

# **MAGIC AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN FOURTH-CENTURY SYRIA**

**Silke Trzcionka**

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What god or demon was most likely to help you win a chariot race in ancient Antioch?

The Ancients often turned to magic to achieve their goals. Angels and divinities could, with the right means, be summoned as interceptors in the corporal realm to magically bestow anything from material gains to love and spiritual satisfaction. This compelling and clear-sighted book focuses on the beliefs and practices that people used in late antique Syria and Palestine to bring supernatural powers to their aid.

With new research using both archaeological and literary sources and blending classical, Jewish and Christian traditions from both regions, Silke Trzcionka examines a myriad of magical activities such as:

- Curses, spells and amulets
- Accusations relating to chariot races, love, livelihood and career
- Methods involved in protection, healing, possession and exorcism.

With consideration for economic, political, religious and social factors, rituals of magic are defined through their social context as indivisible from the many factors which framed and influenced their use. Trzcionka applies theoretical models offered by sociological and anthropological studies, such as ideas on envy, limited good, honour and shame, to gain an illuminating contemporary insight into the various tenets of the period. A belief system emerges that intricately intertwines the supernatural and tangible worlds, and in which magic pervades and defines social reality.

With a clarity and theoretical sophistication that will be useful to students and specialists of late antiquity, ancient magic, ancient religion and early Christianity, this book details a rich and nuanced belief system with the supernatural world at its core.

**Silke Trzcionka** is an Australian Research Council Senior Research Associate at the Centre for Early Christian Studies, Australian Catholic University.



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FOR MY MOTHER,  
MIT LIEBE UND RESPECT



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Brisbane  
March 2006

## ABBREVIATIONS

- ACM Meyer, M. and Smith, R., *Ancient Christian Magic. Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*, San Francisco: Harper, 1994.
- AMB Naveh, J. and Shaked, S., *Amulets and Magic Bowls. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1985.
- ANRW *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*.
- CT *Theodosiani, Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, Voluminis I pars posterior textus cum apparativ, editio secunda lucis ope expressa, ed. Th. Mommsen, 1954.
- DT Audollent, A., *Defixionum Tabellae*, Paris, 1904 (repr. 1967 Frankfurt/Main: Minerva GmbH).
- GMA Kotansky, R., *Greek Magical Amulets. The Inscribed Gold, Silver, and Bronze Lamellae*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994.
- GRBS *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*.
- HAIT Schiffman, L.H. and Swartz, M.D., *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Geniza*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992.
- HE Sozomène, *Histoire Ecclésiastique, Livres I–II*, ed. J. Bidez (SC 306), Paris, 1983, and *Histoire Ecclésiastique, Livres III–IV*, ed. J. Bidez (SC 418), Paris, 1996.
- HN Zosimi, *Comitis et Ex Exadvocati Fisci. Historia Nova*, ed. L. Mendelssohn, Lipsia: Aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1887.
- HR Théodoret de Cyr, *Histoire des Moines de Syrie*, 2 vols (SC 234, 257), P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen, Paris, 1977–9.
- JbAC *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*.
- J ECS *Journal of Early Christian Studies*.
- LH *The Lausiac History of Palladius, II*, ed. D. Cuthbert Butler, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904.
- MSF Naveh, J. and Shaked, S., *Magic Spells and Formulae. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1993.
- PG Migne, J.P., *Patrologia Graeca*, Paris, 1857–89.

ABBREVIATIONS

- PGM Preisendanz, K., *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 3 vols, Berlin, Leipzig, Stuttgart: Verlag B.G. Teubner, 1928–41.
- PL Migne, J.P., *Patrologia Latina*, Paris, 1844–64.
- SC *Sources chrétiennes*.
- SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. (Referenced according to volume and inscription number, thus SEG 43.1347.)
- SGD Jordan, D.R., ‘A Survey of Greek Defixiones Not Included in the Special Corpora’, *GRBS* 36.2 (1985) 151–97.
- SHR *Sepher Ha-razim. The Book of the Mysteries*, trans. M.A. Morgan, Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983.
- SM Daniel, R.W. and Maltomini, F. (eds), *Supplementum Magicum*, 2 vols (*Papyrologia Coloniensia*, 16.1–2), Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990–2.



# 1

## INTRODUCTION

This study began with a simple desire to understand more about the mystical, exciting and frightening world of ‘ancient magic’. The work that follows emerges from this original intention having, in the process, been subjected to considerable reflection, realignment and refinement. Its aim now is to convey the excitement, the fear and the power so intrinsic to this field of spells, charms and curses, and to do so with a full appreciation of the society that accommodated it.

Given the broad range of practices, periods and regions which the wider subject of magic covers – including all regions and periods of Graeco-Roman history, from the time of Homer through to Byzantium – finding a focus for this study was a priority, and required careful consideration of preceding scholarship. The foci of this scholarship varied, as did the influences upon it, for as a field of study ‘ancient magic’ has interested a range of scholars since the nineteenth century and the discovery of the first magical papyri. Since then there has been a variety of work carried out on the subject, influenced both by the availability of evidence and by prevailing trends of academic thought regarding magic and its place within society.<sup>1</sup>

The early part of last century saw an increasing amount of activity in the field. Of particular note at this time was the work of Preisendanz who in his *Papyri Graecae Magicae* translated and examined hundreds of Greek papyri from Egypt.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the activity, magic and its study was not assigned scholarly status by many academics who appeared to view it as a pollution of the idealised image of the ancient past.<sup>3</sup> Such culturally tainted and even pejorative attitudes towards magic were sustained for many decades and were considerably influenced by the works of Tylor and Frazer, the latter particularly affected by Darwinian notions.<sup>4</sup> Frazer, and others with similar ideas, believed that cultures ‘evolved’ in much the same way as the physical human form had evolved. Thus it was believed that there were ‘primitive’ societies and beliefs, and there were more ‘evolved’ cultural forms. Within this framework, any practices which were deemed magical were primitive and reflected a lower, less-evolved form of ‘superstitious’ belief not to be found in more evolved cultural entities. Such pejorative notions of ancient

belief systems were to pervade scholarship for many decades, and in some instances their influence is still apparent.<sup>5</sup>

A revival and renaissance in scholarship on magic has been evident since the early 1990s with significant scholars such as Faraone, Gager, Graf, Jordan, Kotanksy, Luck, Meyer, Mirecki, Shaked, Schaefer and Swartz providing varied and often insightful studies into various aspects of the field.<sup>6</sup> The interest of many of these recent studies in the social contexts of magical practices, and their increasing dismissal of the pejorative ideas of the past, has spurred on a broader acceptance of magic as a legitimate and noteworthy aspect of mainstream socio-historical studies.

