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1

Drawing Down the Moon: Defining Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World

> She strives with the reluctant moon, to bring it down from its course in the skies, and makes hide away in shadows the steeds of the sun; she reins the waters in, and stays the down-winding stream; she charms life into trees and rocks, and moves them from their place. Among sepulchres she stalks, ungirded, with hair flowing loose, and gathers from the yet warm funeral pyre the appointed bones. She vows to their doom the absent, fashions the waxen image, and into its wretched heart drives the slender needle—and other deeds 'twere better not to know.
>
> (Ovid, *Heroides* 6.84–93)[1]

Introduction

Magic—the word evokes the mysterious and the marvelous, the forbidden and the hidden, the ancient and the arcane—deeds that it is better not to know. Drawing down the moon and reversing the rivers' flow, like sticking pins into wax images and stealing bones from funeral pyres, are typical examples of magic, and Ovid's Hypsipyle accuses Medea, her rival for her lover, Jason, of doing such terrible things. Drawing down the moon from

[1] *illa reluctantem cursu deducere lunam nititur et tenebris abdere solis equos; illa refrenat aquas obliquaque flumina sistit; illa loco silvas vivaque saxa movet. per tumulos errat passis discincta capillis certaque de tepidis colligit ossa rogis. devovet absentis simulacraque cerea figit, et miserum tenuis in iecur urget acus—et quae nescierim melius* (Loeb).

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the sky is a familiar trope in discussions of the weird and extra-ordinary activity that is often labeled 'magic,' and it appears, either as part of a list of magical acts or as a single act representative of the whole scope of magical possibilities, in sources throughout the ancient Greco-Roman world, by which I mean the peoples of the Mediterranean region who expressed themselves in Greek or Latin between the eighth century BCE and the fifth century CE.

So what did 'magic' mean to the people who first coined the term, the people of ancient Greece and Rome? In this study, which takes its title of *Drawing Down the Moon* from the most famous of the magical tricks known from the ancient world, I survey the varieties of phenomena labeled 'magic' in the ancient Greco-Roman world, seeking ways to form a definition of magic to understand the uses of the label. I discuss ancient tablets and spell books as well as literary descriptions of magic in the light of theories relating to the religious, political, and social contexts in which magic was used. I also examine the magicians of the ancient world and the techniques and devices they used to serve their clientele. Bindings and curses, love charms and healing potions, amulets and talismans—from the simple spells designed to meet the needs of the poor and desperate to the complex theurgies of the philosophers, the people of the Greco-Roman world did not only imagine what magic could do, they also made use of magic to try to influence the world around them.

The study of magic in the Greco-Roman world is not merely an exploration into the weird and wonderful, an antiquarian search for the colorful corners of the ancient world. Understanding why certain practices, images, and ideas were labeled as 'magic' and set apart from the normal kinds of practices provides insight into the shifting ideas of normal religion in the Greco-Roman world. Normative religion is that which both follows the model of socially accepted religious activity and expresses that model for the community, and, from our own contemporary cultural context, we tend by default to think of normative religion in terms of institutionally sanctioned correct ways of believing (orthodoxy) and of practicing religion (orthopraxy). However, in societies with no notion of orthodoxy and even limited modes of orthopraxy, normative religion could only be defined by this kind of practice of labeling, and 'magic' was one of the more important labels that was used, in different ways by different people at different times. The study of ancient magic therefore provides a crucial perspective on normative practices of religion in the ancient Greco-Roman world—on ritual practices such as sacrifice, purification, and prayer, on theological elaborations of the hierarchies of divinities, and on the underlying cosmologies that structured human interactions with both the material world and the divine.

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The evidence for magic comes not only from the familiar literary traditions of the classical world, the spectacular and memorable images of witches, ghosts, and demons and the fantastic powers of metamorphosis, erotic attraction, or reversals of nature such as the famous trick of drawing down the moon. The archaeological record provides evidence that attests to the ideas of people in the ancient world who never had a chance to contribute to the literary tradition, the non-elites or marginal figures whose expressions were never preserved and recopied throughout the millennia of reception of classical materials. In the curses scrawled on sheets of lead, seeking to restrain rivals in business, law courts, athletics, or erotic affairs, we can see the hopes and fears of a group of people whose voices have been lost in the intervening centuries. In the elaborate formulations of the spell books or alchemical recipes, we can see the complex workings of intellectuals who remained at the margins of society, engaging in complex speculations about the nature of the world and the gods. In the jumbled lists of powers invoked, we can see the dynamics of cultural fusion that occurred in the rich multicultural environment of the ancient Mediterranean world, where an ancient Mesopotamian goddess Ereškigal might be invoked alongside the Greek Persephone and the Egyptian Isis, right next to a prayer to the supreme deity Iaō, the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Jehovah.

Understanding the category of magic in its ancient Greco-Roman context is important for understanding not only the ancient world itself, but also the ways in which the ideas and controversies have influenced later periods. The ways in which things and ideas are labeled 'magic' in the ancient world are replicated in religious controversies throughout the later Western tradition. Most famous of these is perhaps the critique of Catholic ritualism that plays a central role in the Protestant Reformation, but even in the witch hunts that are used to reinforce (or invent) orthodoxy, we can see the reuse of ancient categories for normative and non-normative religion in the accusations of magic. On the more positive side, the esoteric traditions of ancient wisdom that manifested in the astrological, pharmacological, and alchemical practices of ancient magic play an important part in the history of science from antiquity through the Enlightenment and beyond. A deeper understanding of the category of magic in its ancient contexts provides a richer understanding of its reception.

Drawing down the moon provides an illustrative example of the issues involved with understanding magic in the ancient Greco-Roman world and its later receptions. This act, which appears in the contemporary world as an important ritual in certain Wiccan and Neopagan traditions, appears first in the evidence from the ancient world as a joke. In Aristophanes's *Clouds*, the scoundrel Strepsiades explains his cunning plan for getting out

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of his debts. He'll hire a Thessalian witch to draw down the moon and keep it in a box so that the new moon day, on which debt payments are due, will never come.[2]

> STREPSIADES: I have an idea for cheating them of the interest.
> SOCRATES: Explain it.
> STREPSIADES: Tell me now, then. . . .
> SOCRATES: What?
> STREPSIADES: If I should hire a Thessalian witch woman and draw down the moon at night, and then I lock it up in a round case, like a mirror, and then I keep it guarded . . .
> SOCRATES: And what would you gain from that?
> STREPSIADES: Why, if the moon should never rise anywhere, then I would not pay interest.
> SOCRATES: And why is that?
> STREPSIADES: Because the money is lent month by month.

This joke reveals several things about the idea of drawing down the moon in Aristophanes's Athens. First, the procedure was familiar enough to his audience that it could be mentioned without explanation: everyone knows that Thessalian witches draw down the moon. Secondly, Strepsiades proposes this idea as an extra-ordinary solution to his debt problem; drawing down the moon is a dramatic reversal of the natural order that will get him out of an otherwise insoluble crisis. Thirdly, however, Strepsiades is a comic idiot, which means that his plan won't work, even within the fiction of the comedy; the extra-ordinary feat of drawing down the moon is actually a worthless sham, good only for a laugh at Strepsiades's expense.

This same constellation of familiarity within the tradition coupled with either extra-ordinary power or worthless superstition appears repeatedly in evidence for magic throughout the ancient Greco-Roman world. It is worth probing, however, how exactly this extra-ordinary nature of magic appears throughout the evidence—what is magic? To answer this question, we must start with a definition of magic that can help us make sense of the evidence. I therefore propose that:

[2] Aristophanes, *Nub.* 746–757. **Στρεψιάδης**: ἔχω τόκου γνώμην ἀποστερητικήν. || **Σωκράτης**: ἐπίδειξον αὐτήν. || **Στρεψιάδης**: εἰπὲ δή νύν μοι — || **Σωκράτης**: τὸ τί; || **Στρεψιάδης**: γυναῖκα φαρμακίδ᾽ εἰ πριάμενος Θετταλὴν| καθέλοιμι νύκτωρ τὴν σελήνην, εἶτα δὴ| αὐτὴν καθείρξαιμ᾽ ἐς λοφεῖον στρογγύλον,| ὥσπερ κάτοπτρον, κᾆτα τηροίην ἔχων — || **Σωκράτης**: τί δῆτα τοῦτ᾽ ἂν ὠφελήσειέν σ᾽; || **Στρεψιάδης**: ὅ τι; εἰ μηκέτ᾽ ἀνατέλλοι σελήνη μηδαμοῦ,| οὐκ ἂν ἀποδοίην τοὺς τόκους. || **Σωκράτης**: ὁτιὴ τί δή; || **Στρεψιάδης**: ὁτιὴ κατὰ μῆνα τἀγύριον δανείζεται. For a study of drawing down the moon in modern Neopaganism, see Adler 1981.

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> Magic is a discourse pertaining to non-normative ritualized activity, in which the deviation from the norm is most often marked in terms of the perceived efficacy of the act, the familiarity of the performance within the cultural tradition, the ends for which the act is performed, or the social location of the performer.

Each piece of this definition needs unpacking, and its usefulness can be demonstrated through a closer examination of some of the evidence for drawing down the moon.

Defining Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World

Magic and the Art of Bicycle Maintenance

In her review of several scholarly works on magic in the ancient world, Sarah Iles Johnston refers to Marvin Meyers's comparison of the scholarship on magic to riding a rather rickety bicycle; we continue to make progress in understanding ancient magic as we pedal forward working with the evidence, but every once in a while, we need to stop and do some maintenance on the bicycle itself, our definition of the category of magic. The definition will always be a bit rickety, but if we spend all our time and energy in trying to fix it up, we will never make any progress.[3] Nearly fifteen years after her reflection, however, it may be time for some more work on the definition of magic.

