ideological

act. I do not mean by this that the popular association of women in particular with witchcraft was the result of a conscious lie on anyone's part, rather that in the vacuum of reliable and incontrovertible data on the subject, a prejudice was allowed to thrive. It would have been difficult for the ancients to acquire a true picture of the gender-profile of witchcraft in their societies: in days prior to the systematic collation of statistics social 'facts' were inevitably constructed from prejudice alone (cf. Ogden, 1996: 8–10); and if individuals were unable to perceive the true profile of open and public phenomena in their society, how much less able were they to perceive the profile of a phenomenon as necessarily and as significantly secretive as magic? No-one in the ancient world had a collection of 1,600 discovered curse tablets to peruse as we do. The prejudice that witchcraft was a female phenomenon in particular would have served the function of control: it validated the exclusion of women from normal means of power. Furthermore, the accusation of magical practice provided a stick with which women could be beaten: such an accusation was conveniently difficult to refute, since magic was in any case inherently secretive and its mechanisms largely inexplicable.

For Graf the fact that men were the almost exclusive producers of ancient literature is sufficient to explain why literary portrayals of the practitioners of erotic magic should be primarily female: the concept of the female magician furnished an explanation of the mad love they could feel for women (1994a: 216). On the other side, he believes that curse tablets were particularly the preserve of men because they were concerned, in their agonistic context, with a struggle for social status that was of far greater significance to men than to women (1994a: 212, qualified at 215). For Winkler the main reason for the misrepresentation of the gender of magical practitioners in literary sources was to allow men, 'weakened by invading *eros*' to seek help 'through the construction of public images which relocated both the victimage (in young women – Theokritos' Simaitha *et aliae*) and the wickeder forms of erotic depredation (in older women – Horace's Canidia *et aliae*).' Winkler relates this 'transference' to the personal 'transferences' of erotic suffering that the individual tablets hope to achieve (1990: 87–91; see above).

From a different angle, erotic spells aimed at women make it clear that 'autonomous' sexual desire in women (which, in a paradoxical way, the tablets sought to create), was regarded as a desirable thing, at any rate for the recipient of it, much as it may have been disapproved of in public. The belief in the power of such spells could be used to explain and perhaps even excuse the illicit passionate behaviour of otherwise 'respectable' women (Winkler, 1990: 97–8).

Far-reaching, but possibly unsafe, conclusions have been drawn from the language of curse tablets and from the configuration of related

voodoo dolls for the character of relationships between men and women and attitudes towards sex and love in antiquity. Winkler draws attention to the 'aggression' of the language that men use towards their beloveds in the tablets (dragging by the hair, sleep deprivation etc.) and to the symbolism of the famous Louvre voodoo doll, a female figure bound hand and foot and transfixed by 13 needles, including one in the vagina (*SGD* no. 152 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 47 = *VD* no. 27 = *CT* no. 28, ii–iii AD; see Figure 4; pace Bernand, 1991: 293 on the last point), and raises the possibility that such things evidence a 'historical misogyny' (Winkler, 1990: 72–3 and 93–8; cf. Luck, 1985: 92). But to apply a crude and all-too-contemporary feminist semiotics to these texts and images, and to conclude that the men of antiquity 'hated' women and considered sex to be a form of violence would be to mislead. Firstly, aggressive language is resident in the tradition of curse tablets. Secondly, the piercing of ancient voodoo dolls is generally symbolic not of bodily harm, but simply of bodily restraint. In the case of erotic voodoo dolls, the piercing perhaps takes on the additional significance of expressing (sympathetically?) the desired penetration of the beloved. Most importantly of all, ancient magic often likes to clothe itself in the countercultural and the paradoxical, and it could well have been the case that violent language in attraction spells was felt to be effective in part because of its paradoxical inappropriateness (cf. *CT* p. 81).

It has similarly been argued that since many erotic tablets speak only of achieving the goal of sexual conquest, without explicit mention of a permanent union, the tablets' aim was usually an exploitative and lustful fling (thus Winkler, 1990: 72, but contrast 97; cf. *CT* p. 83; against this view see Graf, 1994a: 212). But the tablets are mostly brief documents, and such arguments from silence do not carry much weight: it is understandable that they should concentrate on the achievement of the immediate goal in the first instance. And it may be significant that while some tablets do indeed plead explicitly for marriage or a more permanent union, none of them explicitly requests a finite fling. Theon's request that Euphemia be bound to him for ten months is oddly specific, and perhaps relates to a standard fertility-testing trial-marriage period, theoretically long enough for a child to be produced (*PGM* CI = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 45 = *VD* no. 28 = *CT* no. 30, with notes ad loc., Egypt, v AD). Another tablet requests a five-month period (or possibly a seven-month one), still long enough to prove pregnancy (*SGD* no. 159 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 37, Egypt, ii AD). The following tablet is definitely 'romantic':

> Bring and yoke Urbanus, whom Urbana bore, to Domitiana, whom Candida bore, in love, tortured, sleepless because of his love and desire for her, so that he may take her away to his house to live with him . . . yoke them in marriage and love, to live together for the whole of their lives. (*DT* no. 271 = *CT* no. 36, Hadrumentum, iii AD)

Another tablet asks for 'unceasing and imperishable love' (*SGD* no. 189 = *Suppl. Mag.* no.41, provenance unknown, iii–iv AD; cf. also *SGD* no. 160 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 39, Egypt, iii AD). A papyrus formulary for an attraction spell designs that the relationship should last for all eternity (*PGM* IV 405 = *CT* no. 27). Another tablet from Carthage or Hadrumentum, not fully published, perhaps gives fullest play to cynicism: its male author requests the affections of no less than four women (*SGD* pp. 186–7; cf. Robert, 1981). Full publication of the text may tell us whether its author was greedily attempting to construct a harem, or was merely a harmless monogamist hedging his bets.

Occasionally the tablets give insight into the wider world of the women they are aimed at. A Greek tablet from Israel implies that a woman, Valentia, would be involved in the auditing of a business:

> Lord angels, muzzle and make subject and attach to yourself and bind and enslave and restrain Sarmation whom Ursa bore and Valentia whom Eva bore and Saramanas, whom Eusebis bore, before Pancharia, whom Thecla bore, choking them, throwing into bonds their ideas, their mind, their hearts, their will, so that they should not make any further enquiries into an account or a reckoning or anything else. (*SGD* no. 164 = *CT* no. 77, iv AD)

CLASS

The different classes of antiquity all alike participated in the culture of curse tablets (cf. *CT* p. 24). Just as the curse tablets restore to us, albeit in a small and problematic way, the barely unheard voices of women of antiquity, so too they give us access to the voices of a group still more oppressed and largely silenced in other sources: slaves. While it is generally surprising to find any document from antiquity produced by a slave, it is not very surprising that slaves, in their situations of utter powerlessness, should have turned to this arcane pretence of or substitute for power (see Bernand, 1991: 30–4 and 160 for the argument that magic belonged above all to those marginal to ancient societies: women, slaves, metics etc.). This is one of the most eloquent and touching of the tablets (Rome, iv AD):

> PHANOIBIKUX PETRIADE KRATARNADE, restrain, lord angels, Clodia Valeria Sophrone from getting hold of Politoria.
> ARTHU LAILAM SEMISILAM BACHUCH BACHAXICHUCH

> MENEBACICHUCH ABRASAX, restrain, lord gods, the boss of the workhouse, Clodia Valeria Sophrone, and let her not take Politoria to the workhouse (*ergastill[o]n*), to see lifelessness (*apsychia*). (Wünsch, 1909: 37–41 = *CT* no. 78)

Perhaps Politoria was a slave-courtesan past her prime. It is possible that the 'workhouse' referred to is a brothel (the related term *ergastērion* could be used in this way).

A litigation and trade curse attempts to restrain several cook-butchers (*mageiroi*) (*DT* no. 49 = *CT* no. 44, Athens, c.300 BC). These were usually slaves. What gives this dispute special resonance is the fact that in the New Comedy that flourished at this time cook-butchers were favourite stock characters, distinguished for their vulgarity, boastfulness and quarrelsomeness (cf. Dohm, 1964; Bethiaume, 1982). Indeed one of the cooks mentioned, Seuthes, may even have appeared in a comedy of Poseidippus (F29 K-A). This tablet therefore appears to lend some credence to the stereotype. The 'Sethian' circus tablets appear to have been written largely by slaves and freedmen (*DT* nos. 140–87; cf. *CT* p. 68, Rome, iv AD). Other stock characters from New Comedy that appear frequently in the curse tablets are prostitutes (doubtless usually slave) and their pimps, such as the one whose name is lost in the tablet binding Cercis and others (*DT* no. 52 = *CT* no. 73, Attica, iii–ii BC, quoted above). As we saw, the curser was presumably a rival in trade. Lucian portrays courtesans using binding spells to attract lovers (*Dialogues of the courtesans* 4.286).