Amongst this wide-ranging, extensive, and often enlightening scholarship, there are still many areas and aspects of Graeco-Roman magic deserving of attention. The physical, temporal and geographical nature of the evidence means that most studies of the material have either covered a broad geographical area and a lengthy period of time, or focused their attention on specific forms or functions of practice. These are issues that will receive more considered attention in the following chapter; it suffices to say here that there is scope for more temporally and regionally focused studies of the material, especially as the social context becomes increasingly acknowledged and examined. In line with this argument this work offers a study clearly defined both geographically and temporally, which addresses the antique evidence with a primary concern for the social context which produced it.

The aim of the study is to present and discuss people's utilisation of techniques involving the supernatural in Syria and Palestine in the fourth century of the common era. The study considers the evidence from both regions for practices involving methods such as curses, spells, invocations and the use of amulets. Such a focus allows for a concentrated study excluding assumptions in regard to the homogeneity of Graeco-Roman practice and belief. It also facilitates the social aspect of the investigation which considers the evidence within the fourth-century social setting of Syria and Palestine, drawing upon ideas presented by sociological and anthropological studies that offer insight into understanding the social place of practices involving the supernatural.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2, 'The Status Quaestionis', briefly addresses the reasoning behind the delineations and ambitions of the study. This discussion includes a review of scholarship regarding 'magic', and presents an argument for the inapplicability of the term and its consequent exclusion from the investigation. In the absence of such a generic label, the subject matter to be incorporated in the study covers those activities involving people's communication with the supernatural<sup>7</sup> for the purposes of protection, or assistance in beneficent or maleficent action. The discussion then focuses on the restriction of the investigation both to the specific time period of the fourth century of the common era and to the two regions of Syria and Palestine. Thereafter consideration is given to the work that has already been done on the fourth century, and particular

regard is also paid to various methods of interpretation and their applicability to the subject of this study.

Chapter 3, 'Syria and Palestine: a fourth-century background', outlines some of the major political, economic, religious and social changes to affect fourth-century Syria and Palestine.

Chapter 4, 'Curses for courses: heavy tactics in the hippodrome', begins the investigation of fourth-century practices involving the supernatural in Syria and Palestine. Extant evidence relating to the chariot races in both regions is presented and includes curse tablets and hagiographical accounts that illustrate the use of methods involving the supernatural to enhance, inhibit, or protect horses and charioteers. It is argued in the course of the discussion that the agonistic context of the sporting event, individual financial concerns, as well as the social perception of the charioteer, all contributed to appeals to supernatural agents in this sporting arena.

Chapter 5, 'Supernatural sabotage: ensuring a successful livelihood', addresses the methods people used to ensure their success or survival in areas of livelihood and career. This included curses, the assistance of holy men, as well as the use of sorcery accusations. This chapter is divided between the evidence dealing with livelihood and career, and that dealing specifically with the sorcery accusations. It is proposed in the discussion of the various forms of evidence that social, economic and political factors, as well as concepts of honour, envy and limited good can be seen as having contributed to the use, or alleged use, of practices involving the supernatural in relation to livelihood in this period.

Chapter 6, 'Demanding desire: rituals of love and lust', relies heavily on hagiographical accounts in its investigation of love spells and curses. It is argued that in this evidence can be seen the influences and provocations of social constructs of gender, family, behaviour, honour and shame, as well as an attempt to reassert and manipulate social norms and expectations.

Chapter 7, 'The Apotropaic: protecting good fortune', investigates the pervasive practice of protecting the individual and his/her property from misfortune. The predominant threat of misfortune lay in the fear of the evil eye, a complex belief closely related to ideas on envy. It is proposed in the discussion of the apotropaic practices that the prevailing social structures and belief systems create a sense of vulnerability, fostered by the notion of limited good and of envy, that brings about this need for apotropaic security from the daimonic and deleterious.

Chapter 8, 'Illness and healing: threats and retaliation in a discourse of power', considers the role of the supernatural in the healing practices of the fourth century. It is argued from an examination of the evidence that the fourth-century mindset associated illness with the malevolent intervention of supernatural forces and that these forces consequently also provided a medium for the healing of maladies. Furthermore, it is asserted that the practice of healing provided a powerful forum for the promotion of effective

## INTRODUCTION

supernatural and religious prowess, particularly by contemporary Christian authorities.

Chapter 9, 'Possession and expulsion: experiencing and expelling the daimonic', investigates the activities and rituals related to daimonic possession and expulsion. It is proposed in the discussion that the perception of deviant behaviour, the assertion of religious differentiation, social change, the social perception of vulnerability, as well as issues of power and control, are all evident factors in the quite dramatic context of possession and expulsion.

Chapter 10, the conclusion, reflects on the aims of the study and the methodology which directed it, while also considering the interdependence of social context and belief systems and their role in the use of methods involving the supernatural in the fourth century.

## THE STATUS QUAESTIONIS

This chapter discusses the problem of the label of ‘magic’ and its definition, the parameters of the investigation, and the methods for approaching and understanding the material.

### ‘Magic’

The discussion must begin with a clear delineation of the subject matter, and thus, as suggested earlier, with the term ‘magic’. The use of this term without definition of meaning places any study at the mercy of each researcher’s and reader’s variable understanding of what magic is. However, definition itself does not necessarily help the situation. Consider, for instance, the difficulty that must be faced when using a definition such as that proposed by Luck which utilises the concept of the ‘soul’ – a term which is itself open to various problems of interpretation. Luck writes:

I would define magic as a technique grounded in a belief in powers located in the human soul and in the universe outside ourselves, a technique that aims at imposing the human will on nature or on human beings by using supersensual powers. Ultimately, it may be a belief in the unlimited powers of the soul.<sup>1</sup>

Unclear terminology is not, however, the only difficulty of definition. The label ‘magic’ is loaded with the cultural and social meanings, both positive and negative, which have been assigned it over the course of the last millennia. Hence it is necessary to find a definition which proposes a meaning suitably stripped of modern preconceptions and judgements. Yet, even having found this description, it is also imperative that the understanding and conceptions of the period in question are considered. As will be shown, the antique notion of magic can be variable and is not readily restricted to the one label so often sought for it. Thus the term ‘magic’ itself and its use pose significant dilemmas for the investigation and must receive due consideration in order to determine a manageable and academically viable approach for the study.