Defining magic is notoriously problematic, and the comparison is often made to Supreme Court Justice Stewart's famous comment on pornography: he couldn't quite define it, but he knew it when he saw it.[4] When people see an example of drawing down the moon, most would know it as magic, even if they can't articulate why. This sort of intuitive definition is the starting point for any kind of classification, but if it remains the end point as well, the definition will be full of tacit and unexamined presuppositions that do more or less violence to the subject under investigation. We can move, however, from an intuitive to an analytic definition by making explicit and examining the presuppositions we bring to it—why does it feel like magic, smell like magic, look like magic? What distinguishes

[3] Meyers was calling for more pedaling forward while setting aside the question of definition, or even the use of the term 'magic' itself, while Johnston calls for some renewed attention to the definitions. "So although I remain an enthusiastic cyclist ten years after Meyer's remark, I now ride with a closer eye on my chain and sprocket" (Johnston 2003: 54).

[4] Cp. C. Phillips 1991, who refers n. 34 to Stewart's legal opinion in Jacobellis v. Ohio, 378 U.S. 184 (1964), at 197.

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the things that we know as magic when we see them from the things that we don't classify as magic?

If we are looking at magic in the ancient Greco-Roman world, we face the further problem that our categories and classifications do not necessarily align with the classifications made in those cultures during those times. What did those people define as magic, and by what criteria did they make their distinctions? Anthropologists distinguish between emic and etic perspectives on a culture, between the cultural insider's perspective and the outside, scholarly perspective.[5] An account from a member of the community, using the terms and categories of the culture, provides an emic perspective, while someone examining the culture from the outside, using the terms and categories of his or her own culture, takes an etic perspective. Ideally, to understand another culture, we must understand the way that the people in that culture think, but, as anthropologists have shown, an outsider can never fully adopt an insider perspective. In the case of the ancient Greco-Roman world, we are separated too far in time (and, for many of us, in space as well) to merge seamlessly into the world of those we study; the gaps in the evidence are too enormous, and the cultural shifts over the centuries are too great and too complex.

Thus, we must start with etic definitions, since those are the presuppositions we bring to any inquiry from our own culture and upbringing. Ultimately, we must end up with etic definitions as well, since we cannot analyze another culture as though we were part of it. So, for the modern scholar, 'magic' will always be an etic category, formulated for the purposes of analyzing and understanding the ancient Greco-Roman world.[6] If we want to make sense of the evidence for ourselves, we cannot do without definitions altogether; any attempt to do so just ends up bringing back in implicit—and therefore unexamined—etic definitions.[7] However, we can

[5] The terminology of emic and etic are borrowed from linguistics, which differentiates the phon*emic* and phon*etic* qualities of a word, the meaning comprehensible to one who knows the language and the sounds audible even to outsiders who don't know the language. See Pike 1967, especially 37–41.

[6] J. Z. Smith makes the same point of of religion in general: "Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization" (J. Smith 1982: xi). One might also compare the concepts of *parole* and *langue* from structural linguistics; the particular examples of *parole* are real individual speech acts, but the *langue* is an idea of a system deduced by the one who examines the *paroles*.

[7] Cp. Johnston 2003: 54: "Taking a crack at defining 'magic'—that most provocative of chimeras—is simply irresistible; we should at least learn to do it better. The second reason is that we need definitions of magic, at least for heuristic purposes. Truly emic research is impossible; we are condemned to look at other cultures from the outside, and are better off confronting that fact and turning each attempt to define magic into an exercise in examining our conceptions about the practices and beliefs we categorize under that term."

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come up with better etic definitions if we look to the way the ancient Greeks and Romans made their own emic definitions and drew their own categories.[8] If we refine our intuitive modern etic definitions with reference to the evidence for the ancient emic classifications, the bicycle may still end up a bit wobbly, but we will be able to make better progress.

Magic as a Discourse

One of the most useful adjustments in the recent scholarship on magic has been the turn to considering magic as a dynamic social construct, instead of some particular reality.[9] Magic is not a thing, but a way of talking about things. It is thus a 'discourse,' like sexuality, or religion, or science, or literature—or, indeed, pornography. Such a discourse, as Foucault points out, always has a history, since such a way of talking about things shifts over time as different people do the talking.[10] When we speak of 'magic,' therefore, we should always explain: 'magic for *whom*?' Any specific piece of evidence from the ancient Greco-Roman world provides an example of magic for that particular person, from one particular persepctive. To speak of 'magic in the ancient Greco-Roman world' is thus to refer (loosely) to the whole range of things that various people in those cultures during those times could label as 'magic.'

Scholarship over the past few decades has pointed to the ways the discourse of magic has been used to denigrate the Other. Magic has been a colonialist tool to denigrate the colonized (we have real religion; they just have magic), but even before that, magic was a Reformation tool to denigrate traditional Catholic religion (barren ritualism) or an Enlightenment tool to denigrate religion in general (primitive superstition).[11] All of these

[8] As Bremmer 1999: 9, points out, "In order to be workable, the etic definition of a concept should always be as close as possible to the actors' point of view: if not, it will soon cease to be a useful definition."

[9] "Magic is best understood as a discursive formation—a socially constructed body of knowledge that is enmeshed in and supports systems of power. What gets labelled magic is arbitrary and depends on the society in question. Once the label is affixed, however, it enables certain practices to *become* magic by virtue of being regarded as such by memember of the society" (Stratton 2013: 246–247). Gordon 1999a provides the best starting point for this approach, but see also Stratton 2007; Gordon and Marco Simón 2010; Otto 2013; and Kahlos 2016, among others.

[10] Styers 2004 provides perhaps the best overview of the history of the discourse of magic in the modern period, although he has little interest in the ancient world.

[11] Stratton 2007: 4–18 provides a good brief introduction; cp. Collins 2008a: 1–26. Thomas 1997 provides the classic study of the categories of magic and religion in the early modern period following the Protestant Reformation. As Styers 2004: 8 points out, "More than a century of thwarted attempts to reify and define magic—to contain and circumscribe this phenomenon—by many of the West's most prominent cultural theorists would seem to provide a rather clear indication that this enterprise might be suspect."

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negative uses remain latent in the discourse whenever we as contemporary scholars make use of it, but it is worth noting that the history of the discourse also includes positive senses of magic. In the Renaissance, for example, 'magic' was used as a term to designate the rediscovered wisdom of the ancients, while in the twentieth century the term 'magic' was at times reappropriated from colonialist discourse to indicate the romanticized Other as positive in contrast to soulless modernity. These conflicting uses of the discourse do not mean that we should (or can) discard 'magic' as a useful way of talking about Greco-Roman antiquity. The shifts between positive and negative evaluations are not merely the pendulum swings of history but inherent in the nature of the discourse of magic itself.

Beyond the Grand Dichotomies: Magic as Non-normative

Throughout the scholarship dealing with magic, not just in the ancient Greco-Roman world, but for cultures in various times and places, magic is often set up in opposition to religion, but the opposition of magic to science often also appears.[12] Intuitively, it seems, we tend to define magic as that which is not (real) science or that which is not (real) religion. Such a negative definition, I would argue, contains an important insight, but applied uncritically to the ancient evidence, as it often has been, this etic definition is not very useful, largely because the discourses of religion and science are likewise modern etic constructions, so distinguishing between them creates divisions that are often alien to the ancient emic distinctions. We must probe further.

The modern distinction between science and religion depends upon a modern distinction between the natural and supernatural, but that distinction does not map onto the categories of the ancient Greco-Roman world without some serious distortions. The ancient Greeks and Romans, like all the peoples of the ancient Mediterranean world (and beyond), certainly distinguished between the mortal and the divine, as well as between the material and the immaterial. The divine and the immaterial, however, were generally considered as an integral part of the cosmos, the natural order of the world.[13] Whereas moderns tend to treat anything that involves

[12] Braarvig 1999 discusses the 'Grand Dichotomy' of magic and religion with reference to many other such dichotomies: primitive/civilized, oral/literate, closed/open, them/us, etc., noting that science often appears in the 'us' side. Cp. also Styers 2004: 6.

[13] "In our own culture, we tend to equate the occult and uncanny with the supernatural: something is uncanny only if it has no obvious explanation within the scientific framework of 'nature,' and so is necessarily 'supernatural' as well. In the Roman world, by contrast, it would have been perfectly possible for people to regard something as occult or uncanny and yet not supernatural" (Rives 2003: 320). Cp. Collins 2003: 21–29.

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the divine as religion and anything that involves the perceptible, material world as science, such a distinction does not appear in the ancient evidence. Some philosophers might frame a contrast between the things perceptible by the senses (especially sight and touch) and those perceptible only by the mind and reasoning, but both kinds of things are part of the same cosmic order. Material objects may have divine powers that operate in ways that are not directly perceptible, and divine entities may act in ways that produce direct, material, and perceptible results.

J. Z. Smith points out that if magic is defined in opposition to religion as well as in opposition to science, then, logically, religion and science should share some characteristic that stands in opposition to magic.[14] I would suggest that this shared characteristic is *normativity*, since both science and religion function as normative discourses in our contemporary society; that is, they are held up as models of the normal ways to relate to the divine and to the material world. Someone who stitches up a cut or who goes into a temple to make a prayer is seen as acting in a normal and expected way, making use of normal scientific or religious patterns of action. By contrast, someone who cuts the throat of a puppy and burns it on a tombstone in the middle of the night is engaging in non-normative religious behavior, just as someone who smears the wound with a paste made from the wrappings of an Egyptian mummy, powdered rhino horn, and the intestines of a frog is engaging in non-normative scientific activity. Both such actions might well be labeled 'magic' by an observer, but, whereas a modern observer would draw the distinction between science and religion, an ancient one would simply characterize both actions as abnormal.

What counts as 'normal,' however, differs from culture to culture and era to era, and even within a given culture at a particular time, what is considered normal may depend on a complex of circumstantial factors. Abnormality, moreover, is not absolute; there is a whole spectrum of differences from the norm.[15] The concept of a 'hierarchy of means' is useful here.[16] To achieve any end, there is a whole range of means that might be employed, but some means are more highly valued than others, because of their difficulty, cost, or efficacy. Normal means are in the middle of the hierarchy; the ordinary way to solve a problem is the one most often adopted. Something that is high on the hierarchy of means is only rarely

[14] J. Smith 1995: 13.

[15] Gordon 1999a: 192 makes the important point that "the value of conceptualizing a continuum of possible values between fully normative and wholly illicit is that, while allowing the negative pole to be wholly imaginary, it leaves plenty of room for religious activity which for one reason or another is viewed askance."