It may be assumed that most of the petitioners responsible for the Bath tablets were from the poorer classes, since almost all of the thefts referred to in them seem to have been petty and to have occurred in the bath-complex itself, and those most subject to such thefts will have been those too poor to own or hire a slave to mind their clothes whilst they bathed (*Tab. Sulis* pp. 80–1 and 97–8; cf. *CT* p. 193). Also, the prosopography of the Bath tablets indicates that their authors were generally of non-citizen class before Caracalla's bestowal of citizenship on all inhabitants of the empire in 212, and descendants of the same group afterwards. Most of the petitioners appear to be city-dwellers; the peasant Civilis, who asks for the return of his ploughshare, appears to be an exception (*Tab. Sulis* no. 31 cf. pp. 74 and 96–7). A distinct Celtic background can sometimes be detected in the names of the appellants and in their Celtic-influenced misspelling of some Latin vowels. We have seen that one of the tablets actually appears to be written in Celtic, transcribed in Roman letters (*Tab. Sulis* no. 14, iii–iv AD; cf. p. 79).

The fact that so many of the tablets appear to have been made or commissioned by relatively poor people tells us that they could often be

cheap. Plato expressly states that binding spells were very cheap even when bought from professionals (*Republic* 364c = *CT* no. 140; cf. Faraone, 1991b: 4). Certainly a home-made curse tablet would cost nothing more than the lead of which it was made, and lead was very cheap indeed in antiquity. The Bath tablets give easy proof of the overall cheapness of the tablets (whether homemade or not), since some of them complain about the theft of what seem to be quite petty sums, such as two *argentioli*, (*Tab. Sulis* no. 54; cf. pp. 80 and 100). Lucian's fictional professional, an old Syrian woman, is not said to deal in tablets, but her fee for an erotic binding spell is explicitly said to be cheap. It consists of 2 drachmas and an obol (a quite trivial sum in Lucian's day), bread and wine for her to devour, along with contributions of substances necessary for the rite itself, namely a torch, sulphur, salt and some of the victim's 'stuff' (*Dialogues of the courtesans* 4.286 = *CT* no. 152). Larger sums were doubtless taken from the rich, around whose doors, Plato tells us, the dealers in curse tablets hawked their wares (*Republic* 364c; cf. Bravo, 1987: 207–8). Augustine was asked by a magician how much he was willing to pay him to secure victory in a recitation competition (*Confessions* 4.2).

The lawcourts were usually the playgrounds of the rich and influential, so most of the litigation curse tablets may be assumed to have been made by (and against) the rich (cf. Faraone, 1989: 156; *CT* p. 119). In this context a group of inscribed dolls found together in graves a few yards apart from each other in the Ceramicus is particularly intriguing. Some of the names inscribed on them are rare, but known to have belonged to people attacked or spoken of in speeches written by Lysias. Mnesimachus is the single name found inscribed on the right leg of a voodoo doll which had been enclosed in a little oval coffin made up of two lead tablets moulded to fit each other (*VD* no. 5). A Mnesimachus was attacked by Lysias at F182 Sauppe. The upper lid of this coffin was itself inscribed with a litigation curse with a series of names which included Mnesimachus' again and also that of a Nicomachus (*SGD* no. 9 = *CT* no. 41), perhaps the great lawcode-systematiser of that name. In a nearby grave were found three voodoo dolls enclosed in oblong coffins (*VD* no. 6), inscribed with the names of Theozotides (attacked by Lysias at *P. Hibeh* 14) and Micines (perhaps less of an enemy: Lysias F170–8 Sauppe prosecute his murderer). These dolls may well then have emanated from a source very close to Lysias himself. (See Trumpf, 1958; Jordan, 1988b: 274–7; Faraone, 1985 n. 20, 1989: 156 n. 20, and 1991b: 30 n. 76.)

Curses were by no means confined within class, as is shown by a remarkable inscription from Tuder in Italy (i AD):

> In return for the salvation of the town and of the order of the town senate, to Jupiter best and greatest, the guardian and the preserver,

> because he, by his power, brought forth the names of the town senators which had been attached (*defixa*) to tombs by the unutterable crime of a most wicked public slave, and he liberated and freed the town and the citizens from the fear of dangers. Lucius Cancrius Primigenius, the freedman of Clemens, member of the board of six, both Augustan and Flavian, the first member of the order to be honoured in this way, fulfilled his vow. (*CIL* 11.2.4639 = Luck, 1985 no. 14 = *CT* no. 135; cf. Versnel, 1991: 63)

It is interesting that an individual slave could exercise such terror over the great and the good of the town with such easy magic. Indeed the episode raises an important issue. Since binding spells could, at the cost of little effort and expense, level or even invert the power-relationships between the highest and the lowest in society, how could society as it was known, with all its established hierarchies, continue to exist? Why was it not unravelled? The fact that ancient society did continue to function with all its established hierarchies perhaps suggests that there was at some level a general acceptance that binding magic could only be effective in a very limited way.

Those in the greatest positions of power gave most reason to others to hate and fear them, and so were particularly likely to attract curse tablets. Hence we find Attic tablets directed against current political figures, including such famous figures as the orators Demosthenes and Lycurgus (*DT* no. 60 = *CT* no. 42, iv BC; cf. Faraone, 1985: 159–60 and 1989: 156 n. 20) and the dynasts Cassander and Demetrius of Phalerum (*SGD* no. 14 = *CT* no. 57, late iv BC; cf. Jordan, 1980a: esp. 229–31 and 234–6, and Faraone, 1989: 156 and 1991b: 31 n. 76). Perhaps the early tablet found on the floor of the Tholos, the home of the Athenian council, which has not yet been fully deciphered, was aimed against the governing body of Athens (*SGD* p. 162, early v BC). Tacitus recounts several attempts to use curse tablets against the emperor and his family: Libo Drusus was supposedly found to have made sinister and mysterious marks (*voces magicae* and Characters?) against the names of Tiberius and his family (*Annals* 2.30 = *CT* no. 147). His account of the death of Germanicus, accomplished through curse tablets and other magical paraphernalia, is well known (*Annals* 2.69; cf. Dio Cassius 57.18). He also mentions other individuals accused of using curse tablets against Tiberius, Agrippina and Nero (*Annals* 4.52, 12.65 and 16.31 = *CT* nos. 149–51; cf. Phillips, 1991: 264). The theme of curse tablets well suits Tacitus' dark world of concealed malice and dissimulation.

The curse tablets cross class divides in other ways too: some of the combinations of people grouped together for cursing in the classical Attic tablets can be surprising: distinguished politicians are listed alongside

women defined as prostitutes and with names appropriate to prostitutes (e.g. *SGD* no. 48 = *CT* no. 56 and *DTA* no. 107 = *CT* no. 40, iv BC; cf. Ober, 1989: 149). It was ever so.

VOODOO DOLLS

Faraone's survey of known 'voodoo dolls' as they are now termed, or *kolossoi* as the Greeks called them, catalogues 38 separate finds, a 'find' here including as a single unit groups of dolls found in the same site (*VD* pp. 200–5; for the appropriateness of the term 'voodoo doll', see Jordan, 1988b: 273). Although the finds of dolls are dwarfed by those of the tablets, they exhibit a roughly similar geographical and temporal spread, except that they are found already in the archaic period and therefore constitute significant antecedents to them. Nonetheless, it has been useful to review the tablets first, since they give expression to a range of meanings and purposes which can be used to contextualise the dolls' images. There are 15 finds from Greece, 9 from Sicily and Italy, 4 from North Africa, 7 from Egypt, 3 from the Near East and 1 from the Black Sea. Several examples, all twisted figures in bronze, are archaic: one each from Tegea (*VD* no. 8, early vii BC) and Cephalonia (*VD* no. 10), and a group of five from Alonistena in Arcadia (*VD* no.9). The latest dolls seem to hail from fifth-century AD Egypt (e.g. *VD* nos. 28 [= *CT* no. 30] and 28a).