The issue of magic in regard to its relation to religion and its definition has been thoroughly discussed and debated in books and journals for well over a century. However, this discussion has waned in past years and scholars have largely followed the individual approaches deemed most appropriate and culturally responsive to the material and periods under investigation. Recent trends in scholarship display a shift away from traditional pejorative views, distinctions and labels, yet the approaches of scholars do not present a conclusive solution or an easily applicable precedent.

The traditional definition of magic rested largely on scholarly interpretations of its relation with and to religion and, to a lesser degree for the ancient world, science. The dichotomy created a plethora of articles, each providing new markers upon which to place that all important dividing line, crucial to separating magical practice from what were considered the more respectable fields of religion and even science.<sup>2</sup> The hugely influential works of Frazer and Tylor,<sup>3</sup> for example, which were heavily influenced by a scientific view of the world and subsequent social studies deriving from theories of evolution, were not surprisingly largely focused on separating the 'primitive' rites of magic from the more 'pure and civilised' forms of Christian religion. The impact of these views can be traced in scholarly studies in the field through to the later part of last century, weighed down as they were by definitions reflecting long-defunct scholarly trends, ethnocentric assumptions, pejorative and subjective attitudes, and anachronistic analyses.<sup>4</sup>

The anthropologist Émile Durkheim dealt extensively with the issues of magic and religion and their definitions. To Durkheim, Frazer, by failing to define religion, was not able to recognise the profoundly religious character of various beliefs and rites, which he had classified as primitive and magic:<sup>5</sup>

So magic is not, as Frazer has held, an original fact, of which religion is only a derived form. Quite on the contrary, it was under the influence of religious ideas that the precepts upon which the art of the magician is based were established, and it was only through a secondary extension that they were applied to purely lay relations.<sup>6</sup>

Durkheim, by defining religion, diverges from the ideas of Frazer to establish magic as a rite and practice derived from, and similar to, religion. Yet he does differentiate between magic and religion by identifying a social distinction between the two: magic as the practice of the individual, and religion as the practice of the collective.<sup>7</sup>

Evans-Pritchard, on the other hand, in his study of the Azande, while recognising the individual nature of most magic, highlights the establishment of magic associations in Azande society.<sup>8</sup> These associations challenge traditional patterns of behaviour in that society in relation to sex, age and status, as well as customary divisions of magic within the community. Evans-Pritchard's work establishes that universal definitions of religion and magic

cannot hold true, and he recognises only an ambiguous distinction between magic and religion, placing little importance on the interrelationship between the two.<sup>9</sup>

The last three decades of scholarship on antique practices have seen a move away from traditional and often pejorative views of magic and have increasingly included anthropological and sociological approaches, such as those pioneered by Durkheim and Evans-Pritchard, with varying results. For instance, Aune, while still seeking to define magic according to its relationship with religion, utilises modern theoretical concepts of social deviance in his work on early Christian magic. Aune thus states that: ‘magic is defined as the form of religious deviance whereby individual or social goals are sought by means alternate to those normally sanctioned by the dominant religious institution’.<sup>10</sup>

Jeffers, in contrast, argues that a distinction between magic and religion is largely untenable and reflects an ethnocentric distinction between natural and supernatural which is not made by most religions.<sup>11</sup>

Other significant studies have in recent years directed renewed attention to the magic and religion dichotomy, often seeking new approaches and providing fresh directions for examining the subject.<sup>12</sup> The work edited by Faraone and Obbink in *Magika Hiera* is an example.<sup>13</sup> This collective study sets out to determine whether the traditional dichotomy between magic and religion helps in any way to conceptualise the objective features of particular magical activities.<sup>14</sup>

The various contributors to *Magika Hiera* did not provide homogeneous analyses. For example, Faraone in his examination of early Greek *defixiones* found that a theoretical dichotomy between ‘magic’ and ‘religion’ did not assist in analysing and evaluating the cultural phenomenon of early Greek *defixiones*.<sup>15</sup> In contrast Versnel, examining the role of *defixiones* and the use of prayer in the ancient world, concluded that the terms ‘magic’ and ‘religion’ tended to become less distinct in areas. However, he protested the dismissal of the terms, arguing instead that his findings ‘should provoke our interest and encourage us to document and explain the conditions and the circumstances that foster the blurring of the boundaries’.<sup>16</sup>

While the work of the contributors to *Magika Hiera* is significant in seeking to determine whether the traditional dichotomy of magic and religion is of any benefit, and in doing so within a framework seeking to understand specific rituals in their contexts, it is worth noting that the practices examined in the book were often diverse in the periods of time and geographical areas covered, and the treatment of the material by the contributors varied considerably. Diversity in approach and subject matter can be of benefit; however, homogeneity of approach and defined parameters of time, location and practices could conceivably provide a more indicative picture, albeit with a more limited historical scope. That is, if the varied approaches were applied to a particular region or regions over a prescribed period of time, a

more representative portrayal of the situation may have been possible and the blurred boundaries of meaning described by Versnel subtly noted.

Segal represents a movement away both from the often artificial distinction of magic and religion and indeed from the application of any definition. He states:

I will argue that no definition of magic can be universally applicable because 'magic' can not and should not be construed as a properly scientific term. Its meaning changes as the context in which it is used changes. No single definition of magic can be absolute, since all definitions of magic are relative to the culture and sub-culture under discussion. Furthermore, it is my contention that we have been misled by our own cultural assumptions into making too strict a distinction between magic and religion in the Hellenistic world. As we shall see, in some places the distinction between magic and religion will depend purely on the social context.<sup>17</sup>

Gager and his fellow contributors in *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells* extend this point, proposing that 'magic, as a definable and consistent category of human experience, simply does not exist', and arguing that, even when scholars insist that there is an overlap between magic and religion, they 'must presuppose them somehow to be distinct and definable entities'.<sup>18</sup> Certainly a dismissal of the use of any such label is a move towards minimising subjectivity and the misrepresentation of material by not seeking traditional and often ethnocentric definitions of 'magic'.