[16] Gordon usefully applies this concept from Evans-Pritchard 1937 in a number of his studies of Greek magic; see especially Gordon 1997 and Gordon 1999a.

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employed; it may be perceived as having higher efficacy, but it is much more troublesome or expensive or difficult. If you are trying to kill a fly, a grenade launcher will probably take care of it, but there are simpler solutions, like a rolled up magazine. On the other hand, a well-designed fly swatter is more likely to succeed than the magazine, but it may not be immediately at hand, so the choice of means always involves weighing the costs and advantages, especially when opting for something out of the normal.

It is also crucial to remember that abnormality is double-edged; it may be either inferior to the normal or superior. Something that differs from the norm may be considered deviant in a bad way, failing to meet the expectations for ordinary action, but at times the normal way of doing things is insufficient to the situation and an abnormal solution needs to be sought, something better and stronger than the ordinary. Non-normative behavior is thus extra-ordinary, out of the ordinary and normal way of doing things, but it may be extra-ordinary either in a negative or a positive sense. The evidence labeled 'magic' in the ancient Greco-Roman world shows both these positive and negative labels of 'abnormality'; although much of the labeling applies to things considered negatively deviant, in some cases the deviation from the norm is marked as a marvelously positive thing.[17]

Magic as Ritualized Activity

As J. Z. Smith points out, magic is always only one of the ways in which a society can mark deviation; not every social deviation is labeled 'magic' or even could be.[18] The first distinction that must be drawn is to limit the scope of magic as a discourse of non-normative activity to ritualized activity, where 'ritual' is defined very broadly as symbolic action, which may include speech, gesture, movement, or other kinds of symbolic actions.[19] Purely instrumental actions tend not to be characterized as magical; they

[17] Cp. Gordon 1999a: 178: "The basic difficulty in making clear to oneself what one takes magic to be is that it is janus-faced, there being little point in choosing to stress exclusively (as has been the recent tendency) one side or the other. One face is that of religious power used illegitimately, the other the dream of power to effect marvellous changes in the real world."

[18] J. Smith 1995: 19: "I wish I could share the confidence of some scholars that, although substantive definition of 'magic' is rendered impossible by a sociological approach, the sorts of social fissures and conflicts revealed by the accusations are generalizable. A review of the ethnographic, historical and analytic literature makes clear that they are not. Any form of *ressentiment*, for real or imagined reasons (see Aberle on 'relative deprivation'), *may* trigger a language of alienating displacement of which the accusation of magic is *just one possibility* in any given culture's rich vocabulary of alterity."

[19] See further discussion of the nature of ritual in ch. 2, pp. 45–52.

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are normal ways of dealing with normal situations. Likewise, normal speech acts, while involving the basic symbolic system of language, tend not to involve the more complex layers of symbolism that characterize magical speech. Rituals need not involve contact with divine entities, although most contacts with the divine are indeed ritualized. Any particular act, be it killing an animal, eating a meal, or walking along a path, can be ritualized, given added significance beyond its instrumental effect. Observing the positions of the stars is not in itself a ritual, but interpreting them as signs of divine communication ritualizes the process by adding the extra symbolic level. Likewise, to melt and combine two metals is simply metallurgy, but to perform the procedure as a symbolic re-enactment of the demiurgic process by which the cosmos is ordered turns the mechanical process into a kind of ritual.

As symbolic processes, rituals depend upon a cultural tradition to provide the symbolic material with which to work. One way of understanding magic as a discourse of ritualized activity is on the analogy of language, analyzing rituals like speech acts that draw upon a religious and cultural tradition in the way that linguistic speech acts draw upon the tradition of the language. Saussurean linguistics refers to the speech act as the *parole*, while the language system is called the *langue*.[20] Every *parole* is structured by the system of the *langue* but at the same time contributes to the dynamic change of the system. So, too, every ritual act, be it a prayer or a sacrifice or an elaborate consecration, is a particular articulation of ideas within the system of the religious tradition and, at the same time, serves to shape the continuing tradition. As scholars, we must remember that we only have individual *paroles* for our evidence and that any reconstruction of the *langue* is the result of our analytic activity. The ritual tradition, then, of any particular community may be seen analogously to the language of that community, as a *langue* that structures (and is structured by) every individual ritualized act. Every society has countless rituals in its cultural tradition, most performances of which are normative, acceptable, and expected, while only a few violate the boundaries of normality. To understand what is normative in the ancient Greco-Roman world requires a shift from our preliminary etic categories to something more closely approaching emic ones.

Labeling Magic: Valid Cues

The non-normative is also always a relational category rather than a substantive one. That is, rather than a discourse like magic being a thing

[20] Cp., e.g., the general introduction to the concepts in de Saussure 1986: 8–15, or an application to the study of myth in Lévi–Strauss 1963: 209.

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that can be defined by a single necessary and sufficient criterion, it is a label applied by one person to another person, act, or thing, who defines it as non-normative for one of a variety of reasons. What is considered non-normative therefore depends on who is labeling whom in what circumstances.

To take account of all of these variables requires a definition that is not monothetic, but polythetic, involving multiple criteria of varying cue validity. Polythetic definitions are best explained by Wittgenstein's famous analogy of family resemblances: all the members of a family share a set of characteristics—hair color, bone structure, nose shapes, eye color, and so forth. Every member of the family has some of these features, but no one member of the family has all the characteristics, nor is there any feature that every family member has. Contemporary cognitive psychologists have shown that humans intuitively make such definitions of complex classes and that some features of the family are given more weight than others in any classification; that is, to use the jargon, some cues have more validity than others.[21] To identify furniture, for example, one might use the cues of having four legs, a flat surface, and a wood or metal frame. Not all things with such cues will necessarily be classified as furniture (e.g., a small water tower), nor will all things identified as furniture have all these features (e.g., a lamp), but things that exhibit such cues are more likely to be identified. Of course, the validity of some cues may shift over time. For the automobile, the internal combustion engine has become less valid a cue with the recent development of electric cars, whereas for the earliest automobiles, it was the most crucial feature. To define magic in the Greco-Roman world, therefore, we must determine what kinds of non-normative activity have the highest cue validity to be classified as magic. The specific cues may vary over time and circumstance, as may their relative validity, but we can nonetheless survey the evidence to assemble a collection of such cues. The valid cues in the ancient world differ notably from those most significant in modern or early modern Europe or in contemporary scholarship, since the ideas of normative behavior have shifted notably.

It is difficult, however, to find good evidence for emic definitions, since few ancient sources are interested in providing systematic definitions, and such sources are invariably polemical texts that are using systematicity as a rhetorical device to validate their arguments. Such polemics tend to focus on specific criteria to distinguish magic from some other practice, but such criteria are often rarefied cosmological or theological points incomprehen-

[21] Cp. Rosch and Mervis 1975: 575–576: "The principle of family resemblance relationships can be restated in terms of cue validity since the attributes most distributed among members of a category and least distributed among members of contrasting categories are, by definition, the most valid cues to membership in the category in question."

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sible to a general audience, and we should be wary of trying to extrapolate a generally applicable definition of magic from these particular polemics. Such polemics nevertheless provide insights into the contexts in which the discourse of magic appears, as well as some of the ways in which one person labels another as non-normative.

One favorite tactic in the attempt to recreate the emic categories, especially among Classical philologists, is to look to specific words used in contexts that seem to involve magic. Although there is a certain amount of circularity in the process of choosing such contexts, it helps that the modern word for magic (in English and other European languages) is directly related to the ancient Greek term, *magos* or *mageia* or *magikē*, as are the Latin terms *magus*, *magia*, *magica*. The *magos/magus* is someone who performs *mageia/magia* or *magikē/magica*. These cognates provide at least a starting point for a lexical study, but, as many scholars have discovered, problems arise almost immediately.[22] *Magos* and related terms appear in only a few of the contexts in which the same kinds of practices are being described; other terms are frequently found instead. Moreover, the term *magos* at times seems to retain its original meaning of a particular kind of priest from Persia, so although it is a cue with fairly high validity, the word is neither a necessary nor a sufficient marker of a magical context.[23]

Philological studies have turned up a collection of other words that often appear in contexts that look like magic to scholars who know it when they see it. Although none of these words provide a necessary or sufficient indicator of magic, a few do seem to correlate best with magical contexts, providing relatively high cue validity. The words *goēs* and *goētia* are often strongly marked with non-normative activity; they might be rendered 'sorcerer' and 'sorcery' in English. The Late Antique encyclopedia, the *Suda*, connects these words with the *goos*, the funeral lament, and with necro-

[22] As J. Smith 1995: 20, points out, "Giving primacy to native terminology yields, at best, *lexical* definitions which, historically and statistically, tell how a word is used. But, lexical definitions are almost always useless for scholarly work. To remain content with how 'they' understand 'magic' may yield a proper description, but little explanatory power. How 'they' use a word cannot substitute for the *stipulative* procedures by which the academy contests and controls second-order, specialized usage."

[23] Bremmer 1999 makes a study of the 'birth of the term magic,' while Otto 2013 surveys the same material to create a historical overview. A short summary overview may be found in the introductory sections of the standard treatments of ancient magic, such as Graf 1997: 20–29; Dickie 2001: 12–17; Collins 2008a: 49–63; and Stratton 2007: 26–34 (with an excursus on Hebrew terminology, 34–37); as well as Luck 1999: 97–107. While these studies focus mostly on Greek usage, Rives 2011 usefully surveys the deployment of the Latin terms. Otto has examined in detail the sources from the ancient Greek to the modern period in his dissertation, published as Otto 2011. This study provides a better overview than, e.g., Daxelmüller 1993, but the vast scope of both works nevertheless means that little evidence from the ancient Greco-Roman world can be considered.

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mantic activity, but, although some ancient uses of the term fit a necromantic context, most just seem to indicate extra-ordinary rituals and those who perform them.[24] Two other groups of words seem particularly relevant, the words for a magical substance (*pharmakon* in Greek or *venenum* in Latin), and the words for incantation (*epaoidē* in Greek or *carmen* in Latin). A *pharmakon* is something that produces an effect without a visible cause; it may be a material substance—a poison, a drug, a medicine, or a potion—but it may also refer to an immaterial incantation or curse. A reference to *epaoidai* or *carmina*, by contrast, always refers to speech acts marked by some special poetic or musical feature, but Homeric epics or Latin lyric poems might be so labeled, as well as the enchantments of sorcerers. These words (and others referring to various rituals and practitioners) all have some cue validity, but their usage must always be examined to determine who is applying them to whom in what circumstances and for what reasons.