As with the tablets, lead is the most commonly found material of manufacture in extant examples (*VD* nos. 1–7, 12, 15–16, 18, 21, 23–26a, 32, 34; cf. Preisendanz, 1972: 4). Bronze is also quite common (*VD* nos. 8–11, 13–14, 17, 19, 33). Wax dolls are actually found only in late antique Egypt (*VD* nos. 28–9 and 31 = [Figure 5]), but the Cyrene foundation decree gives us reason to suppose the use of wax was particularly ancient (see below); also, a lead tablet from fourth-century BC Attica refers to the curser's use of 'lead and wax,' which may imply that it was originally accompanied by a wax doll (*DTA* no. 55 = *CT* no. 64); the prayer of Theocritus' Simaetha that her lover should melt like the wax she is using also suggests the use of a wax voodoo doll (*Idyll* 2.28; cf. Gow, 1952, ii: ad loc.; Bernand, 1991: 180; *CT* 36 n. 4; pace Graf, 1994a: 202–3); the Pseudo-Callisthenic *Alexander romance*, written at some point between the second and third centuries AD, was to have Nectanebo seduce Olympias by using a wax doll with which to send her a vision (5). Clay was used in its various aspects: a number of dolls are made of terracotta (*VD* nos. 20 and 22 and pp. 201 and 204); the famous Louvre doll is made of unbaked clay (*SGD* no. 152 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 47 = *VD* no. 27 = *CT* no. 28, ii–iii AD; Figure 4); another doll is mud (*VD* no. 30). Many unbaked clay or mud dolls will have disintegrated in their deposit-sites. Sometimes it

can be speculated that loose dirt in graves derives from voodoo dolls (*VD* p. 205 and Graf, 1994a: 168). A doll made of dough is employed in a necromantic ritual recounted by Heliodorus (*Aethiopica* 6.14). Horace's Canidia uses a doll made of wool, alongside one made of wax, for erotic purposes (*Satires* 1.8.30; cf. Tupet, 1976: 44–50 and 302). One of the accusations made against Apuleius under the charge that he practiced magic was that he worshipped with extravagant rites a skeleton-statue made of rare wood, and hailed it as 'king' (*Apology* 61.2; cf. Graf, 1994a: 96–8).

The artistic quality of the voodoo dolls spans the full range from careful models (e.g. *VD* nos. 18 and 27 [= Figure 4]; cf. p. 190) to objects barely recognisable as figures (e.g. *VD* no. 11). Cast bronze or terracotta dolls required a greater degree of technical expertise to manufacture than their clay or wax counterparts. However, lack of access to casting facilities need not have deprived the curser of a metal doll: lead was malleable enough to be moulded by hand, and some of the lead dolls have clearly been made this way (e.g. *VD* nos. 5–6); a group of four figurines from Delos have been cut out of a rectangular lead slab (*VD* no. 12). The unique discovery of a cache of 16 figurines in Israel from the first century BC at the latest, alongside unused curse tablets, constitutes our sole direct evidence for professional involvement in the manufacture of the voodoo dolls (*VD* no. 32; see Mariani, 1910).

A similar range of deposition sites is found for voodoo dolls as for curse tablets. Graves are the most common sites (*VD* nos. 1, 5–6, 18, 20, 22, 34 and p. 205). A group of four were found in a hellenistic house on Delos (*VD* no. 11; see Dugas, 1915). Some are found in sanctuaries, though none can positively be said to have been chthonic (*VD* nos. 12 and 32). Some dolls are found in what were bodies of water: a riverbed (*VD* no. 2, undated) and a sewer (*VD* no. 25, imperial). These finds do not obstruct the supposition that voodoo dolls began to be deposited in water at around the same time as curse tablets, i.e., the early imperial period. Plato spoke of dolls being displayed at the points where three roads meet, on doors and on parental graves (*Laws* 933a); Sophronius spoke of a doll cast into the sea (see below).

In contrast to the curse tablets, however, it seems that voodoo dolls of the wax variety at any rate were sometimes activated by melting, as we have seen (Theocritus, *Idyll* 2.28; Horace, *Satires* 1.8.43–4; *ML* no. 5 line 44–9). But not all wax voodoo dolls met this fate: a number of them deposited in tombs like dolls of other substances survive to us (*VD* nos. 28–9 and 31 [= Figure 5]).

The voodoo dolls represent in concrete form many of the themes found in the curse tablets. They are often represented as bound. Sometimes the binding is visible, but in cruder dolls it has to be imagined from the positioning of arms or legs as if bound. Arms can be bound in front, or twisted behind the back, and legs too can be bent back for binding (thus *VD* nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 18, 21, 23, 24, 27 [= Figure 4], 29, 32 and p. 204). Some female dolls from Delos wear heavy collars (*VD* no. 12). Was this particularly significant in view of the fact that Delos was a major slave-trading centre (cf. Bernand, 1991: 321)? A rope or chain appears to attach the hands to the head of the 'gingerbread man' doll from Carystus (*SGD* no. 64 = Faraone no. 15 = *CT* no. 19).

The dolls are often twisted in more violent ways too, particularly in the neck and legs, so that head and legs point in the wrong direction (thus *VD* nos. 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 19, 25, 26, 33). The purpose of this appears to have been not to maim or kill the victims, but to 'confuse' their designs and efforts (*VD* p. 194). Different kinds of distortion are also found. A few dolls have enlarged male genitals (thus *VD* nos. 5, 6, 9, 11, 21, 29). This may have been apotropaic (see Bernand, 1991: 104–5 for the apotropaic phallus in magic). The face of a classical Sicilian doll is demonic, which also may have been apotropaic, or may have represented a specific demon that the doll sought to bind (*SGD* no. 122 = *VD* no. 16 and p. 195). The male doll of an Egyptian separate male and female pair has an ass' head, perhaps representing Seth (*VD* no. 29).

A yet more extreme progression is the actual mutilation of the dolls. An Attic figurine has had its head cut off (*VD* no. 7), whereas a doll from Crete was cast without head (*VD* no. 14; cf. also no. 24). The legs of an Italian doll have been broken off (*VD* no.9). A female doll from Morocco has no hands (*VD* no. 25). The 'gingerbread man' doll from Carystus was presumably made as a three-dimensional doll and then ritually flattened (*VD* no. 15). An Italian doll that now consists only of a torso may have been subject to mutilation (*VD* no. 21). Some dolls are transfixed by nails (thus *VD* nos. 1 [possibly], 7, 21, 27 [= Figure 4] and p. 204). A group from Delos seem to give added emphasis to the 'nailing' of the mouth by holding their right hands over the nail that penetrates the mouth (*VD* no. 12). Again, the purpose of twisting, mutilation and transfixing seems to have been the restraint rather than the killing or mutilation of the victim (*VD* p. 194; cf. Faraone, 1992: 133–4).

Personal 'stuff' (*ousia*) could also be used in conjunction with voodoo dolls: one of the Egyptian wax dolls had some human hair pushed into its navel (*VD* no. 31 = Figure 5).

Dolls could be made to resemble the dead also by being shut in mini-coffins or tight-fitting containers of their own. These containers are sometimes made of sheets of lead, and are therefore physically close to curse tablets themselves (thus *VD* nos. 4 and 6 from the Ceramicus, iv BC; cf. *CT* p. 119). Indeed the sheets that make up the coffins can themselves be inscribed as a curse tablet (*SGD* no. 9 = *VD* no. 5 = *CT*

no. 41, iv BC). Sophronius speaks of a doll that was shut tight in a box which was locked and sealed with lead (see below). Some Egyptian dolls are shut tight in clay pots, in which they are accompanied by curse texts (*VD* nos. 27 [= Figure 4], 28, 28a and p. 204).

Dolls are strongly associated with curse tablets in a number of further ways. They are often inscribed with the name of the curse victim (thus *VD* nos. 5, 6, 18, 20, 21 and p. 201). Ten names are inscribed on a Sicilian doll (*SGD* no. 122 = *VD* no. 16). The lead 'gingerbread man' from Carystus is apparently a doll that has simply been flattened to be used as a tablet (*SGD* no. 64 = *VD* no. 15 = *CT* no. 19, iv BC). A broken Egyptian wax figurine (the one with hair in its navel) reveals that it has been moulded around a papyrus roll, which undoubtedly contains the name of the victim and perhaps also a curse text (*VD* no. 31; Figure 5). Sometimes bound figures can simply be drawn onto curse tablets proper, as we have seen (see also *VD* nos. 23, 24, 26a, 34; cf. Jordan, 1988c no.3, with his figures 2 and 7). The group of four lead figures from Delos that has been cut out of rectangular slabs of lead would appear to have been made out of something that could as equally well have served as a curse tablet (*VD* no. 12). Rather unique is a single terracotta bust-group of a couple and a child, each of which is inscribed with names, with a curse text on the back (*VD* no. 22).