Graf, by contrast, in his work *Magic in the Ancient World*, approaches the term magic 'in the sense that the ancients gave it, avoiding not only the Frazerian notions, but also all the other ethnological notions of the term'.<sup>19</sup> In doing this Graf seeks to understand the Graeco-Roman concept within its specific social context, and as such this approach is a valuable shift towards a more valid social understanding of magic. Using the antique terms and understanding the roles of *μαγεία* or *γοητεία* for example, as well as those of related practices and practitioners within their contemporary social contexts, is a move towards minimising the influence of the loaded term 'magic'. However, variations in the meaning of terms according to context, author and time are inevitable, and though Graf acknowledges these changes in his approach his study covers a considerable time period and various regions, and allowing for possible deviations in meaning in respect of these influences alone is difficult. Furthermore, when using the terms of the Graeco-Roman world there are problems in determining, without influencing the material to some degree, how information should be classified when the ancient authors have not already done this. That is, authors of antiquity will not always label an activity as *μαγεία* or *γοητεία*, for example, while they may, or may not, actually be referring to a practice which they

or others would have considered in this way. In cases such as this a modern scholar must determine whether a particular activity would have been perceived to fall into one of the antique categories, and whether it would have retained the same meaning as other examples within the classification. In these situations the Graeco-Roman material would be subjected to modern interpretation, and an avenue for possible misrepresentation of the primary material would thereby be opened. Furthermore, if for the sake of academic integrity a scholar sought instead to include only material which had been overtly labelled by its contemporaries, then the study is conversely faced with restrictions of content that could provide a somewhat skewed impression of historical practice and belief.<sup>20</sup>

Thus even the utilisation of antique definitions is troublesome. In addition to these considerations there is Versnel's argument that all theoreticians begin with their own concept of magic, whether it be used in inverted commas or introduced by 'so-called'.<sup>21</sup> We are indeed influenced by the society in which we live and are therefore predisposed to an understanding, and even judgement, of certain ideas and behaviours. Engaging these pre-conceived and ethnocentric ideas in a study of different cultures and periods can thus frame the very way in which data is approached, from the initial questions through to the final analysis, invariably distorting any understanding of antique notions.<sup>22</sup> Although it is evidently difficult to eliminate all the preconceived ideas inherent in modern thought and scholarly discourse in relation to magic, it is, nevertheless, possible to be aware of the influence of the researcher in the selection processes related to the antique material.

Also requiring consideration is a problem that is arguably inherent in a study that is both anachronistic and culturally disparate, especially when concerning supernatural subject matter – namely, the concept of subject validity. As Bowie points out, there are ethical and methodological problems associated with the assumption that: 'Any cosmological statement or ritual practice is of interest not because it might or might not be true, but for what it reveals of a coherent body of thought that constitutes a culture and its social structure.'<sup>23</sup> So it is the case that, in dismissing the efficacy of the idea or practice by disregarding its importance or validity, a fundamental aspect of that idea and behaviour is already misrepresented by the scholar.

Although in this study the beliefs and practices associated with the supernatural are largely examined for the role they play in social relations in fourth-century Syria and Palestine, they are not examined on the premise that they may or may not have been truly effective, and that this efficacy is to a great extent irrelevant to their existence. It is not the role of a modern observer of the past to dismiss an activity as ineffective, especially when its potency was decidedly relevant for its contemporary users.<sup>24</sup> Nor is it necessary that these beliefs and activities be minimised or debased into 'irrational' or 'pseudo-scientific' intellectual groupings, such that a scholar is justified in accepting, for example, the personal experience of oneiromancy for the

Graeco-Roman world, while also reducing it to a tradition of ‘willed self-delusion’, hallucinations and delusional acceptance.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, without adopting experiential anthropological methods<sup>26</sup> it is possible to accept the basic premise of the technique by attempting to enter the mindset of the late-antique world, at least to the degree practicable given current comprehension of it, in order to appreciate the beliefs and practices of that period within their social contexts. As Bowie writes: ‘It is certainly possible to remain open to another culture and its beliefs, and perhaps be profoundly affected by them, without feeling it necessary to enter into discussions of truth or falsity.’<sup>27</sup> This involves the elimination of any assumptions of continuity in the constructs of thought, belief and behaviour from the antique world through to many modern societies, often considered its loyal descendants. Eradicating the influences of cultural constructs of thought and belief is not completely achievable, as has already been argued above. However, it is possible for a researcher to diminish such influence through both a consciously sought-after appreciation of cultural contexts and constructs of the past and the instigation of an applicable investigation that is of a chronological and geographical scope that allows such an appreciation to be effectively applied. Ultimately it is within the framework of a particular view of the nature of reality and a culture’s unique image of the way in which the world works that the conceptual foundation for diagnosis and analysis lies.

Thus acceptance of the belief in the practices and powers of the supernatural, combined with a dismissal of the credibility of that belief, is avoided in this study. In contrast, an acknowledgement is made that practices involving the supernatural could possess both meaning and efficacy in their antique context. Therefore this study is based on the assertion that in the Graeco-Roman world people believed in the supernatural not because they ‘didn’t know any better’ but because their world included powerful preternatural forces that were able to assist, hinder, or protect them.

Within this study therefore the label ‘magic’ will not be utilised or defined, given the problems associated with its use discussed above, nor will any supplemental label of such a kind be used or defined. Similarly the debate on the dichotomy between religion and magic will not be entered upon as no definable concept of magic is accepted or asserted as a valid foundation for the study. The elimination of a one-word label such as ‘magic’ does not, however, allow for a dismissal of all delineation of the subject matter for the study. By contrast, it requires very clear designation of the subject matter to be incorporated in the research.