In addition to formal, systematic definitions or definitions grounded in the presence of specific terms, the ancient sources provide evidence for more informal definitions in less polemical contexts. Collocation is an important element in these informal emic definitions, since ancient sources often group together a variety of things whose deviation from the norm marks them as liable to receive a label of 'magic.' This kind of definition by association helps expand the range of activities that can be labeled 'magic,' since something explicitly marked as *mageia* in one text may be listed with a number of other things that, even if not explicitly marked, may well be classified as magic. A survey of the things associated with the terminology of magic, with particular systematic definitions of magic in contrast to other practices, and the things collocated with them in the ancient evidence provides the best way to refine the basic definition of magic as a non-normative practice with the cues that are most valid in the Greco-Roman world. Drawing down the moon provides a good test case, since it is often listed among a whole variety of practices that contravene the natural order, and those who perform the drawing down of

[24] *Suda* s.v. Γοητεία: μαγεία. γοητεία καὶ μαγεία καὶ φαρμακεία διαφέρουσιν: ἅπερ ἐφεῦρον Μῆδοι καὶ Πέρσαι. μαγεία μὲν οὖν ἐστιν ἐπίκλησις δαιμόνων ἀγαθοποιῶν δῆθεν πρὸς ἀγαθοῦ τινος σύστασιν, ὥσπερ τὰ τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ Τυανέως θεσπίσματα. γοητεία δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ ἀνάγειν νεκρὸν δι' ἐπικλήσεως, ὅθεν εἴρηται ἀπὸ τῶν γόων καὶ τῶν θρήνων τῶν περὶ τοὺς τάφους γινομένων. φαρμακεία δὲ, ὅταν διά τινος σκευασίας θανατηφόρου πρὸς φίλτρον δοθῇ τινι διὰ στόματος. "Goēteia: magic. Sorcery [γοητεία] and magic [μαγεία] and witchcraft [φαρμακεία] differ; Medes and Persians discovered them. So magic is of course invocation of beneficent spirits for the production of something good, like the oracles of Apollonius of Tyana. But sorcery refers to raising a dead person by invocation, whence the word is derived from the wailing [γόοι] and lamentations that are made at burials. But the word witchcraft is used when some death-dealing concoction is given as a potion by mouth to someone."

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the moon are often depicted as performing all sorts of other non-normative practices.

The Etic Perspective: Frazer versus Weber and Beyond

However, the inadequacy of the ancient terminology for defining the category, in addition to the basic problem of ever obtaining a sufficiently emic perspective, has led scholars to rely on primarily etic criteria, and such cues have often been used by scholars, explicitly or implicitly, in determining whether something is magical or not. As Versnel and others have shown, the most common criteria are those deriving from Frazer's influential treatment of magic in his *Golden Bough* (these criteria go back further, of course, but Frazer's framing has been particularly formative for later thinkers).[25] Versnel distinguishes four criteria, *attitude*, *action*, *intention*, and *social evaluation*, that are most often used to distinguish magic from normative religion, and it is worth briefly summarizing them here. A manipulative or coercive *attitude* in relations with the divine marks magic, in contrast with the submissive or supplicative *attitude* in religion. Magic operates through impersonal *action*, rather than the personal interactions characteristic of religion. The *intention* behind magical practices aims at concrete and individual goals, rather than the intangible long-term goals of religion (such as, for example, blessedness or salvation). Finally, magic is imagined to be antisocial or at least not working for the common good of the society, whereas religion has a cohesive function, so that the *social evaluation* of religion is positive, in contrast to the negative evaluation of magic. In the scholarship, a coercive attitude is most often used as single criterion, but others often appear in supporting roles, especially impersonal or automatic action. As scholars have pointed out, these two criteria have played an important role in the debates over ritual in the Christian theological tradition over the centuries, particularly in Protestant critiques of Catholic ritualism in which the ritual is imagined to be immediately efficacious simply by being performed by the appropriate priest (*ex opere operato*).[26]

The problem is that the contrast between a coercive and a submissive attitude in addressing the divine powers is actually one of the least significant contrasts in the ancient evidence; that is, it matches least well with the emic discourse of magic. An examination of Greek prayers, both in 'magical' and nonmagical contexts shows a mixture of imperatives and

[25] Versnel 1991b provides the best treatment. Despite questioning the etic categories, both Braarvig 1999 and Thomassen 1997 end up reverting to some version of Versnel's set.

[26] Versnel 1991b: 179–180. Cp., e.g., Thomas 1997: 52, etc. Styers 2004: 73, 104–119 further points to the way that the contrast between materialistic and other worldly intentions has been deployed within modern capitalist social orders.

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supplications scattered throughout both.[27] Intention and social evaluation suffer similar problems as useful criteria for distinguishing magic from normative religious activity, since petitions for very concrete things from the gods appear alongside less tangible benefits, such as divine favor or blessedness. Likewise, performing rituals for the benefit of oneself and one's close friends and family, often at the explicit expense of others, appears both in magical and perfectly normative religious activity.

More importantly, the ancient sources themselves seem to focus on other issues when drawing the lines between magic and other kinds of activity; these Frazerian criteria, so intuitively familiar to modern scholars, do not demonstrate particularly high cue validity. The key, then, to coming up with a definition of magic as a discourse of non-normative activity that reflects the ancient emic perspective is to identify the factors in the ancient sources that seem to make that activity deemed non-normative. Again, a survey of different sorts of things that are labeled 'magic' emically, as well as things that are collocated with them, is needed, and all the evidence must be analyzed to take account of *what* it is, *who* is involved, *where* and *when* it takes place, *why* it is done, and *how* it is imagined to work. These standard analytic questions, applied to the body of evidence from the ancient sources, produce a set of cues that characterize the things that could be labeled as 'magic.'

The criteria that appear in the sources correspond fairly well with the Weberian criteria for legitimate religious activity discussed by Gordon, a set of criteria that are vague and broad enough to apply to the ancient materials without too much distortion.[28] Gordon refers to *objectivity*, *ends*, *performance*, and *social or political location* as the arenas in which the validity of any religious activity may be judged, and these criteria are also useful, from an etic scholarly perspective, for gauging the validity of scientific activity, thus providing a way to classify magic in relation to both elements of the grand dichotomies so prevalent in etic definitions of magic. By *objectivity*, Gordon refers to the success rate or efficacy of the activity, judged by an objective observer, but I prefer the term '*efficacy*' as somewhat more transparent. Things labeled 'magic' are characterized by an abnormal success rate or efficacy, whether that abnormality is extraordinarily low efficacy or extraordinarily high. The *ends* are the socially unac-

[27] As Graf 1991 has shown. See further ch. 6, n. 5, p. 152.

[28] Gordon has demonstrated the viability of these criteria in his magisterial essay on imagining Greek and Roman magic. Cp. Gordon 1999a: 191–192: "Legitimate religious knowledge in antiquity can roughly be defined in terms of performance, political-social location, objectivity, and ends. In relation to each, we can posit a normatively ideal form from which actual forms diverge in greater or lesser degree: the ideal form constructs the positive pole of a notional contiuum of legitimacy whose opposite pole is constitituted by fully illegitimate religious knowledge."

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ceptable or deviant aims of the magic, in contrast to other more normal and socially acceptable actions. The validity of the *performance* depends on its execution by the actor and reception by its audience, while the *sociopolitical location* of the performer with respect to that audience is the final criterion for its legitimacy.

The criterion of objectivity or *efficacy* addresses the question perennially raised by newcomers to the study of ancient magic: did it work? Such a question, however, properly understood, is not the same as: can we, from our modern perspective, find a way of explaining how it could work? Rather, we must ask whether, from the evidence available to us, those involved with the magic thought it worked or not. At times, the text provides explicit indication of the perceived extra-ordinary efficacy of the magic, but other times we must deduce the evaluation from other evidence. To take an example, people in the ancient Greco-Roman world continued to make curse tablets from our earliest examples in the fifth century BCE to Late Antiquity a millennium later, so we have to conclude that they assumed that the practice was sufficiently effective to continue.[29] Of course, the deviation from the ordinary standard of efficacy may be negative as well as positive; something that does not, in fact, work in the ways that it is expected to (especially by others), is often labeled as 'magic.'[30] Herbal remedies or good luck charms may be derided as 'magic' or 'superstition' because, from the standpoint of scientific causality, they don't actually work in the ways that their users expect them to.

This criterion is also crucial for addressing the etic distinction between magic and science, since modern thinkers often assume that some version of Arthur C. Clarke's famous Third Law must apply: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."[31] That is, if you can't understand how it works, it counts as magic, so the primitives who cannot understand modern scientific processes regard the operation of those processes as magic. Other critics quibble, pointing out correctly that most of us have no ability to explain the operation of our microwave ovens, automobiles, or cellphones, nor would we have the capacity to replicate their functions. We do not, however, regularly regard such

[29] As Tomlin 1988a: 101 comments of the curse tablets at Roman Bath, "The practice of inscribing them continued for two centuries, from the second to the fourth, which implies that they did work. Or rather, that they were believed to work; and, perhaps, that this belief was justified."

[30] As Gordon 1999a: 210 points out, abnormal religious activity is often assumed to be less effective than the normative. "It is precisely this connection, unquestioned for civic cult, between ritual and efficacy that fails to hold true for illicit religion. There is a vacancy at the centre of illicit cult, a vacancy that is the structural consequence of negating the norm."

[31] The 'law' appears in a footnote at the end of Clarke's essay on "The Hazards of Prophecy: The Failure of the Imagination," in Clarke 1973: 21.

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technologies as magic, because they are such familiar and normal parts of our ordinary world. The point here is that anything that works better than our normal expectation appears as magic; it is the deviation from the ordinary that provokes the label, rather than our inability to provide a causal explanation.