A development of the voodoo doll specifically for erotic attraction spells is the Egyptian entwined-couple type: these represent male and female twisted together in sexual congress (*VD* nos. 28 and 28a; Wortmann, 1968: 86 figure 8 is an excellent photograph of no. 28 being unrolled from its papyrus). A recipe for such an entwined pair of dolls is preserved, from the Graeco-Roman tradition, in the Arabic magical text, the *Picatrix* (Ritter and Plesner, 1962: 267; cf. *CT* p. 101). It is an oddity here that one of the dolls presumably represents the actual curser. Individual dolls deposited in pairs in the same spot, where one is male and the other female, may also sometimes stem from an erotic context, but Faraone argues that they may rather be intended to carry a *pars pro toto* significance, and attempt to blight an entire group or family, its male and female members alike. He argues that the earliest use of couples of dolls was a Roman innovation which evinced a thinking similar to that underlying the city's ancient sacrificial rite in times of crisis, in accordance with which a Gaulish and a Greek couple, standing for all the enemies of the state, would be buried alive (*VD* nos. 18, 25, 29, with p. 192; for the rite, perhaps initially an Etruscan custom, see, e.g., Livy 22.57).

A variant of the voodoo doll is prescribed in one of the Greek magical papyri: it contains a recipe for the manufacture of a wax doll of Eros, which can be animated and serve as an assistant in attracting a beloved (*PGM* XII.14–95; cf. Winkler, 1990: 79 and 91–2, and Bernand, 1991: 305–7); this is perhaps not too far removed from the Nectanebo case discussed above. Similarly Lucian tells of a Hyperborean magician who manufactures a cupid from clay, which he animates and sends to fetch his client's beloved (*Lovers of lies* 14–18 = Luck 1985 no. 27; cf. Graf, 1994a: 213–14).

There can be various representational relationships between the dolls and the curse victims. No extant doll, even those of high artistic quality, gives the appearance of having been moulded to portrary the peculiar characteristics of any curse victim (*VD* p. 190). When a doll is inscribed with a simple name, it is an obvious assumption that the doll is intended in some way to represent the named victim (e.g. *VD* no. 5 with p. 190). This neat one-to-one relationship is lost, however, in the case of dolls inscribed with more than one name (e.g. *VD* no.16 = *SGD* no. 122, inscribed with ten names). Sometimes the gender of the doll matches that of the victim: this seems to be true of a pair of dolls found in an Etruscan tomb, one male, one female, each inscribed with a name of the corresponding gender (*VD* no. 18), and so too with the family bust-group (*VD* no. 22). Graf suggests that the Euboean 'gingerbread man', the curse text of which is addressed against a woman, should in itself be considered a male figure in default of positive female characteristics. But this is a weak argument in view of the crude state of the doll, and in view of the possibility that it was originally a three-dimensional doll, which may well have had (female) sexual characteristics before being flattened (*SGD* no. 64 = *VD* no. 15 = *CT* no. 19; Graf, 1994a: 162). It would appear, however, that Dido actually burned a portrait-bust of Aeneas, alongside his remaining clothes and belongings, on her pyre as part of her suicide-curse against him. Dido's rite here hesitates between one of erotic attraction and one of more destructive cursing (*Aeneid* 4.508 and 640; cf. Tupet, 1976: 232–66, esp. 243, 248 and 259).

Dead animals could also be used as voodoo dolls. Libanius' mutilated and twisted chameleon has already been discussed; it is clear why the chameleon should have been considered a magical creature (see Pliny, *Natural History* 38.122–7; cf. Bonner, 1932a: 39). A pair of Latin tablets with continuous text reveal that a dead puppy was sympathetically used alongside the tablet (Gaul, ii AD):

> I denounce Lentinus and Tasgillus, the individuals written below, so that they may go away from here to Pluto and Proserpina. Just as this puppy did harm to no-one, so . . . nor let them be able to win this lawsuit. Just as the mother of this puppy could not defend it, so may their advocates be unable to defend them, so may these enemies be turned away from this case. Just as this puppy is turned away and cannot get up, so may they not be able to do so either. So may they be

> transfixed, just like this puppy. Just as animals/souls (*animalia*) have become dumb in this tomb and cannot get up, so may these men not. (*DT* nos. 111–12 = *CT* no. 53)

In a spell from the Jewish *Sepher ha-Razim* collection, the purpose of which is to prevent sleep, one is instructed to insert a duly inscribed tablet into the head of a black dog that had never been allowed to see the light (which probably implies the use of deliberately killed puppies), seal up the mouth with wax, and conceal the head behind the victim's house (Morgan, 1983: 49 = *CT* no. 114). Dogs were particularly appropriate as the special animal of Hecate: one of her heads was a dog's, and dogs were sacrificed to her (cf. Gow, 1952, ii: 38 and 43; cf. Tupet, 1976: 72). One of the Greek magical papyri bids one sow a rolled-up tablet into a dead frog (*PGM* XXXVI 231–55). Ovid speaks of binding the tongues of gossips by sewing up the mouth of a fish (*Fasti* 2.577–8; cf. Tupet, 1976: 39). A sixth-century AD literary source displays a development of this notion: St. Euthymius appears in a dream to a man dying with pains in his stomach, opens the stomach and draws out a tin tablet (Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of St. Euthymius* 57; cf. *Tab. Sulis* pp. 104–5). An unillustrated circus tablet refers to a cockerel: 'Just as this cockerel has been bound by its feet, hands and head, so etc.' (*DT* no. 241 = *CT* no. 12, Carthage, i–iii AD; cf. Faraone, 1989: 153). This text may refer to a real cockerel that was sacrificed in conjunction with the activation of the tablet, or to an image of a cockerel that should have been drawn on the tablet, the spell perhaps being incompletely copied from a formulary, or to the head of a cockerel (Abrasax?) found drawn on a separate but adjacent tablet. (See Jordan, 1988b; Faraone, 1991b: 21 n. 3.) Possibly the wryneck bird (*iynx*), which was spread-eagled across a wheel, itself also known as a *iynx* or *rhombos*, which was then spun on two strings to attract a beloved, as used most famously by Theocritus' Simaetha, was in some sense supposed to stand for the beloved (*Idyll* 2 passim and *Palatine anthology* 5.204 [the Niko epigram]; cf. Bonner, 1932a: 38–9; Gow, 1952, ii: 39–41; Tupet, 1976: 50–5; Pirenne-Delforge, 1993).

Voodoo dolls could also represent animals. This could be specifically to bind the animals represented: a cache of nine horse figurines from Roman Antioch, inscribed, apparently, with both horse names and human names, doubtless curses horses and their chariot-drivers in the familiar circus context (*SGD* nos. 180–8, not in *VD*; cf. Seyrig, 1935 and *CT* p. 15). But the animal could also have a magical significance exstrinsic to the subject of the spell in hand: one of the Greek magical papyri includes a recipe for an attraction spell which involves the manufacture of a wax dog into the mouth of which is to be placed a fragment of the skull of a man that died by violence (*PGM* IV 1872–926); another spell for attracting a woman through wakefulness requires the manufacture of a dough dog into which the eyes of a bat have been inserted (*PGM* IV 2943–66; cf. Winkler, 1990: 93 and 95).

The most vivdly informative narrative from antiquity about the use of voodoo dolls tells us that, like curse tablets, if found they could be deactivated. Sophronius (late vi AD) tells how Theophilus of Alexandria was rendered tetraplegic, his limbs racked by pains, by the devil, who had been summoned by his enemies. Saints appeared to Theophilus in dreams and told him to hire a fisherman to cast his net into the sea. The fisherman drew from the sea a small box locked and sealed with lead. Inside was found a bronze effigy of Theophilus with a nail driven into each limb. As they were withdrawn, he was released from pain and paralysis in the corresponding limb (Sophronius, *Account of the miracles of Saints Cyrus and John*, *PG* 87.3 cols. 3541–8 = *CT* no. 165; cf. *DT* pp. cxxii–iii, *VD* p. 193 and Faraone, 1991b: 9). But Graf considers this late tale unreliable evidence for ealier voodoo doll culture on the ground that the doll does not operate within any of the canonical categories of binding curse, and on the ground that the portrayed relationship between the piercing of the limbs of the doll and the restraint of the corresponding limbs of Theophilus is oversimplified and anachronistic (1994a: 165).

Horace narrates, in the character of Priapus, an elaborate magical rite which includes the use of a large woollen doll and a smaller wax one, the latter of which is made to bow down in supplication before the former, as if about to be executed as a slave. The wax doll is then melted with fire. The dolls would appear to have an erotic function, but the narrative is unfortunately difficult to exploit for the historical use of the dolls as Horace appears to have deliberately contaminated the erotic rite with a necromantic one (*Satires* 1.8.30–3 and 43–4; cf. Tupet, 1976: 299–309).