*The subject matter, then, will include those activities that involve humanly instigated communication with supernatural entities, such as divinities and daimones,<sup>28</sup> for the purpose of protection, or assistance in beneficent or maleficent action.* These entities, though neither tangible, visible, nor mortal, are clearly recognised in the late antique evidence as forces upon which

humans may have an impact, and which, conversely, may have an impact on humans. Furthermore, the form which this communication may take includes verbal, written, and symbolic methods, directly orchestrated by the individual protagonist, or by his or her agent, or facilitated by some form of intermediary device. Finally, in specifying assistance in beneficent or maleficent action, communications with the supernatural will be limited to those instigated in order to affect, in some way, another individual(s), or the protagonist.

### The parameters

The following pages consider the parameters of time, place and source material which, in line with the definition outlined above, determine the specific boundaries for this study.

Studies that examine practices and beliefs concerning the supernatural over an extensive time period often span several centuries in their discussions.<sup>29</sup> Such works do offer broad surveys of the subject; however, their analyses are disadvantaged by the difficulties inherent in trying to account for and represent changes in the occurrence, form or meaning of practices over such lengthy periods – variations which seem inevitable for organic cultural constructs. There may be significant advantage in limiting a study's time-frame so that a quite detailed analysis of the social context for each piece of evidence is possible and a more accurate understanding of the interrelationship of evidence, practice and social context achieved. It is a basic premise of this study that the application of a restricted time period for the investigation will allow for the development of this more representative portrayal of practice and belief.

Given the political, religious and social changes of the fourth century CE, as well as the comparatively large amount of evidence, literary and non-literary, which record them, the fourth century provides the study with a rich and well-documented social setting for activities involving the supernatural. Furthermore, the considerable amount of evidence concerned with practices involving the supernatural in the later-Roman world, as well as early studies which have proposed that the period fostered increased superstition and consequently 'deviant' practices,<sup>30</sup> provide enticing incentives to direct research this way. The selection of one century, it is acknowledged, is an artificial delineation that does not reflect the actual existence, either from their beginning or to their end, of the practices to be considered. However, it does offer a convenient means of restricting this type of study, and the arguments favouring a more limited time span still apply.<sup>31</sup>

The beliefs and practices of the fourth century dealing with the supernatural are often referred to within the framework of much larger works dealing with 'magical' practices in the Graeco-Roman world, religion in late antiquity and general scholarly discussions of late antiquity or the fourth century.<sup>32</sup> Although it is often suggested that this period provides

an abundance of material, few studies have made the activities and beliefs of the period that relate to the supernatural the focus of their work. Those that have, have concentrated on particular aspects of behaviour such as so-called sorcery accusations, and it is these studies that are often used as the expert and, as it were, ‘complete’ sources for the period by the larger aforementioned studies.<sup>33</sup> While there is evident academic merit in the work which has been done, no work has yet encompassed the period and its various supernatural beliefs and activities as a whole. This study attempts to bridge this gap in scholarship, utilising the literary and non-literary evidence available for the period.

Many studies on beliefs and practices involving the supernatural have concentrated on the Graeco-Roman activities over a number of regions within the empire, often arguing for homogeneity on account of imperialism and resultant cultural infiltration. It is also a common argument that the papyri of Egypt, as well as other evidence uncovered in the region, represent homogeneous practice across the contemporary Graeco-Roman world.<sup>34</sup> However, despite the cultural infiltration of the Greeks and Romans throughout the Mediterranean, there were indigenous cultural traits and approaches which cannot be excluded from consideration in any socio-historical analysis. For instance, the Egyptian papyri demonstrate both how practices were absorbed by other cultures in the Hellenistic and late Roman periods and how adopted practices would take on indigenous cultural nuances.<sup>35</sup> Hence, studies must take into consideration not only the possibility that forms of practice alter in some way but also that a disregard for differing social conditions in each region risks an assumption of homogeneous cultural meanings regardless of social contexts.

There are some studies which have avoided this problem by dealing with specific regions. These include Cryer’s work on divination in ancient Israel and the Near East,<sup>36</sup> Faraone’s study of ‘love magic’ in Ancient Greece,<sup>37</sup> as well as numerous studies which have focused on aspects of Egyptian tradition.<sup>38</sup> These studies deal with cultural practices within provincial regions and specific social contexts; however, it is worth noting that they also tend to focus on particular practices.

The geographical delimitation of this study will concentrate on two specific regions of the eastern Roman empire – Palestine and Syria, incorporating the provincial administrative divisions of Palaestina and Palaestina Salutaris. This does impose an artificial delineation which may not have clearly paralleled social and communal areas, but the distinction does allow for a clear outline of regions, following fourth-century borders, and provides a clear boundary for the investigation.

There is a further incentive for selecting two regions for this study. As the two regions are neighbours, examining them simultaneously provides scope to consider whether there is an homogeneity of belief and practice involving the supernatural which can be traced across these two areas. Given that the

regions are often grouped together by scholars, this approach could either support their broader cultural delineation or it could lead to speculation on the justification of studies which readily link the two together.

Still to be considered is which evidence will be included in the study. There are significant studies which concentrate on one particular practice.<sup>39</sup> A disadvantage in adopting such a course is that the social contexts that provoke, foster and contain the practice, and which are invariably entities that change with time and circumstance, can be overlooked or generalised to allow for an homogeneous analysis. This may lead to misconceptions and skewed evaluations of a practice which is fundamentally a social behaviour and hence a product of its society. In addition, such a focus can lead to a delineation of the activity, not allowing for its relationship with other contemporary practices involving the supernatural.

The bulk of such studies were produced in the twentieth century, providing significant scholarship on magical papyri and texts,<sup>40</sup> amulets,<sup>41</sup> magic bowls<sup>42</sup> and curse tablets,<sup>43</sup> and predominantly focusing on the particular apparatus or practices. While the early works are strongly focused, later works often draw in other apparatus or practices in their notes when similarities of language or inscription are evident.<sup>44</sup> For the large part, however, these studies can be read on their own as thorough analyses of particular 'magical genres', and do provide students of Graeco-Roman society with invaluable reference works on practices and rituals.