It is the deviance from the norms of acceptable behavior that also marks the criterion of *ends*, rather than the dubious concept that true religious action always tends toward the cohesion of the society.[32] In a given social circumstance, it may be completely normal and acceptable to act in one's own interest instead of the imagined greater good of the community, whereas in others to sacrifice one's own interests or life for the greater good of the community might be seen as bizarre and extra-ordinary. It is also crucial to bear in mind that, just because something is agreed upon as non-normative or socially unacceptable does not mean that people won't do it. Adultery, for example, is a non-normative behavior that violates the norms of marriage, but Greco-Roman literature (and indeed history) is full of stories of people choosing to commit adultery.

Likewise, people may deliberately choose deviant modes of *performance* of their actions upon the social stage, or their performance may be adjudged as non-normative by their audience. Someone who mutters a prayer in a foreign language rather than speaking aloud in standard Greek may be suspected of non-normative behavior, but someone who performs an incantation full of incomprehensible words and animal noises must surely be performing magic. Magical words, *voces magicae* or *voces mysticae* as they are often called in the scholarship, are a deliberately deviant verbal performance, since they do not communicate meaning normally, and the more abnormal and exotic they appear, the more magical they seem.[33]

Some scholars have critiqued the 'deviance theory' of defining magic as non-normative because of the existence of evidence in which individuals define their own actions as deviant.[34] Such self-definitions of deviance, however, are far from uncommon in all realms of cultural performance; there are many ways of 'queering' oneself, be it with regard to gender or sexuality or any other facet of one's social identity. Gordon makes use of

[32] Such a concept derives from the Durkheimian understanding of religion as an expression of the collective identity and will. If religion is merely a transferred honoring of the collective to imagined gods, then any action against the interests of the collective would logically be an antireligious action. The classic study in Mauss 1972 works out these ideas most fully and influentially.

[33] Malinowski 1935: 218–223 refers to this deviation from normality as the "coefficient of weirdness"; the higher the coefficient, the more likely it is to be magic.

[34] "The deviance theory falls short in at least one respect, in that it fails to account for the fact that some people also apply the concept of 'magic' to themselves and their own practices and beliefs" (Otto and Stausberg 2013: 7). Cp. also Otto's critique of the deviance theory in Otto 2013.

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Bourdieu's terminology of 'intentional profanation' to refer to those who intentionally mark themselves as non-normative in the performance of religious ritual as they seek to transcend or subvert the established norms of society.[35]

Bourdieu's concept of profanation is also useful in discussing the criterion of *sociopolitical location,* since someone may be marked as a non-normative member of society, especially by someone who considers himself normative, simply on the basis of that person's place in society. If the mature male citizen is taken as the normative member of society in the Greco-Roman world, then anyone who is not a citizen, not a mature adult, or not a male may be marked as non-normative, objectively profane in Bourdieu's terms. The levels of alterity may be cumulative, so an old, foreign, slave woman has the greatest number of valid cues for her non-normative status and thus most likely to be suspected of using magic.

Drawing Down the Moon

Criteria for Non-Normative Action

The act of drawing down the moon with which we began furnishes a good example of the usefulness of these criteria adapted from Gordon for understanding the discourse of magic in the ancient Greco-Roman world, the ways the ancient Greeks and Romans defined magic. This act is explictly labeled 'magic' by some of the earliest sources, and many different examples of this Thessalian trick appear throughout the entire range of the evidence. The ability to draw down the moon frequently appears in lists of magical powers, so these collocations provide a wider set of other practices that may be labeled 'magic' from an emic perspective. The various examples stress different aspects of the non-normativity of the act: some the social location of the performers, some the non-normative ends for which it is performed, some for the weirdness of the perfomance, and others for the extra-ordinary power and efficacy of the rite.

In some of the evidence for drawing down the moon, its nature as magic is marked by the sociopolitical location of the ones performing the ritual. *Who* does it indicates the kind of practice it is, and its alterity is marked by various aspects of alterity of the performers, especially their alien status, their gender, and their age. Our earliest witness, Aristophanes, attributes the trick of drawing down the moon to a Thessalian witch (*pharmakis*), and the association persists throughout the evidence. The Thessalian

[35] Gordon 1999a refers to the categories of intentional and objective profanation developed in Bourdieu 1971, although the context of Greco-Roman religion differs with respect to forms of institutional control from the examples Bourdieu discusses.

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trick is the sort of thing that people in far-off Thessaly do, so that Thessalian women become proverbial as magicians.[36] As Pliny notes, magic has long been associated with the Thessalian women, to the extent that Menander called his play about women drawing down the moon *The Thessalian Woman*.[37] Lucan digresses on the magical powers of Thessalians in his introduction of the greatest witch of all, his horrible Erictho, while a later scholarly commentator, a scholiast on Apollonius, quotes a passage from the lost *Meleager* of the fourth-century BCE tragedian, Sosiphanes, to the effect that every Thessalian girl with her magic incantations can bring down the moon from the heavens.[38] This alien Thessalian origin can serve as a transferred epithet; Horace's witches draw down the moon with Thessalian incantations, and the whirligig, the spinning wheel device that makes a buzzing noise that draws down the moon, is often simply referred to as the Thessalian wheel.[39] This whirligig is actually a very common toy found in cultures all over the world, from the Neolithic period through the present day, but, in the evidence from the Greco-Roman world, it is associated with erotic magic and drawing down the moon.[40]

[36] Aristophanes, *Nub.* 746–757, ch. 1, p. 4, n. 2. The practice may, like so many of the rites attested in the Greco-Roman tradition, have a precedent in Mesopotamia. A Neo-Assyrian letter to King Esarhaddon in the seventh century BCE refers to women who bring down the moon from the sky; see Reiner 1995: 98.

[37] Pliny, *HN* 30.7. *nec postea quisquam dixit quonam modo venisset Telmesum religiosissimam urbem, quando transisset ad Thessalas matres, quarum cognomen diu optinuit in nostro orbe, aliena genti Troianis utique temporibus Chironis medicinis contentae et solo Marte fulminante. miror equidem Achillis populis famam eius in tantum adhaesisse, ut Menander quoque litterarum subtilitati sine aemulo genitus Thessalam cognominaret fabulam complexam ambages feminarum detrahentium lunam.* "And in later times nobody has explained how ever it reached Telmesus, a city given up to superstition, or when it passed over to the Thessalian matrons, whose surname was long proverbial in our part of the world, although magic was a craft repugnant to the Thessalian people, who were content, at any rate in the Trojan period, with the medicines of Chiron, and with the War God as the only wielder of the thunderbolt. I am indeed surprised that the people over whom Achilles once ruled had a reputation for magic so lasting that actually Menander, a man with an unrivalled gift for sound literary taste, gave the name 'Thessala' to his comedy, which deals fully with the tricks of the women for calling down the moon" (Loeb).

[38] Cp. Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.434–506; Scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius 3.533 (234.22–235.6) Σωσιφάνης ἐν Μελεάγρῳ (fr. 1 N.2) 'μάγοις ἐπῳδαῖς πᾶσα Θεσσαλὶς κόρη ψευδὴς σελήνης αἰθέρος καταιβάτις.'

[39] Horace, *Ep.* 5.45–46. *quae sidera excantata voce Thessala lunamque caelo deripit.* "She charms the moon and stars with Thessalian incantations and pulls them down from the sky." Cp. Martial 9.29.9–12, 12.57.15–17, with reference to drawing down the moon with a Thessalian or Colchian whirligig (*Thessalo rhombo, Colco rhombo*).

[40] The Greek terms are *iunx*, *strophalos*, or *rhombos*, whereas the Latin usually uses *rhombus*. This whirligig, sometimes called a spinner, buzzer, buzz saw or sawmill in English, is sometimes confused with the bullroarer, another simple device that makes sound when it is spun. The bullroarer, however, is a piece of wood or other material swung around at the end of a single string, whereas the whirligig is rotated by pulling the two strings that go through

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These sources stress another form of alterity, gender, for it is specifically Thessalian women who are famous for drawing down the moon. Moreover, although Sosiphanes refers to girls, many of the depictions of Thessalian women add another layer of alterity, old age. Such old Thessalian women appear in Apuleius and other Roman sources, culminating in Lucan's horrible hag Erictho, who is old and female and Thessalian. The alterity of age and gender can appear without Thessalian origin; Horace's witches Canidia, Sagana, and Folia are filthy old women, but they are Italian, like Ovid's drunken old bawd-witch, Dipsas. Propertius's gloating description of the death of the bawd-witch Acanthis, who has thwarted his erotic intentions with her magic, dwells in gruesome detail on the ravages of age on the hag's body.[41] In other cases, merely the alterity of alien origin takes the place of gender and age. Lucian describes a (male) Hyperborean magician drawing down the moon, while Nonnos attributes this feat to the Brahmans of India.[42] In all these cases, drawing down the moon is an act characteristic of someone *who* is not in a normative place in the social and political order, not a mature, male citizen but old, female, or alien.

Other indicators of the non-normative status of the act may be *where* and *when* it is performed; it is a perfectly respectable thing for a woman to go to a cemetery to visit the tombs of family members, but for anyone to visit a graveyard in the dead of the night is always suspicious. The scarecrow Priapus statue in Horace's *Satire* complains that, in his spot in the Esquiline gardens by the old pauper's cemetery, he not only is beset with robbers and wild beasts, but, worst of all, the witches come prowling in the light of the moon. Lucian's Hyperborean magician may perform his ritual in the courtyard of his client's house, but he still waits for midnight under a waxing moon to perform his uncanny ritual.[43]

Of course, the motives for performing the drawing down of the moon may be as shady as the time and place in which they are done. The Hyperborean magician summons up the dead, invokes Hekate, and draws down

its middle. Both devices generate sound from the speed of their rotation, but the whirligig goes much faster, actually reaching speeds of up to 125,000 rpm (faster than a Ferrari engine) because of the hypercoiling effect of the strings. Scientists have recently devised a way to use such simple whirligigs as centrifuges for processing blood samples in areas without access to regular electricity, since the speed of rotation and the force generated (up to 30,000 g) exceed the capacity of centrifuges costing thousands of times more. See Bhamla et al. 2017.