One find, that including the Louvre voodoo doll, already mentioned in a number of contexts, draws together many of the themes of this essay, despite being unique in a number of ways. It dates from the second or third century AD and comes from Egypt, perhaps Antinoopolis; it consists of:

1. The most elaborate of the voodoo dolls, a female figure carefully modelled, even though made only of unbaked clay, her hands bound behind her back and her legs bound up under her. She is transfixed by 13 nails in the top of her head, eyes, ears, mouth, chest, palms of the hands, vagina, anus, and the soles of her feet. She may be presumed to represent Ptolemais, the victim of the spell (*VD* no. 27 = Figure 4).
2. A rolled lead curse tablet, with an erotic attraction curse directed against Ptolemais by Sarapammon. The curse is written by a practised hand (*SGD* 152 = *Suppl. Mag.* no. 47 = *CT* no. 28).

3. A clay vase, which contained the two objects above, perhaps serving as a kind of coffin.

The find is not only of interest because of the quality and graphic nature of the voodoo doll, and its close association with a detailed and informative tablet: it is of also of interest because the manufacture of the doll and the text of the curse follow quite closely the instructions given in one of the Greek magical papyri (*PGM* IV 296–408 = *CT* no. 27; cf. Faraone, 1991b: 26 n. 33), save that no *voces magicae* are inscribed on the doll's limbs. The group therefore consitutes our best direct evidence for the use of magical handbooks for voodoo dolls. This, taken together with the superb quality of the doll and the inscribed text, perhaps indicates that the assemblage is the product of a magical professional.

An important document bearing upon the existence and use of voodoo dolls in the archaic period is the Cyrenean foundation decree, which, although carved in the fourth century BC, purports to relay material from the original foundation in c. 630 (*ML* no. 5 lines 44–9). An oath is prescribed by the decree which is to be accompanied by the burning of wax dolls: it includes the sympathetic wish that those who do not abide by it should melt like the dolls. Faraone compares the notion with the Greek myth in which Meleager is killed by the sympathetic burning of a log (Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.8.1–3 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.445–525 etc.: a wooden voodoo doll?), and a wide range of Homeric, archaic and classical Greek oath-taking ceremonies in which the butchery of animals (in sacrifice) and the libation of wine are taken to have sympathetic implications for the destruction and the spilling of the blood of the foresworn (e.g. Homer, *Iliad* 3.292–301 and Aeschines 1.114). Such oaths are particularly used in the context of international treaties and special pledges of loyalty (Faraone, 1993).

Another fourth-century BC inscription from Cyrene purports to relay purification rituals dictated to the city in the past by Apollo at Delphi. One of the rituals is for the laying of a ghost. Ghosts can be laid by the proclamation of their name, but if this is not known, then male and female dolls must be made from earth or wood, entertained to a feast, and then deposited in uncultivated land (*SEG* ix no. 72 lines 111–21). It is possible that this ritual is inspired by Assyrian ghost-laying rituals (i.e. mock reburials of the dead, for which see below), but it also appears to have affinities with the rituals behind Mycenean, archaic and classical Greek cenotaphs, which contain effigies in place of the missing corpse. The use of ghosts to curse and the laying of ghosts are contradictory activities, but both alike exploit the technique of their manipulation. An ancient commentary on Euripides speaks of Thessalian sorcerers (*goētes*), called 'spirit-conductors' (*psychagōgoi*) whose skill lay both in being able to send ghosts out to attack people and also to send them back to the grave (Scholiast to Euripides, *Alcestis* 1128; *VD* p. 180–5).

Traces of things akin to voodoo dolls possibly prior to the archaic are period also preserved by written sources. Pausanias speaks of an ancient bound statue of the war god Enyalius at Sparta (3.15.7). In a number of early myths we hear of Ares, the principal god of war, being bound (e.g. Homer, *Iliad* 5.385–91 and *Odyssey* 8.296–99). That there may have been corresponding bound effigies of Ares is suggested is suggested by later evidence, an oracle of Apollo at Claros to the Syedrans: it advised them to avert attacks upon them by pirates by setting up a statue of Ares, bound and kneeling (Bean and Mitford, 1965 no. 26, i BC). The *Palatine anthology* preserves the inscription from what may have been a bound statue of Ares buried in Thrace to protect it against barbarian invasions (9.805). Olympiodorus of Thebes refers to the discovery, during the reign of Constantius, of three buried silver statues of bound barbarians, which protected Thrace against the Goths; when they were removed the Goths overran the country (*FHG* iv p. 63 F27). The purpose of binding Ares was apparently both to restrain war from harming the city, and also to retain the forces of destruction on ones own side. (On all this see *VD* pp. 167–72 and Faraone, 1992: 74–93).

An intriguing find from tenth-century BC graves in Lefkandi may constitute the earliest example of a voodoo doll from Greece: it is a teracotta centaur which appears to have been deliberately broken before being inserted into graves, the head in a separate one from the body: did the centaur embody some wild and disruptive spirit which was thus subjected to restraint? (See Desborough et al., 1970; *VD* p. 195.)

THE ORIGINS OF THE CULTURE OF GREEK BINDING-CURSES

It is not possible to speak of (significant) antecedents to or influences upon Greek binding-curse culture with great certainty. All ancient mediterranean cultures probably employed 'magical' rituals of some sort and there was always cross-fertilisation between the different cultures, both before and after the beginnings of the archaeological and documentary records. The appearance in other cultures of rituals akin to binding magic prior to its recorded emergence in the Greek world does not in itself require that the Greeks 'imported' it. That said, certain ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern rites deserve consideration here: these cultures were highly developed when Greek culture remained primitive, and were therefore in a strong position to exercise influence over it. The process of magical borrowing between ancient mediterranean cultures and the development of some sort of magical *koinē* between them may have been aided by

internationally intinerant professionals (Tupet, 1976: 165; Burkert, 1983; *VD* pp. 198–9).

The Greek rites in which Ares the god of war was bound seem to be prefigured in a range of oriental cultures. A forerunner of striking similarity is found in the very ancient Egyptian practice of making dolls representing the enemies of Pharaoh as kneeling bound captives. These dolls, of wax or wood, usually represented at once an enemy of a god, such as Osiris' enemy Seth (later popular in Greek curse tablets), and at the same time an enemy of Pharaoh. They would be distorted and destroyed in fire. The image of the kneeling bound captive was popular in royal Egyptian art: in reliefs they cower below the feet of Pharaoh, and could be portrayed on the soles of sandals (to be trodden on). These captive dolls bring us close also to curse tablets: clay versions of them were flattened out (cf. the Greek 'gingerbread man', *SGD* no. 64 = *VD* no. 15 = *CT* no. 19), inscribed with the names of Pharaoh's enemies, perhaps sometimes then deliberately broken, sealed in clay pots and finally deposited in graveyards or near mortuary temples. The earliest examples hail from around 2,300 BC. Earthenware bowls were similarly inscribed with 'execrations' and then deliberately shattered. Akin to the captive dolls in a different way are small figures placed in graves of the dead and inscribed with the name of an individual corpse. The purpose of these is thought to have been to lay the unquiet ghost of one that had just died, to serve, that is, as 'mortuary aids' (for a possible Greek equivalent, see *SGD* pp. 179–80 and *CT* no. 117). If this type of doll did directly influence Greek cursing practice (and NB the presence of ghost-laying dolls at Cyrene), then the dolls' purpose seems to have been inverted: designed by the Egyptians to bind the dead, and to give them (and the living) peace, they came rather to bind the living, and to exploit the restlessness of the dead in order to bring further disturbance to the living. (See Raven, 1983; Bernand, 1991: 54–62; *VD* pp. 172–6 and 199; *CT* pp. 15 and 26; Ritner, 1993: 111–90; Pinch, 1994: 90–104.)

In the Near East the Babylonians appear to have used something akin to the bound captives: as part of a pre-battle ritual effigies of the enemy were made from tallow and other materials: their arms were twisted behind them, or they were distorted with cords. The Assyrians employed both private and public 'Burning rituals' (*Maqlû*), known from records of the incantations that accompanied them, in which effigies of demons (including personifications of diseases), ghosts and human enemies were distorted and burned. The effigies of human enemies were usually themselves identified as magicians (even though their precise identity might not be known). In some Assyrian *Namburbi* texts instructions are given to counteract the magic of hostile magicians. This involves the making of a series of effigies of various materials, including tallow and wax, writing the

name of the magician on the dolls' left hips, twisting their arms behind their backs, and tying their feet together. The dolls are then to be all bound together and buried with the victims' hair in a container in the ground.