In contrast to these studies, this investigation will examine several forms of practice dealing with the supernatural, with the aim of undertaking an in-depth study of a particular sector of Graeco-Roman history.<sup>45</sup> The practices to be included are those that lie within the content parameters set out above; that is, they constitute evidence that portrays or adequately suggests human interaction with the supernatural for the purposes of protection, and/or assistance in beneficent or maleficent action.<sup>46</sup> Such evidence predominantly falls into groups with a shared purpose, and it is the categorisation of these groups that governs the shape of the investigation into the areas of entertainment, career, desire, protection, health and daimonic expulsion.<sup>47</sup>

Closely related to the practices are those who utilise them, yet knowledge of the practitioner, supplier, or consumer will in many cases remain relatively obscure. On those occasions, however, where relevant information regarding the instigators of supernatural activities becomes apparent, discussion of the relevant protagonists and victims will be offered.

The extant evidence for the practices to be included does not reside in physical material; that is, in artefacts alone. Written records provide an invaluable source of information which builds on the evidence provided by the extant papyri, amulets, tablets and other material remains. From these sources it is possible to determine something of the social context of the activities, as well as gain some insight into the mindset that instigates their use. Furthermore, written records also provide information on practices

and beliefs for which no material evidence exists, such as the sorcery accusations. This variety in extant source material allows for a clearer understanding of the fourth-century role of the supernatural, of the practices involved with manipulating it, and of those who sought to utilise it. Written sources, including Christian material (such as ecclesiastical history,<sup>48</sup> the writings and oratory of the Church Fathers,<sup>49</sup> hagiographies,<sup>50</sup> and church codices<sup>51</sup>), historiographies,<sup>52</sup> law codes,<sup>53</sup> as well as various Jewish materials,<sup>54</sup> are utilised in the research.

### Approaching the fourth century

The following pages consider previous approaches to the study of the supernatural in the fourth century, as well as analytical approaches to the topic or other aspects of Graeco-Roman history that will shape the direction of this investigation.

The earliest scholar to concentrate on a fourth-century figure and the supernatural was Campbell Bonner in 1932.<sup>55</sup> In his article Bonner discussed aspects of Libanius' work which dealt with his beliefs in, and social experiences with, the supernatural. Libanius was the victim of *γοητεία* and the victim of accusations of high treason (through divination), and of himself practising *γοητεία*. The article begins:

A curious happening in his lecture hall was interpreted by Libanius as an attempt to bewitch him. It was a typical case of homeopathic magic, an uncanny animal, a chameleon, used to represent the intended victim. Several other passages in Libanius' writings show that charges of magical practice were freely bandied about, even among educated people; Libanius himself was so accused. Though doubtless innocent, he believed in the efficacy of magic, and in this respect did not rise above the general level of the superstitious age in which he lived.<sup>56</sup>

This introduction provides a concise summation of much of Bonner's analysis. While it serves to correct a perhaps previously held notion that dealings with the supernatural were the domain of the lower and working classes, it shows the hallmarks of much of the scholarship of its time. Bonner's pejorative view can best be demonstrated in the attitude directed towards 'magical' or 'superstitious' practices. This view is similarly all too evident in the apologetic manner that Bonner adopts in his attempt to remove the rhetor from blame, and to excuse his actions and beliefs – that is, the actions and beliefs of a 'highly educated' man.

Bonner's idea of magic and its relation to religion is not discussed. However, it is possible to identify an opinion that such 'superstitious' beliefs

and practices belong to the uneducated, and there are hints of Frazerian influence on the subject. It is not unexpected, therefore, that Bonner takes on the role of the apologist for the intellectual, even though he acknowledges Libanius' belief in the efficacy of supernatural practice. There are a number of examples throughout the article to demonstrate Bonner's role as apologist. For instance, in a discussion of Libanius' reaction upon finding the chameleon in his lecture room, which served to confirm the supernatural causes of his illness, Bonner states: 'His fretful tirade places the aged Valetudinarian in a sorry light, and the episode is perhaps less to the credit of his intellect than any other happening in a life which was, on the whole, active and useful.'<sup>57</sup>

Bonner's approach to Libanius and his experience represents the thinking that appeared through much classical scholarship on the topic of the supernatural, as has already been discussed. In assigning anachronistic and ethnocentric judgement to the beliefs and practices of antiquity, there is, as has been argued, a danger of polluting a reading of the antique material and thereby hindering an understanding of the society that produced it. While Bonner's study is of benefit both for drawing scholastic attention to sorely neglected events and for his use of anthropological ideas on homoeopathic magic in discussing the importance of the chameleon in Libanius' account, his study is tainted by the attitude that framed it. This, it can be said, led to an understanding of the fourth century that, to a great degree, exaggerated the situation yet also influenced the perceptions of others for many decades. Consider, for example, his assertion that 'the fourth century was darkened by the most degrading of superstitions in a manner that can only be compared to the benighted condition of western Europe in the later Middle Ages'.<sup>58</sup>

Bonner's view was to be supported almost thirty years later by Barb: 'we find in the fourth century conditions which in many respects closely resemble the worst witch-hunting centuries at the end of the Middle Ages'.<sup>59</sup> Such an assertion was made on the basis of a variety of fourth-century sources, including the history of Ammianus Marcellinus, the *Codex Theodosianus*, the writings of Libanius, the Church Fathers and the papyri. However, considering the process of analysis and the pejorative framework in which Barb built his argument, it is hardly surprising that he reached such a dramatic conclusion. Barb acknowledges, yet dismisses to a large extent, the structural functionalist theories of contemporary scholars, and proposes instead that the most applicable thesis would be a reverse of Frazerian evolutionism.<sup>60</sup> Thus he inverts the idea that places magic at the early stages of religious evolution and Christianity at the tip, arguing that religion does not build up from magic but that the latter is rather the result of the decay of religion. Using a quite striking metaphor he declares that:

The task of a Roman emperor as health officer in things supernatural became increasingly difficult when the syncretistic, rotting refuse-heap of the dead and dying religions of the whole ancient world grew to a mountainous height while wholesome supernatural food became scarce.<sup>61</sup>

The visual imagery of 'rotting refuse' forms not only part of this reverse-evolutionist theory but also forcefully highlights the inherent attitude of the author. Barb himself argues that his theory serves to explain the increased number of sorcery accusations in the period, the decline of traditional religions causing an increase in accusations. In the process Barb's alternative evolutionism largely excuses Christianity from any tainted association with supernatural practices, as magic beliefs in the fourth century were a result of the 'decay' of pagan religions and, what is more, the result of non-Roman, foreign, influences: 'we find again and again that the closest connexion exists between magic and alien imported cults'.<sup>62</sup>