[41] Cp. Apuleius, *Met.* 1.12 on Meroe and Panthia as *mulieres duas altioris aetatis*, two women of rather advanced age. Horace, *Ep.* 5.98; Ovid, *Amores* 1.8.1–2; Propertius 4.567–572.

[42] Lucian, *Philops.* 14; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 36.344–349. θεοκλήτοις δ᾽ ἐπαοιδαῖς πολλάκις ἠερόφοιτον, ὁμοίιον ἄζυγι ταύρῳ, οὐρανόθεν κατάγοντες ἐφαρμάξαντο Σελήνην. "Their inspired incantations have often enchanted Selene as she passes through the air like an untamed bull, and brought her down from heaven."

[43] Horace, *Sat.* 1.8.17–26; Lucian, *Philops.* 14.

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the moon to obtain the power to send the pretty young wife of his client's neighbor over to his client's bed, maddened with lust. This kind of illicit inflaming of passion is often *why* magicians draw down the moon. Vergil depicts a woman drawing down the moon to force her errant lover Daphnis to return to her.

> Songs can even draw the moon down from heaven;
> by songs Circe transformed the comrades of Ulysses;
> with song the cold snake in the meadows is burst asunder.
> Bring Daphnis home from town, bring him, my songs![44]

Vergil is adapting the motif from the earlier poem of Theocritus, where Simaetha spins her magic whirligig (called a *iunx* or a *rhombus*) to draw down the moon and bring her errant lover Delphis back to her.

> O *iunx*, drag this man to my house.
> As this wax doll I, with the divinity's power, do melt,
> So may he melt with *eros*, the Myndian Delphis, at once
> And, as whirls round this bronze *rhombos* from Aphrodite,
> So too may he whirl round to my doors.
> O *iunx*, drag this man to my house.[45]

For these girls, forsaken by their lovers, some extra-ordinary means is needed to win back their affections, so they turn to magic and the power gained by drawing down the moon to take control of their lovers' minds and bodies, subjugating these men to female control, something that is always viewed as abnormal in the patriarchal societies of the ancient Greco-Roman world.

The illicit aims of drawing down the moon may have nothing to do with *eros*, however. Strepsiades's plan, in Aristophanes, is to get the Thessalian witch to draw down the moon so that he can hide it in a box, thus enabling him to get out of paying his debts, which are due on the new moon day, when the new moon first appears in a month. No moon in the sky means no payment due date, which, Strepsiades reasons, means no debts.[46]

In other accounts, the aim of drawing down the moon is to collect the lunar power that accumulates from the proximity of the moon to the earth, whether in the form of plants with extra potency from the moon's rays or

[44] Vergil, *Ecl.* 8.69–72. *Carmina vel caelo possunt deducere Lunam;| carminibus Circe socios mutavit Ulixi;| frigidus in pratia cantando rumpitur anguis.| Ducite ab urbe domum, mea carmina, ducite Daphnim.*

[45] Theocritus, *Idyll* 2.27–32. ἶυγξ, ἕλκε τὺ τῆνον ἐμὸν ποτὶ δῶμα τὸν ἄνδρα.| ὡς τοῦτον τὸν κηρὸν ἐγὼ σὺν δαίμονι τάκω,| ὣς τάκοιθ' ὑπ' ἔρωτος ὁ Μύνδιος αὐτίκα Δέλφις.| χὠς δινεῖθ' ὅδε ῥόμβος ὁ χάλκεος ἐξ Ἀφροδίτας,| ὣς τῆνος δινοῖτο ποθ' ἁμετέραισι θύραισιν.| ἶυγξ, ἕλκε τὺ τῆνον ἐμὸν ποτὶ δῶμα τὸν ἄνδρα.

[46] Aristophanes, *Nub.* 746–757.

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in a concentrated form as 'moonfoam,' *aphroselenon*. As the early third-century CE Sextus Julius Africanus tells us in his collection of interesting facts entitled *Kestoi*, this moonfoam is gathered from the dew of plants and the rays of moonbeams, and Lucan and other sources refer to the foam of the moon that appears when the moon is drawn down by magic.

> And the clear moon, beset by dread incantations, grew dim and burned with a dark and earthy light, just as if the earth cut her off from her brother's reflection and thrust its shadow athwart the fires of heaven. Lowered by magic, she suffers all that pain, until from close quarters she drops foam upon the plants below.[47]

The third-century CE alchemist Zosimus likewise connects *aphroselenon* with the rays of the moon, since at the waning (or drawing down?) of the moon there is an outflow of light that bears the particular lunar nature.[48] This magical substance might be used for various magical ends, but Lucan depicts his horrid witch Erictho using the moonfoam in her gruesome re-animation of a corpse for necromancy.

> Then she began by piercing the breast of the corpse with fresh wounds, which she filled with hot blood; she washed the inward parts clean of clotted gore; she poured in lavishly the poison that the moon supplies. With this was blended all that Nature inauspiciously conceives and brings forth. The froth of dogs that dread water was not wanting, nor the inwards of a lynx, nor the hump of a foul hyena, nor the marrow of a stag that had fed on snakes; the echenais was there, which keeps a ship motionless in mid-ocean, though the wind is stretching her cordage; eyes of dragons were there, and stones that rattle when warmed under a breeding eagle; the flying serpent of Arabia, and the viper that is born by the Red Sea and guards the precious pearl-shell; the skin which the horned snake of Libya casts off in its lifetime, and ashes of the Phoenix which lays its body on the Eastern altar. These ordinary banes that bear names she added to her

[47] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.500–506. *Phoebeque serena Non aliter diris verborum obsessa venenis Palluit et nigris terrenisque ignibus arsit, Quam si fraterna prohiberet imagine tellus Insereretque suas flammis caelestibus umbras, Et patitur tantos cantu depressa labores Donec suppositas propior despumet in herbas.* Cp. the reference to making the moon drop its dew by magic (*magico . . . lunam despumari*) in Apuleius, *Met.* 1.3 and Medea's knowledge of how to make the moon produce foam by magic substances (*Atracio lunam spumare veneno sciret*) in Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 6.447–448. Sextus Julius Africanus, *Kestoi* 9.1.35 apud Psellos, *Opusc.* 32.48. ὁ δὲ ἀφροσέληνον συλλέγει ἐκ τῆς δρόσου τῶν φυτῶν καὶ τῶν σεληναίων αὐγῶν.

[48] On Zosimus, *On Excellence and Interpretation*, CAAG II.123.17–19. ἐπείπερ ἐν σελήνῃ ἐνρωηκὰ ἀπορ<ρο>ία ἐστὶν τοῦ φωτὸς, καὶ αὕτη ἡ ῥεῦσίς ἐστιν τῆς οἰκείας φύσεως ἐνδικαίως τῶν ἄλλων πάντων τῶν ἄστρων. Cp. ἀφροσέληνον . . . ἀπὸ σεληνιακῆς ἀπορροίας in Fragmenta Alchemica, *On the Dyeing of Stones*, CAAG II,357 Berthelot.

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> brew; and next she put in leaves steeped with magic unutterable, and herbs which her own dread mouth had spat upon at their birth, and all the poison that she herself gave to the world; and lastly her voice, more powerful than any drug to bewitch the powers of Lethe, first uttered indistinct sounds, sounds untunable and far different from human speech.[49]

Erictho's aims in violating the bounds of life and death are characteristically repulsive, but alchemists like Zosimus used moonfoam for other extra-ordinary aims, such as transmuting silver into gold.

> Unify *aphroselenos* with *komaris*, pounding it fine and softening it and making it solid and washing it, smelt silver, and make a projection from the compound, and you will see the silver transmuted into gold, and you will be amazed. Nature rejoices in nature, and nature conquers nature.[50]

Alchemists can use the magical substance of moonfoam in their processes of the transmutation of qualities, with just a tiny trace amount changing a large quantity of the white shiny metal of silver into the yellow shiny metal of gold.

"You will be amazed," proclaims the alchemical recipe; this procedure is not at all a normal one, but something extra-ordinary and marvelous. The extra-ordinary efficacy of the process is the most significant marker of its magical status, what Weber would term its abnormal *objectivity*.

[49] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.667–687. *Pectora tunc primum ferventi sanguine supplet Volneribus laxata novis taboque medullas Abluit et virus large lunare ministrat. Huc quidquid fetu genuit natura sinistro Miscetur. Non spuma canum quibus unda timori est, Viscera non lyncis, non dirae nodus byaenae Defuit et cervi pastae serpente medullae, Non puppim retinens Euro tendente rudentes In mediis echenais aquis oculique draconum Quaeque sonant feta tepefacta sub alite saxa; Non Arabum volucer serpens innataque rubris Aequoribus custos pretiosae vipera conchae Aut viventis adhuc Libyci membrana cerastae Aut cinis Eoa positi phoenicis in ara. Quo postquam viles et habentes nomina pestes Contulit, infando saturatas carmine frondes Et, quibus os dirum nascentibus inspuit, herbas Addidit et quidquid mundo dedit ipsa veneni. Tum vox Lethaeos cunctis pollentior herbis Excantare deos confundit murmura primum Dissona et humanae multum discordia linguae.* Cp. the witch's invocation of the moon for necromancy in Heliodorus 6.14. Gordon 1999a: 223 suggests that this substance is the same as the lunar ointment (τῷ σεληνιακῷ χρίσματι) used in PGM VII.874 to anoint a statue of the moon goddess in a spell for attracting women and sending dreams.

[50] Fragmenta Alchemica, *On the Dyeing of Stones*, CAAG II.358.28–359.3. Ἀφροσέληνον ἕνωσον μετὰ κομάρεως, λειῶν καὶ μαλάττων καὶ πηγνύων καὶ βάπτων αὐτὸν, χώνευσον ἄργυρον, καὶ ἐπίβαλε ἀπὸ τοῦ συνθήματος, καὶ ἴδῃς τὴν ἄργυρον εἰς χρυσὸν μεταποιηθεῖσαν, καὶ θαυμάσεις. Ἡ φύσις τῇ φύσει τέρπεται, καὶ ἡ φύσις τὴν φύσιν νικᾷ. This recipe is attributed to Demokritos, the fifth-century BCE thinker to whom many later alchemical works were spuriously atttributed (see ch. 9, p. 272, nn. 4–6). To make a projection (ἐπίβαλε) is to put a tiny portion of the special substance (here, the ἀφροσέληνος) into a larger quantity of another substance (here, silver) that is to be transformed.