Assyrian texts from Nineveh give instructions for a similar ghost-laying ritual: if a ghost appears to a living person, one is to make a clay effigy of the dead person, inscribe his name on the left hip, insert it into a container made from the horn of a gazelle, and bury it. The effigy may have its feet twisted, and its mouth plugged with the tooth of a dog. These effigies can themselves be given burial rites: it is as if it were felt that the original burial rites of the dead person had failed to work properly. (See Castellino, 1953; Caplice, 1970; Abusch, 1974 and 1987; Elat, 1982; Bottéro, 1987–90; Reiner, 1988; Bernand, 1991: 48–52; *VD* pp. 176–9; *CT* p. 26; Graf, 1994a: 195–8 and 294–5, with further bibliography.) The Cyrenean use of voodoo dolls in oath-taking may also be compared with Assyrian ceremonies in which wax dolls are sympathetically burned during oath-takings (e.g. the Aramaic 'Sefire' inscription at *ANET* pp. 659–60, viii BC; cf. Faraone, 1993).

Curses akin to those found in Greek and Roman curse tablets can also be found in ancient Jewish culture. Particularly noteworthy is:

> Jeremiah, having written down in a book a full description of the disaster which would come upon Babylon, said to Seraiah, 'When you come to Babylon, look at this, read it all and then say, 'Thou, O Lord, hast declared thy purpose to destroy this place and leave it with no one living in it, man or beast; it shall be desolate, forever waste.' When you have finished reading the book, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates, and then say, 'So shall Babylon sink, never to rise again after the disaster which I shall bring upon her.' (*Jeremiah* 51:60–4 [trans. *New English Bible*])

Ezekiel appears to give a prescription for the manufacture of something quite akin to a curse tablet, with a similarly sympathetic function (4:1–3; see Fox, 1912b: 304 and 1913–14; *CT* pp. 26–7).

There are more vague indications that the Hittites too used dolls of clay, wax and other materials in the restraint of their enemies: again the dolls could be held to represent hostile magicians. In the course of the restraining ritual the dolls were flattened or melted, and the accompanying verbal curses revealed that this was supposed to have a sympathetic effect on the enemy. (See Goetze and Sturtevant, 1938; *VD* pp. 179–80; *CT* p. 26.) The Hittites too seem to have used dolls in oath-taking (e.g. the military oath *KBo* VI 34.40–rev. 5 at *ANET* p. 353, c. 1,400 BC).

DID ANCIENT BINDING MAGIC 'WORK'?

It is now commonly argued that binding magic 'worked' with reference to shared (mistaken) belief. The notion is not new, but as old as Plato:

> Another kind of witchcraft (*pharmakeia*) with its so-called sorceries, charms and binding-spells persuades those attempting to harm their victims that they really are able to achieve such a thing, and persuades their victims that, more than anything, they are being harmed by those who are able to work magic. (Plato, *Laws* 933a)

In such a sense magic can just about be said to have worked, though hardly in the way in which it was supposed to do so. In the case of prayers for justice it may be argued that the wrongdoer's sense of guilt may have helped to induce psychosomatic illness, or led him to associate any occurring illness with his guilt. A wrongdoer might at any rate have been expecting and fretting about the prospect of a curse, but an innocent victim would not normally have had any such internal prompting. (See *Tab. Sulis* pp. 101–2; Betz, 1992: xlviii; *CT* pp. 21–3, 120 and 176–7, cf. 221; for the 'resilience' and 'self-confirming' nature of magical belief systems see Evans-Pritchard, 1937: 475–8 and Thomas, 1971: 641–2.)

There certainly was a widespread acceptance in antiquity that binding magic worked: the elder Pliny asserted that everyone feared curse tablets (*Natural History* 28.4.19 = *CT* no. 146; cf. Preisendanz, 1972: 2). But the difficulty for us in believing that it worked to any significant extent in the way outlined above relates to the problems of publicity and legality. It is probable that most magical activity was carried out in secret. This must have been true to a certain degree, since tablets and dolls could be deactivated once discovered and the desecration of graves, which was a common element of the deposition of tablets and voodoo dolls, could not have been publicly countenanced. Furthermore, magic often revelled in and drew power from its own secrecy and secretiveness: Greek magical papyri often require that their readers divulge their contents to no other (e.g. *PGM* I 40–1; cf. Graf, 1994a: 117–18). It is sometimes believed that the jumbling of letters in the tablets and the rolling of them were for reasons of secrecy, though we have seen that other explanations carry more weight. A wide range of sources indicate that magical incantations were muttered in low tones, both to maintain their secrecy and so as not to alarm the necessary demons, who could be frightened by noise (Gow, 1952, ii: pp. 38 and 43; cf. Graf, 1994a: 99). Despite this, we are asked to believe that magical practitioners, before or after the rite, effectively told their victims that a spell had been or was about to be cast upon them. The evidence usually advanced to support such a hypothesis is weak: Simaetha's reference before making her spell to her intention to go to the gymnasium and tell her errant lover Delphis off (Theocritus, *Idyll* 2.8–9; cf. *Tab. Sulis* pp. 62, 72, 84 and 100; Faraone, 1991b: 17; *CT* pp. 21, 82–3 and 176–7).

A more specific reason for keeping *harmful* magical practice secret was its illegality. There is just enough evidence to suggest that harmful magical practice was generally illegal throughout Graeco-Roman antiquity (cf. Preisendanz, 1972: 11; Aune, 1980: 1515–18 [also discussing whether illegality should be considered a universal characteristic of magic]; Phillips, 1991: esp. 261 and 269). By contrast, it is unlikely that prayers for justice were illegal (*Tab. Sulis* p. 100). Perhaps the 'lack of universally accepted definitions of unsanctioned religious activity', the diverse and polytheistic nature of ancient religion, and the largely tolerated emergence of new cults prevented the comprehensive outlawing of magic (Phillips, 1991: esp. 264 and 266). There is no definite case of an actual law from classical Greece banning the use of binding spells, but they may have been covered under the rubric of 'harmful *pharmaka*' in a lawcode from Teos of 479 BC (*Syll.*[3] no.37; cf. Faraone, 1991b: 20 and *CT* p. 23). Most forms of 'magic' appear to have been prosecutable under the catch-all crime of impiety (*asebeia*) in classical Athens (cf. Phillips, 1991: 262). Plato explicitly outlaws binding spells in his hypothetical *Laws* (933a = *CT* no. 141). In Rome harmful magic is said to have been outlawed from the time of the Twelve Tables in the fifth century BC (Apuleius, *Apology* 47; cf. Segal, 1981: 356–8; Phillips, 1991: 262; *CT* p. 258), and the extant laws of the Twelve Tables do indeed define some magical crimes, namely the incantation of a harmful spell (*malum carmen*: Pliny, *Natural history* 28.17; cf. Tupet, 1976: 166–8) and the charming of crops from one field to another by song (*excantatio cultorum*: Seneca, *Natural questions* 4.7.2 and Pliny, *Natural history* 28.17–18; cf. Graf, 1994a: 52–3). Sulla's law of 81 BC, the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* outlawed *veneficium*, a term which covered magical procedures for encompassing death, as well as simple poisoning (*Digest* 48.8; cf. Graf, 1994a: 57–8 and 80). The emperors seem to have agreed that harmful magic should be illegal, but to have been less consistent on non-harmful magic (Barb, 1963: 102–3; cf. *CT* p. 24). Paulus (early iii AD), writing in a context in which magic was clearly illegal, gave the opinion that professional magicians should be burned, whilst magical participants should be thrown to the wild beasts or crucified; magical books were to be confiscated or burned, and their owners exiled or, if of the lower class, decapitated (*Sententiae* 5.23.15–18 = *CT* no. 157). With the development of Christianity, with its monotheist doctrine and concept of orthodoxy, magic or 'unsanctioned religious activity' became easier to define and oppress (cf. Phillips, 1991: 264–5). Eusebius, writing in 335 AD explicitly referred to binding spells as illegal (*Laus Constantini* 13 = *CT* no. 160). Ammianus Marcellinus wrote in 359 AD that execution

awaited those who dug up graves for magical purposes (19.12.14). An imperial decree of 389, repeatedly renewed, required those who knew of individuals practising magic to expose them (*Theodosian code* 9.16.11; cf. *CT* p. 48 n. 29). Later in this volume Luck illustrates the common association between the sorcerer and the criminal in antiquity. Illegality placed an officially countercultural stamp upon magic, and thus conferred greater power upon it. The illegality of magical practice meant that it was extremely dangerous for the practitioner to attempt to start the victim's powers of suggestion against himself by circulating a rumour that magic had been used, and even more dangerous to accost one's victim in a public place and there declare that one was using magic against them, as Simaetha is supposed to do.