It is within this conceptual framework of decaying religion, magic as refuse, and the infiltration of alien concepts, that Barb builds up his analysis of fourth-century supernatural practices. Considering the source material, his assessment of the period does not seem justified (as will be seen in the course of this investigation). It is Barb's interpretive framework that produces his results. Barb, with his brand of evolutionism, argued that religions could devolve, indeed that they could completely decay, transforming into 'refuse'. Furthermore, it can be said that within this interpretive structure he still sought to place Christianity at the top of the scale, thereby associating supernatural practice with all forms of Graeco-Roman religion and not just its 'decaying' forms.<sup>63</sup>

The next significant work on fourth-century magic was a notable advance in the scholarship on the period's practices. Peter Brown's examination of sorcery accusations in late Roman society from the period of 300 to 600 CE<sup>64</sup> has become a classic in this field.<sup>65</sup> The approach taken by Brown provided new insight into methods for understanding the social stimuli for the sorcery accusations.<sup>66</sup>

The anthropological approach Brown adopted in his analysis sought to demonstrate that anthropological studies could be of benefit to an understanding of sorcery and spirit possession.<sup>67</sup> Utilising the socio-anthropological theses of Evans-Pritchard and Mary Douglas, Brown argues that the available evidence allows us to meet sorcery in its social context. Thus he proposes that the sorcery accusations are the result of an instability resulting from changes amongst the ruling classes of a traditional society.<sup>68</sup> It is the clash of articulate and inarticulate power (fixed, certain power versus ambiguous, personal power) that fostered sorcery accusations. For Brown these accusations are very much a social phenomenon resulting both from power

struggles amongst the traditional aristocratic holders of authority and the *parvenu*, and from changes in administration, including an imperial push for control. He writes:

When we see them in this light, we can appreciate how the sorcery accusations of the fourth century mark a stage of conflict on the way to a greater definition of the secular governing class of the Eastern Empire as an aristocracy of service, formed under an emperor by divine right.<sup>69</sup>

Outside the immediate world of politics and bureaucracy, Brown also argues that sorcery accusations in the fourth century can be understood within the framework of articulate and inarticulate power. For instance, rhetors achieved their status based on their skills, and so naturally operated within an arena of rivalry. It is in this setting of 'ill-defined *power*' within this group that accusations occur.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the accusations and their credibility can be partially explained by differing attitudes towards personal identity and the perception of attacks on that identity, such that an attack on the skill of the rhetor Libanius was in effect an attack on his identity.<sup>71</sup>

Brown does not limit his analysis to political and educational contexts. He also develops his argument to include the religious changes occurring in the period. He argues that because misfortune was unambiguously the work of suprahuman agents for both pagans and Christians, 'The Christian Church offered an explanation of misfortune that both embraced all the phenomena previously ascribed to sorcery, and armed the individual with weapons of satisfying precision and efficacy against its suprahuman agents'.<sup>72</sup>

Not unlike Barb, Brown argues that the spread of Christianity is directly related to the decline of sorcery accusations in later centuries, due to its role in subsuming misfortune and its suprahuman agents under one large umbrella of supernatural evil in which human agents no longer figured.<sup>73</sup> That Brown writes that accusations 'declined' is somewhat peculiar and contradictory in the light of his insistence early on in the article that it is not possible, given the evidence, to determine whether there was an increase in sorcery accusations, only that there was an increase in the recording of these events. This initial qualification of the evidence must surely also apply to later sources.<sup>74</sup>

It can be argued that in his analysis Brown makes little allowance for the 'supernatural' belief structure in which the sorcery accusations operated. That is, despite acknowledging that accusations can be seen as an exhibition of belief rather than as an event,<sup>75</sup> the allegations of sorcery are separated from a wider supernatural belief structure, except for an inference of their association with contemporary religious systems. Thus the larger belief system is not adequately acknowledged, and sorcery accusations are in

effect dissociated from a context of practices and beliefs. Instead the allegations are placed firmly within a context of various forms of political power and thereby detached from their inherent context of belief.

Peter Brown's study is an enlightening approach to the field of antique material dealing with activities concerning the supernatural. Its use of contemporary anthropological models pioneered the way for many and identified elements of social power and insecurity in the accusations which successors in the field still pronounce as decisive influences. There are, however, those shortcomings in argument already mentioned, as well as others that receive attention in the discussion of the accusations in Chapter 5.

There have been other studies which have addressed the issue of sorcery accusations in the fourth century, such as those of Funke, von Haehling, and Clerc.<sup>76</sup> Funke, for instance, is particularly concerned with Ammianus Marcellinus' account of the sorcery accusations and trials, and considering the author's motivations for the narrative asserts that the reports of the accusations and trials serve as an attack by the author on the emperors Constantius, Valens and Valentinian; the setting of accusations and paranoia serving to increase Ammianus' ridicule of the leaders.<sup>77</sup> In response, von Haehling considers the trials at Scythopolis and argues for a religio-political motivation for Ammianus' dramatic account of the events in Palestine.<sup>78</sup> Clerc, on the other hand, is strongly influenced by the anthropological approaches of Evans-Pritchard and Peter Brown in his study of the accusations.<sup>79</sup> Irrespective of the work of these scholars, however, the work of Peter Brown has, to date, been the most influential on subsequent research on the fourth-century sorcery accusations.

Phillips, in line with more recent trends in scholarship on the supernatural, adds to the pool of work dealing with the fourth century, with his review of the scholarship undertaken.<sup>80</sup> In forming his argument Phillips is critical of the works of both Barb and Brown – Barb for the strongly evolutionary and pejorative approach he took in his work, and Brown for his placing of sorcery accusations under the one massive label of power. Phillips's work condemns the use of labels and asserts quite clearly that traditional dichotomies of religion and magic may not have been relevant in classical antiquity. In dealing with the fourth century, his work could provide a model for further approaches. However, it goes no further than advocating a dismissal of modern labels and criticising the use of ancient definitions.