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While changing silver into gold using the power from the drawn-down moon is indeed an amazing feat, drawing down the moon is associated with even more astounding actions.

> They profess to know how to bring down the moon, to eclipse the sun, to make storm and sunshine, rain and drought, the sea impassable and the earth barren, and all other such sorts of things, either by rites or by some knowledge or practice that those accustomed to do such things say they are able to happen.[51]

This Hippocratic critique of rival practitioners is the earliest witness to this kind of catalog of acts that are contrary to the normal order of things in which drawing down the moon has pride of place, but such lists of powerfully abnormal acts becomes a familiar trope, especially in Roman literature. Ovid's Medea proclaims,

> When I have willed it, the streams have run back to their fountainheads, while the banks wondered; I lay the swollen, and stir up the calm seas by my spell; I drive the clouds and bring on the clouds; the winds I dispel and summon; I break the jaws of serpents with my incantations; living rocks and oaks I root up from their own soil; I move the forests, I bid the mountains shake, the earth to rumble and the ghosts to come forth from their tombs. Thee also, Luna, do I draw from the sky, though the clanging bronze of Temesa strive to aid thy throes; even the chariot of the Sun, my grandsire, pales at my song; Aurora pales at my poisons.[52]

Medea boasts total control over the cosmos, the ability to reverse every normal condition, whether it be reversing the regular movements of rivers and winds, disrupting the immobility of trees and rocks and mountains, or even making the dead come back to the world of the living. Her power, like that of other witches in Roman literature, is beyond that of any normal mortal, exerting control even over the gods.[53]

[51] Hippocratic, *de morb. sacr.* IV.1–8. σελήνην καθαιρεῖν καὶ ἥλιον ἀφανίζειν καὶ χειμῶνά τε καὶ εὐδίην ποιεῖν καὶ ὄμβρους καὶ αὐχμοὺς καὶ θάλασσαν ἄπορον καὶ γῆν ἄφορον καὶ τἆλλα τὰ τοιουτότροπα πάντα ὑποδέχονται ἐπίστασθαι, εἴτε καὶ ἐκ τελετέων εἴτε καὶ ἐξ ἄλλης τινὸς γνώμης καὶ μελέτης φασὶ ταῦτα οἷόν τ᾽ εἶναι γενέσθαι οἱ ταῦτ᾽ ἐπιτηδεύοντες (Loeb trans. adapted).

[52] Ovid, *Met.* 7.199–209. *cum volui, ripis mirantibus amnes in fontes rediere suos, concussaque sisto, stantia concutio cantu freta, nubila pello nubilaque induco, ventos abigoque vocoque, vipereas rumpo verbis et carmine fauces, vivaque saxa sua convulsaque robora terra et silvas moveo iubeoque tremescere montis et mugire solum manesque exire sepulcris! te quoque, Luna, traho, quamvis Temesaea labores aera tuos minuant; currus quoque carmine nostro pallet avi, pallet nostris Aurora venenis.* Cp. Ovid, *Rem. am.* 249–266; Ovid, *Amores* 1.8.5–18; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 6.439–445; Tibullus 1.2.41–52. Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.483–491 has a similar catalog, but does not explicitly mention drawing down the moon.

[53] Lucan, as usual, provides the most extensive and extravagant catalog of the powers

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So disturbing is this level of power that certain sources postulate that some compensation must right the balance. In discussing whether gaining political power in the city is worth the moral cost, Plato refers to a proverb that Thessalian women who draw down the moon do so only at the expense of losing one of their eyes—or one of their children.[54] The Hippocratic author of *On the Sacred Disease*, however, argues that anyone who claims such abnormal powers must either be an impious disrespecter of the gods or, more likely, simply a fraud.

> In any case I am sure that they are impious, and cannot believe that the gods exist or have any strength, and that they would not refrain from the most extreme actions. . . . But perhaps what they profess is not true, the fact being that men, in need of a livelihood, contrive and devise many fictions of all sorts.[55]

The extra-ordinary power of drawing down the moon is too extra-ordinary to be believed, and thus it must simply be a trick of some kind that enables charlatans to make a living by duping the credulous fools who trust in them.

A similar idea appears in other sources that explain away the drawing down of the moon as a trick by which someone pretends, during an eclipse of the moon, to be drawing it down to make it vanish. Plutarch claims that the Thessalian woman Aglaonike used her scientific knowledge of astronomy to predict lunar eclipses and then pretended to other women that she had the power to draw down the moon.[56] Others, like the early Christian apologist Hippolytus, explain the Thessalian trick as an elaborately staged hoax, with smoke and mirrors, designed to dupe the gullible into believing that these practitioners actually have access to divine power.

> They exhibit the moon and the stars on the ceiling in the following fashion. They fix a mirror to the central part of the ceiling and place a bowl of water directly beneath it in the middle of the floor. Then

of the Thessalian witches (*Pharsalia* 6.434–506), culminating in Erictho, who goes even beyond. "These criminal rites and malpractices of an accursed race fierce Erictho had scouted as not wicked enough." *Hos scelerum ritus, haec dirae crimina gentis Effera damnarat nimiae pietatis Erictho* (*Pharsalia* 6.507–508).

[54] Plato, *Gorgias* 513a. The proverb itself first appears in Zenobius's collection of proverbs, *Epitome* 4.1.

[55] Hippocratic, *de morb. sacr.* IV. 8–10, 17–19. δυσσεβεῖν ἔμοιγε δοκέουσι καὶ θεοὺς οὔτε εἶναι νομίζειν οὔτε ἰσχύειν οὐδὲν οὔτε εἴργεσθαι ἂν οὐδενὸς τῶν ἐσχάτων. . . . ἴσως δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει ταῦτα, ἀλλ᾽ ἄνθρωποι βίου δεόμενοι πολλὰ καὶ παντοῖα τεχνῶνται καὶ ποικίλλουσιν ἔς τε τἄλλα πάντα (Loeb).

[56] Plutarch, *Conj. praec.* 145c–d; *de def. orac.* 416f–417a. Hill 1973 argues cogently that the evidence from the ancient Greeks and Romans shows that they did not think that drawing down the moon was an eclipse, but rather that they could interpret an eclipse as a drawing down of the moon.

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> they put a dimly shining lamp in the middle of the room, suspended above the bowl. In this way the mage makes a moon appear in the mirror from the reflection of the bowl. Also, the mage often suspends a drum from a height and cloaks it with a cover. This is kept covered by an accomplice, so that it should not be seen before the right time. The mage places a lamp behind it. When he gives the agreed signal to his accomplice, the accomplice removes part of the cover, just enough to mimic the phase of the moon at that point. The mage paints the translucent parts of the drum with cinnabar and gum. With a greater degree of preparation, the mage removes the neck and base from a round bottle, puts a lamp inside and covers it with some equipment in such a way that the shape of the moon shines through. . . . One of the accomplices secretly takes up position on high, behind a screen. After receiving the agreed signal, he lowers the apparatus from its suspended position, so that the moon appears to be descending from heaven. A similar trick with a pot is done in wooded places. Tricks can be done with a pot indoors too. An altar is set up and the pot is positioned behind it with a dimly shining lamp. When several lamps are shining, this remains undetectable. Now when the enchanter calls on the moon, he gives the order to extinguish the lamps, but to leave one dim one. Then the light from the pot reflects onto the ceiling and shows an image of the moon to the audience. The pot is kept covered until the time comes for displaying its moon-shaped image on the roof.[57]

These charlatans perform a rite they claim has extra-ordinary efficacy, but, in reality, claims Hippolytus, this procedure has no efficacy at all; it is

[57] Hippolytus, *Haer.* 4.37. Σελήνην δὲ ἐν ὀρόφῳ φαίνεσθαι δεικνύουσι καὶ ἀστέρας τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον· ἐν μέσῳ τῆς ὀροφῆς μέρει προσαρμόσας κάτοπτρον, τιθεὶς λεκάνην ὕδατος μεστὴν ἐν τῷ μέσῳ <κατὰ> τῆς γῆς κατ᾽ ἴσον, λύχνον δὲ μέσον φαίνον<τα> ἀμαυρὸν μετεωρότερον τῆς λεκάνης θείς, οὕτως ἐκ τῆς ἀντανακλάσεως ἀποτελεῖ σελήνην φαίνεσθαι διὰ τοῦ κατόπτρου. ἀλλὰ καὶ τύμπανον πολλάκις ἀφ᾽ ὑψηλοῦ αἰωρηθὲν ὄρθιον περιβαλὼν ἐσθῆτί τινι, σκεπόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ συμπαίκτου, ἵνα μὴ πρὸ καιροῦ φανῇ, <καὶ> κατόπιν θεὶς λύχνον, ἐπὰν τὸ σύνθημα παράσχῃ τῷ συμπαίκτῃ, <οὗτος> τοσοῦτον ἀφαιρεῖ τοῦ σκεπάσματος, ὅσον ἂν συνεργήσαι πρὸς τὸ μιμήσα<σθαι> κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς σελήνης τὸ σχῆμα. χρίει δὲ τὰ διαφαίνοντα τοῦ τυμπάνου μέρη κινναβάρ<ει> καὶ κόμμι. καί τις ἑτοιμό<τερος> δὲ ὀλίγης λαγήνου περικόψας τὸν τράχηλον καὶ τὸν πυθμένα, ἐνθεὶς λύχνον καὶ περιθείς τι τῶν ἐπιτηδείων πρὸς τὸ διαυγεῖν <τὸ> σχῆμα <*> στὰς <δὲ> ἐφ᾽ ὑψηλοῦ κρύβδην ὑπό τινα σκέπην τις τῶν συμπαικτῶν, μετὰ τὸ λαβεῖν τὸ σύνθημα ἐκ μετεώρου κατάγει τὰ μηχανήματα, ὥ<στ>ε δοκεῖν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ κατιέν(αι) τὴν σελήνην. τὸ δὲ ὅμοιον καὶ διὰ χύτρας γίνεται ἐν ὑλώδεσι τόποις· διὰ δὲ τῆς χύτρας καὶ τὰ κατ᾽ οἶκον παίζεται. βωμοῦ γὰρ κειμένου κατόπιν κεῖται ἡ χύτρα ἔχουσα λύχνον φαίνοντα <ἀμαυρόν>· ὄντων δὲ πλειόνων λύχνων οὐδὲν τοιοῦτον δείκνυται. ἐπὰν οὖν ἐπικαλέσηται ὁ ἐπαοιδὸς τὴν σελήνην, πάντας κελεύει τοὺς λύχνους σβέννυσθαι, ἕνα δὲ ἀμαυρὸν καταλιπεῖν. καὶ τότε ἀντανακλᾷ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐκ τῆς χύτρας εἰς τὸν ὄροφον καὶ παρέχει φαντασίαν σελήνης [καὶ] τοῖς παροῦσιν, ἐπισκεπασθέντος τοῦ στόματος τῆς χύτρας πρὸς ὃ ἀπαιτεῖν ὁ καιρὸς δοκεῖ, ὡς μηνοειδῆ δείκνυσθαι ἐν τῷ ὀρόφῳ τὴν φαντασίαν (trans. Ogden 2009).