Perhaps a partial answer lies in Plato's reference to people being frightened by wax voodoo dolls fixed at the meeting-points of three roads, on their parents' tombs or on their doors (*Laws* 933ab = *CT* no. 141; cf. Preisendanz, 1972: 4; Faraone, 1989: 159 and 1993: 64). Since other evidence indicates that a located doll could have been easily deactivated by its removal, dolls in such places could not have presented any great threat in themselves. But perhaps one could deposit a 'working' doll out of reach, whilst exhibiting all too publicly a duplicate to the victim. The displayed doll would therefore have had the function of informing the victim that a curse had been placed upon him, and of unleashing his own powers of suggestion against himself. This would have constituted an effective, graphic and anonymous way of letting one's victim know that he should begin to fret.

Some prayers for justice were probably nailed up flat for display before their deposition: this may be suspected, for example, when a tablet contains a single nail-hole at the middle-top of the text (e.g. a bronze tablet from Asia Minor of between the first century BC and the second century AD, Dunant, 1978 = *CT* no. 90; cf. Versnel, 1991: 74 and 80; Faraone, 1991b: 27 n. 43). This is not to say that the nailing in these cases was purely functional. A fourth-century BC Greek magical papyrus from Egypt, one of the oldest, contains a lengthy prayer for justice (it actually calls itself a *hiketēria*, 'supplication' or 'petition') by Artemisia against the father of her dead daughter, and the text implies that it will be posted up in a public place (*PGM* XL; cf. Versnel, 1991: 68–9). We must assume that there was nothing illegal about this sort of tablet or petition. But then there was nothing anti-social or unfair about them: rather, in so far as they worked, they served the interests of law and order. The same may be said for the publicly displayed conditional curses for the future inscribed on tombstones to protect graves (cf. Strubbe, 1991; *CT* pp. 185–7). Nonetheless, many tablets even of this category, such as the Bath cache, were definitely *not* displayed publicly (see Vernsel, 1991: 80–1; *CT* pp. 176–7).

The casting of the spells may also have served a function useful to the psychology and mental well-being of the curser, whether he felt unfairly treated, or desperately wanted the love of another person, or any of the other things sought in the tablets. In Tomlin's memorable phrase, 'something at least had been done' (*Tab. Sulis* p. 102; cf. *CT* pp. 23 and 82).

BINDING SPELLS AND THE DEFINITION OF MAGIC

It is time to return to the point at which we began. Discussions of the definition of magic itself, particularly in relation to religion, occur frequently in recent publications on ancient binding spells. Virtually all the essays in Faraone and Obbink, 1991, for example, air the matter (e.g. Faraone, 1991: 17–20; Versnel, 1991: 92–3; Kotansky, 1991: 122 and 123 n. 1; Graf, 1991: 188, 195–6 and 207 n. 1; Betz, 1991: 244–7; Phillips, 1991: 260–2 and 266. See also Barb, 1963; Tupet, 1976: vii–xv; Aune, 1980: especially 1510–15; Segal, 1981; Luck, 1985: 4–5; Phillips, 1986: 2679 and 2711–32; Versnel, 1986; *Tab. Sulis* p. 60; Winkler, 1990: 72; Bernand, 1991: 65–75; *CT* pp. 24–5, 39 n. 114 and 247; Graf, 1994a: 27–9). When attempts to define magic are not merely sterile arguments about the use of words, they often threaten to recall their roots in an agenda of religious oppression (cf. Thomas, 1971: 438 etc.; Segal, 1981: 349).

There is no easy way to separate binding spells from what can uncontroversially be termed 'religion' in an ancient context. The curse tablets merge quite fully into ordinary religious practice in the 'prayers for justice' category, in which tablets can be phrased as quite normal prayers to mainline deities. In a sense any curse tablet that appeals to a mainline deity, directly or indirectly, cannot be excluded from the sphere of 'religion.' Curse tablets of all sorts mix and interchange ostensibly 'magical' procedures, such as binding formulas and 'manipulative' or 'coercive' elements (vis-à-vis the powers), and ostensibly religious ones, such as prayer formulas and 'supplicative' elements (Faraone, 1991b: 20; cf. Versnel, 1991: 93; Faraone, 1993: 77; for the significance of these concepts, see Goode, 1949; Aune, 1980: 1512–13). Indeed Plato associated incantations and prayers alike with magicians (*Laws* 909b; cf. Graf, 1991: 188–9). Furthermore, as Gager observes, the ancient world 'teemed' with all manner of supernatural beings of different orders, which most men would not have thought to distribute into categories of 'religious' and 'magical' (*CT* p. 12, against, most recently, Versnel, 1991: 64). Betz has noted that the overlap between the culture of magic in the Greek magical papyri and the culture of mystery cults is particularly strong (1991: 249–50; cf. Graf, 1994a: 107–37). It is perhaps possible to draw a distinction

between religion and magic in the ancient world in the context not of utterances, of prayers, but of rituals, in particular of sacrifice: Graf argues that in a religious context sacrifice and other rituals unite the community, whereas in a magical one they distance the magician or practitioner from the rest of the community (Graf, 1991: 195–6). But the binding magic we have discussed here only makes occasional use of actual sacrifice (dead puppies, chameleons etc.).

As Gager again observes, it is not really proper to ask a question of the sort 'What are the characteristics of Greek magic?' Rather we should confine ourselves to questions of the type 'Under what conditions, by whom and of whom does the term "magic" come to be used?' (*CT* p. 25; cf. Segal, 1981: 367). What can, however, be usefully pointed to here (and this is by no means any kind of total definition of the phenomenon) is the way in which ancient magical practice sometimes *defined itself*, that is, the countercultural cloak that it sometimes took on at least partly of its own accord. Examples of purposefully adopted countercultural forms may be found in the curse tablets' retrograde writing, their penchant for matrilineal descent and their later penchant for alien deities. Graf's observation that magic tends to distance the magician from his community is again apposite; he also argues that it was this aspect of magic that made it a useful and fruitful accusation to cast against outsiders in the community, as happened to Apuleius at Oea (Apuleius, *Apology*; Graf, 1991: 195–6 and 1994a: 75–105).

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The first significant corpus of curse tablets to be published was Wünsch's *Defixionum tabellae* (Wünsch, 1897), normally referred to as *Defixionum tabellae Atticae* and abbreviated to *DTA* to distinguish it from Audollent, 1904. This was a collection of Attic curse tablets known at the time. It still constitutes the basis for the study of the Attic tablets and is likely to continue as such unless the lost originals it reproduces are rediscovered. This publication was significant not only for rendering curse tablet texts generally accessible for the first time, but also for conferring on them a degree of respectability as an object of study, since it formed part of the authoritative epigraphical series *Inscriptiones Graecae*. Wünsch's collection was soon complemented by Audollent's *Defixionum tabellae* (Audollent, 1904), usually abbreviated to *DT*, which reproduced all curse tablets known to Audollent at the time in Greek, Latin and some minor languages, categorised by provenance, excluding those already published in Wünsch's volume.

Most of the Greek tablets not found in either of these corpora are listed

in Jordan's indispensible 'A survey of Greek defixiones not included in the special corpora' (Jordan, 1985a), usually abbreviated to *SGD*. Jordan here lists the tablets by provenance, following an anti-clockwise geographical progression around the Mediterranean, and indicates their place(s) of publication (if any). Some short but interesting texts are reproduced in full. I have not usually cited prior places of publication for tablets in this list.

A corpus of the Latin tablets to have emerged since Audollent by 1920 was compiled by Besnier, 1920, and a list, like *SGD* without full texts, of those to have emerged since Besnier by 1968 was compiled by Solin, 1968: 23–31 (see also García Ruiz, 1967: 55 n. 1). Since then the number of Latin documents available has been significantly increased by the discovery of the Bath cache and its publication in Tomlin's contribution to Cunliffe's *The temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath* ii (*Tab. Sulis*), which is also published separately as *Tabellae Sulis*. This is to date the most meticulous and exemplary publication of any set of curse tablets and includes, amongst other things, careful drawings of each tablet. For this reason the Bath cache takes on an importance for the study of the subject as a whole that its idiosyncratic nature would not otherwise have dictated, the cache consisting almost entirely of 'prayers for justice'.

Of these works only Tomlin provides translations. An excellent set of translations of the most interesting and important texts selected from all these corpora, together with English commentaries, is provided by Gager's *Curse tablets and binding spells from the ancient world* (1992, abbreviated here to *CT*). Where possible I have drawn the examples discussed above from among the texts available in this volume, but they are given in my own translation unless otherwise indicated.