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below normal rather than above normal. The enchanter (*epaoidos*) is a magician in the negative sense of the term, one who performs acts that are worthless and useless, mere deceptions that prey on the superstitious, just as Aglaonike is a Thessalian witch who takes advantage of the ignorance of uneducated women by pretending to power she does not (and could not) have.

Polemical Perspectives

In each case, how the act of drawing down the moon is considered magic depends on who is labeling whom and by what criteria, and even in what kind of text the performance is described. Literary descriptions of the rite differ from the kind of references found in polemical arguments that either accuse people of drawing down the moon by magic or try to defend them from such a charge. The polemics are meant to be representing real life, even if the details are exaggerated or just simply fabricated, but the literary imaginings are limited only by the imagination and artistic purposes of the poet. Then again, these labelings of some other as using magic differ from self-labeling of oneself or one's activities as 'magical.'

Depictions of someone else using magic in literary texts provide an implicit definition of magic in various ways, often through the depiction of aspects of the person's sociopolitical location, such as the old, Thessalian woman who sneaks into graveyards in the dead of night. Literary accounts also illuminate the motivations of the characters involved, and so the ends for which the person is acting can also serve to define the action as magic. The description of the extra-ordinary efficacy of the procedure in literary accounts remains unbounded by anything but the author's imagination, so that the most hyperbolic accounts of magical power come from sources such as the Roman poets and novelists, who use the figure of the super-witch (like Canidia, Meroe, or Erictho) for their various literary purposes in their works. A favorite motif is to pile up the astounding and incredible powers of the witch and then to point out that these nearly omnipotent beings are still helpless in the face of love.

> If anyone thinks that the baneful herbs of Haemonia and arts of magic can avail, let him take his own risk. That is the old way of witchcraft; my patron Apollo gives harmless aid in sacred song. Under my guidance no spirit will be bidden issue from the tomb, no witch will cleave the ground with hideous spell; no crops will pass from field to field, nor Phoebus' orb grow suddenly pale. As of wont will Tiber flow to the sea's waters; as of wont will the Moon ride in her snow-white car. No hearts will lay aside their passion by enchantment, nor love flee vanquished by strong sulphur. What availed thee the grasses

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> of thy Phasian land, O Colchian maid, when thou wert fain to stay in thy native home? What did Persean herbs profit thee, O Circe, when a breeze that favoured them bore the Neritian barks away? Thou didst all, that the cunning stranger should not leave thee: yet he spread full canvas in unhindered flight.[58]

The power of Medea and Circe, which could pull down the moon, reverse the courses of the rivers, and bring dead spirits to the living, cannot empower these women to hold the affections of their lovers, and the more hyperbolic the description of their magical powers, the more the author can enhance the irony of the situation.

The polemical accounts tend to focus on the extra-ordinary efficacy as the most important feature. They either deny any normal efficacy at all, claiming that the performance of drawing down the moon is charlatanry (fakery or eclipse), or they attribute its marvelous efficacy to impious action, a transgression of the natural normal order. Some, like the Hippocratic author, have it both ways, claiming that either the ritual healers who draw down the moon either simply lie about their power to command the divine forces or they impiously treat the gods as inferiors and ask them to do evil things unworthy of a god. In either case, the level of efficacy is out of the ordinary, drastically below in the case of fraud or dramatically above in the case of the real transgressions of the cosmic order. This kind of non-normativity is reinforced by the deviant social location or socially unacceptable ends of the performers. At best they are marginal itinerants who simply want to make a dishonest living; at worst they are pernicious atheists who disrespect the gods and appropriate their power.

By contrast, Marinus does not use the discourse of magic to label Proclus when he describes his activity in drawing down the moon as part of his hagiographic biography of the fifth-century CE head of the Platonic Academy in Athens. Like Simaetha and the Thessalian witches, Proclus was skilled in the use of the *iunx*, the whirligig or spinner that was used in rites of attraction, including the drawing down of the moon. Marinus reports that Proclus described in one of his writings (now lost) the appearance of a luminous form of Hekate, a goddess frequently identified as an aspect of the Moon in this time period. Marinus also recounts some of the miracles

[58] Ovid, *Rem. am.* 249–266. *Viderit, Haemoniae siquis mala pabula terrae Et magicas artes posse iuvare putat. Ista veneficii vetus est via; noster Apollo Innocuam sacro carmine monstrat opem. Me duce non tumulo prodire iubebitur umbra, Non anus infami carmine rumpet humum; Non seges ex aliis alios transibit in agros, Nec subito Phoebi pallidus orbis erit. Ut solet, aequoreas ibit Tiberinus in undas: Ut solet, in niveis Luna vehetur equis. Nulla recantatas deponent pectora curas, Nec fugiet vivo sulpure victus amor. Quid te Phasiacae iuverunt gramina terrae, Cum cuperes patria, Colchi, manere domo? Quid tibi profuerunt, Circe, Perseïdes herbae, Cum sua Neritias abstulit aura rates? Omnia fecisti, ne callidus hospes abiret: Ille dedit certae lintea plena fugae.* Cp. Prince 2003 on this theme.

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Proclus performed with his rituals for the benefit of Athens, producing rain to end a drought and foretelling earthquakes, as well as the miraculous healing of a young girl.[59] *Who* Proclus is as the respected head of the Platonic Academy and *why* he does his rituals—for the benefit of the community—mark his actions as not transgressing the norms of the community. His extra-ordinary efficacy, his miraculous work, is abnormal, but the fact that his social location is normative and his aims are approved by the community makes his using a whirligig to bring down a lunar power a miracle of philosophical theurgy, not magic—at least, that is, for his faithful disciple and biographer, Marinus. A more hostile source, such as a Christian theologian following the arguments of Augustine, might well classify Proclus as a magician, someone who has dealings with the evil mistress of demons in order to perform his extra-ordinary feats.[60] Marinus indeed relates that Proclus spent a year in exile in Lydia because of the suspicions of certain 'vultures' around him in Athens.[61] Such defenses, relying on normative sociopolitical location and normative ends to counterbalance accusations of non-normative efficacy of practices, show that others must indeed have focused on this kind of Weberian objectivity in their labeling as 'magic' the one being defended. Apuleius's *Apologia*, his speech in his own defense against a charge of using magic, shows a similar defensive strategy, albeit with characteristically Apuleian twists, in his focus on his sociopolitical location (in the broader intellectual world of the Roman Empire) and acceptable ends (of philosophical inquiry).[62]

[59] Marinus, *Vit. Procl.* 28.677–679. ταῖς γὰρ τῶν Χαλδαίων συστάσεσι καὶ ἐντυχίαις καὶ τοῖς θείοις καὶ ἀφθέγκτοις στροφάλοις ἐκέχρητο. 684–686. ὁ φιλόσοφος τοῖς Χαλδαϊκοῖς καθαρμοῖς καθαιρόμενος, φάσμασι μὲν Ἑκατικοῖς φωτοειδέσιν αὐτοπτουμένοις ὡμίλησεν, ὡς καὶ αὐτός που μέμνηται ἐν ἰδίῳ συγγράμματι. ὄμβρους τε ἐκίνησεν, ἴυγγά τινα προσφόρως κινήσας, καὶ αὐχμῶν ἐξαισίων τὴν Ἀττικὴν ἠλευθέρωσεν. "He had made use of the communions of the Chaldaeans and the encounters with the gods and the ineffable spinners. . . . The philosopher, having been purified by Chaldaean purifications, consorted with the self-manifesting luminous images of Hekate. He moved the rain clouds, spinning a certain whirligig [*iunx*] in the appropriate way, and miraculously freed Attica from droughts" (my trans.). Cp. ch. 29 702–734 for the healing miracle.

[60] Graf 2002a discusses Augustine's arguments, particularly in his *de doctrina Christiana*, *de divinatione daemonum*, and his sermon of January 1, 403, in Carthage. See also Graf 2002b, as well as more recent studies in Dufault 2006 and Dufault 2008.

[61] Marinus, *Vit. Procl.* 15 370–373. καί ποτε ἐν περιστάσει τινῶν γυπογιγάντων ἐξετασθεὶς ἀπῆρεν, ὡς εἶχε, τῶν Ἀθηνῶν, τῇ τοῦ παντὸς περιφορᾷ πειθόμενος, καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐποιεῖτο πορείαν. "And once having been tested in circumstances with certain opponents like vultures, he left Athens, as he was, and made a journey into Asia."

[62] See further below, in ch. 11, pp. 391–396, with references to the extensive scholarship. Modern philosophy scholars often have trouble with the idea of a respectable philosopher like Proclus engaging in magic rituals with the *iunx*. "It is hard to picture a Neoplatonist like Iamblichus or Proclus uttering inarticulate sounds or imitating an animal or laughing insanely as he rotated his bull-roarer. Perhaps they let someone else do this for them and simply watched and listened" (Luck 2000: 130).

(continued...)

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