A systematic catalogue of voodoo dolls is provided by Faraone's 'Binding and burying the forces of evil: the defensive use of "voodoo" dolls in ancient Greece' (1991a, here abbreviated to *VD*) at 200–5. This article also provides the best analysis of the use of the dolls and of oriental antecedents to them. Faraone treats the use of wax dolls and their use in oath-taking ceremonies more specifically in his 'Molten wax, spilt wine, and mutilated animals . . .' article (1993). The same scholar puts the voodoo dolls in a wider Greek religious context in his *Talismans and Trojan horses* (1992). A detailed analysis of the Mnesimachos doll is provided by Trumpf 1958, and Mariani 1910 remains useful for providing photographs of some dolls not illustrated in *VD*.

The Greek magical papyri are collected in the two volumes of Henrich's revised version of Preisendanz's *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (Preisendanz and Henrichs, 1973–4; original edition 1928–31, Leipzig and Stuttgart), usually abbreviated to *PGM*. German translations are provided. The second edition of volume ii also incorporates papyri from the 'lost' original

volume iii, production of which was arrested by the Allied bombing of the Teubner press in 1941. Unfortunately this second edition does not also incorporate from the lost volume the detailed and valuable indices to the entire collection. For these we depend upon photocopies of the volume's galley-proofs which are fairly rare, although copies are held by the major British classical libraries (see Jordan, 1985b: 234 n. 71 and Betz, 1992: xliv). These papyri, together with other Greek papyri that have come to light since Preisendanz's first edition, and together with the demotic-language papyri and demotic-language sections of Greek papyri which were known to Preisendanz but omitted by him, are translated into English in Betz's *Greek magical papyri in translation* (Betz, 1992; first edition was 1986). Preisendanz's sequence is preserved, with the additional papyri continuing it: hence *PGM* references from LXXXII onwards refer only to Betz. Betz's demotic papyri are referred to under the *PDM* abbreviation. Unfortunately he omits the Christian magical spells and the magical ostraka and wooden tablets included in Preisendanz's corpus (Winkler, 1990: 226 n. 2 suggests a reason for this); for these we may now turn to Meyer and Smith, 1994: 27–57. Betz's translations are contained in a single volume; a second volume, containing indices to the papyri, is long promised but has yet to appear. If one did not know better, one might think that the indexing of the papyri lay under a curse. Annotated Greek texts, also with English translations, of magical papyri that have come to light subsequently to Preisendanz's first edition are now published by Daniel and Maltomini in the two volumes of *Supplementum Magicum* (1990–2, abbreviated to *Suppl. Mag.*). *Suppl. Mag.* also includes the closely related curse tablets from Egypt, some of which Preisendanz knew but placed outside his remit. A fairly readable survey of the material in the Greek magical papyri is provided by Nock, 1929.

Greek gemstone amulets, which largely hail from Egypt, are analysed in Bonner, 1950, which includes a full descriptive catalogue at 249–323 and photographs of the complete catalogue. See also the collection of similar material by Delatte and Derchain, 1964. The wordier Greek amulets of the lamella type, which hail largely from outside Egypt, are being published in two volumes by Kotansky, the first of which has appeared (1994). A recent introduction to the Greek amulets is provided by Kotansky, 1991. Guarducci, 1978: 271–83 provides a useful introduction in Italian.

Mention should also be made of Wortmann's fine publication, with good photographs, of thirteen magical texts of various kinds in Cologne (1968). His curse tablets, papyri, voodoo dolls and amulets are subsumed in the relevant subsequent series for these materials described above.

The accessibility of the curse tablets and ancient magical technology to study by English readers has been radically transformed over the past decade or so, largely through the work of a small number of American scholars, who have also done much to reinvigorate the subject intellectually: the names of Jordan, Faraone, Gager and Kotansky deserve particular mention. The best modern short introduction to the curse tablets is Faraone's 'The agonistic context of early Greek binding spells' (Faraone, 1991b) in the volume edited by him and Obbink, *Magika Hiera* (Faraone and Obbink, 1991); a number of the other articles in this superb collection also have a bearing on the subject, notably Versnel's on prayers for justice (Vernsel, 1991) and Winkler's on erotic magic (Winkler, 1991), which can also be found in his *Constraints of desire* (Winkler, 1990, the pagination of which is used here). A more detailed and systematic introduction is provided by Gager's *Curse tablets* (*CT*), which prefaces its translations with substantial amounts of introductory material. Tomlin's analysis of the Bath cache is extremely illuminating on the processes of tablets' manufacture, and essential to any consideration of the social context of the tablets' use (*Tab. Sulis*).

The most important introductions to the tablets among older work are Preisendanz's 'Fluchtafel (Defixion)' (Preisendanz, 1972), for twenty years the first place of reference, and Kagarow's *Griechische Fluchtafeln* (Kagarow, 1929). A readable introduction in Italian is provided by Guarducci, 1978: 240–57.

Much of the important modern work on curse tablets appears in the forms of series of articles by the American scholars named above. Thus, in addition to his *SGD*, a number of Jordan's articles may be singled out, in particular 1976, 1980a, 1985b, 1988b and 1988c. Further to Faraone's 1991b piece, there is much of value in his articles of 1985 and 1989. There is a degree of repetition between these. There have also been two recent contributions to the subject in French: Bernand, 1991 translates and discusses a number of the tablets in the course of a wide-ranging treatment of many aspects of Greek magic; a more focused discussion of the tablets themselves is provided by Graf, 1994a: 139–98; mention should also be made here of Tupet's less recent but nonetheless superb *La magie dans la poésie latine* (Tupet 1976) which, although not concentrating specifically on curse tablets, provides a wealth of information on many aspects of ancient magic far beyond the confines of its deceptively narrow title.

Further to the work of Winkler on erotic magic, reference should also be made to Maltomini's review of a thesis by Moke (1979) and to the brief but important article of Petropoulos (1988).

What should scholars turn their attention to in the future? It will be clear from the above bibliographical survey that the publication and documentation of curse tablets is currently chaotic. Also, the accumulated expertise generated by the decipherment of the more recently discovered tablets, when applied to tablets published in the older series (where the

originals remain available), shows that the original decipherments are often defective (no discredit, however, to the pioneers in the field). There is then a pressing need for a single, coherent and systematic new edition of all known curse tablets, and one based, where possible, on new inspections of the texts. Happily, Jordan is engaged in such a task. The availability of such an edition will render all analytical approaches to the tablets much more easy and fruitful.

To some extent the study of curse tablets and other magical texts from classical antiquity has existed in a ghetto, and has not really been fully integrated into mainstream classical scholarship. While at the beginning of this century this isolation may have been caused by a general disdain for the 'irrational' aspects of classical antiquity, it is nowadays probably sustained by the technical difficulties and philological nature of the study of the tablets. It should then be a priority to bring such an integration about. The study of women and the study of religion are perhaps currently the two dominant areas of interest for Classical historians, yet works in these areas seldom refer to magical texts. The above discussion will, I trust, have shown how important magical texts can be for both of these subjects.

Postscript. Of great importance for the history of erotic curses is the detailed publication of a newly discovered and exciting tablet published by Voutiras, E., *Διονυσοφῶντος γάμοι. Marital life and magic in fourth-century Pella* (Amsterdam, 1998). On the representation of witches see Clauss, J.J., and Johnston, S.I., eds. *Medea* (Princeton, 1997) and, more controversially, Rabinowitz, J., *The rotting goddess: the origin of the witch in classical antiquity* (New York 1998). Another good collection of essays on ancient magic is provided by Meyer, M., and Mirecki, P., eds., *Ancient magic and ritual power* (Leiden, 1995). Graf's important general book on ancient magic, 1994a, is now available in English as *Magic in the ancient world* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997). A full and interesting account of exploitable ghosts is provided by Johnston, S.I., *Restless dead. Encounters between the living and the dead in ancient Greece* (Berkeley 1999); see also Felton, D., *Haunted Greece and Rome. Ghost stories from classical antiquity* (Austin, forthcoming). Finally, I mention two works that had not come to my attention at the time of writing. A further useful introduction to the Greek magical papyri is provided by Brashear, W., Magical papyri: magic in bookform' in Ganz, P., ed., *Das Buch als magisches und als Repräsentationsobjekt* (Wiesbaden, 1992) 25–59. A detailed and informative edition of a rich erotic attraction curse is provided by Martinez, D. G., *A Greek love charm from Egypt (P. Mich. 757)* P. Michigan xvi (Atlanta, 1991).

PART 2

Witches and Sorcerers in Classical Literature

Georg Luck