In addition to these works, which deal predominantly with accusations in secular settings, a small number of studies have investigated the relationship between the Church and dealings with the supernatural in late antique society.<sup>81</sup> These studies can often range over considerable time periods and geographic regions, and include both Western and Eastern Church Fathers in their analyses. Likewise their approaches differ considerably and swing between the pejorative attitude of Brox<sup>82</sup> and the sociological analysis of

Aune.<sup>83</sup> Some scholars have dealt specifically with the Eastern Church Fathers and their attitudes (along with those of their parishioners and the wider community) towards, and concept of, various supernatural beliefs. They include Wyss, Dickie, Marasco and Kalleres.<sup>84</sup>

Aune, in his work on magic in the early-Christian period, uses a structural-functional approach, arguing that this resists a negative attitude towards magic,<sup>85</sup> and delineates magic as deviant social behaviour. Specifically he defines magic 'as the form of religious deviance whereby individual or social goals are sought by means alternate to those normally sanctioned by the dominant religious institution'.<sup>86</sup> Hence his argument throughout adopts the attitude that magic is intricately intertwined with religion as deviant behaviour, and as such is a phenomenon that exists only within the matrix of particular religious traditions, and that all related practices are consequently actions of religious deviancy.<sup>87</sup> Thus it is not surprising that he writes: 'If we have found that magic was a characteristic feature of early Christianity from its very inception, that is because we have regarded magic as a constant if subordinate feature of all religious traditions.'<sup>88</sup>

While Aune's structural-functional and deviance approach provides an interesting view of supernatural practices, his emphasis is on the recognition of these practices within early Christianity. His complete alignment of supernatural practices with religion necessarily places these activities within a religious framework and in effect reintroduces the religion-magic paradigm to the subject. While some practices may operate within this religious framework, the same practices may very well have operated outside of it. Hence to view the practices entirely within a religious matrix – for to argue that magic is religious deviance is to do precisely that – may well misrepresent the practices in their broader social context.

Several studies treat specifically the evidence dealing with, or provided by, prominent fourth-century figures of the Church. The work of Wyss, for instance, discusses John Chrysostom and *Aberglaube*, considering numerous passages in the Church Fathers' extant material. The article presents a great deal of evidence from the sermons; however, it is predominantly anecdotal.<sup>89</sup> Dickie investigated the ambiguous attitude of some Church Fathers towards the pervasive social belief of the evil eye and its role in explaining misfortune. His work provides a thorough survey of this complex belief and highlights the Church Fathers' entrenchment in the cosmological framework of their time.<sup>90</sup> Another aspect of supernatural activity and belief has been investigated by Marasco whose research concerned the accusations of sorcery levelled against the Arian bishop, Athanasius, in the fourth century.<sup>91</sup> The work of Kalleres on exorcism in the training of baptismal candidates in Antioch and Jerusalem utilises the homilies of John Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem, and offers significant insight into the supernal cosmology of the fourth century. Furthermore, in her approach to the ritual language of

the baptismal training and its inherent potency, her work is exemplary in demonstrating the benefits of interdisciplinary approaches to historical studies.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, there have been several other studies in recent years that have made a contribution to our understanding of supernatural practices in late antiquity. Most of these provide new insights in their approaches to the late antique material. Though not dealing specifically with the fourth century, these investigations do include evidence from the period. For instance, the dissertation of Aubin, which is interesting for its focus on the representation of the feminine with magic in Rabbinic sources. Her ‘reading for gender’ approach considers the literary evidence within its late antique cultural context, and presents an argument for the disparity between the information offered by material evidence and literary presentations in the portrayal of gendered magic.<sup>93</sup> Heintz’s dissertation, ‘Agonistic Magic in the Late Antique Circus’, provides an in-depth look at the evidence for supernatural activity in the hippodrome. Presenting an array of extant evidence, Heintz proposes four different functions for these supernatural practices, all ensuring success: performance enhancing, aggressive, defensive and revelatory.<sup>94</sup> Janowitz, though particularly dealing with the first three centuries of the common era, considers notions of ‘magic’, as well as practices and rituals within their cultural context, particularly seeking to understand them within their temporal frame. As such she presents an interesting study on ‘magic’ and the practices of exorcism, love rites, alchemy, and what she terms ‘deification’, in the late-Roman world.<sup>95</sup> Finally, Dickie’s work, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, considers the practitioners of magic from classical Greece through to the end of the seventh century.<sup>96</sup> Dickie deals with a considerable amount of material in his analysis, including that from late antiquity, and his focus on ‘magicians, witches, sorcerers and sorceresses’ over an extensive period of time presents an interest in informing from the Greek and Roman sources; however, it is not concerned with the cultural constructs that frame the material and the characters presented.<sup>97</sup>

The pejorative and value-laden sentiments of the scholarship of a century ago have been increasingly abandoned in favour of an acceptance of antique belief systems and a desire to utilise cross-disciplinary techniques in order to gain a greater understanding of the practices, beliefs and events of the period. It is this dismissal of pejorative and value-laden ideas and the later trends in interdisciplinary approaches which will influence the analytical direction of this investigation.

Anthropological and sociological studies, through their observations of various communities – their beliefs, customs and behaviours – offer new means for observing antique society. The prime objective of this study is to try to understand the practices and beliefs involving the supernatural within the social contexts of fourth-century Syria and Palestine. Interpretational tools based in the social sciences provide alternative and often

surprising social insight, and they have in the past been applied to history with rewarding results. Yet it must be said that neither this study nor its results claim to be either the definitive analysis of the subject matter, or an anthropological and sociological study in itself, aiming rather to provide a soundly reasoned and feasible view of antique social practice, belief and behaviour. Such an eclectic method of analysis, considering its cross-cultural and anachronistic application,<sup>98</sup> must be used with caution with the intent to inform the study rather than commit it overall to a particular interpretation, but it has been applied by other scholars of Graeco-Roman history and produced interesting and enlightening interpretations of the antique material.

The use of interdisciplinary models for the interpretation of classical societies was first made by Frazer in his legendary volumes of *The Golden Bough*.<sup>99</sup> Frazer used popular scientific notions of biological and physical evolution to propose a concept of cultural-religious evolution.<sup>100</sup> To do this he made comparisons between the religious beliefs and practices of 'primitive' cultures and those of alleged developed or civilised cultures. He proposed that the existence and overlap of magic and religion was the result of confusion, and that magic was normally restricted to primitive culture.<sup>101</sup> For Frazer a belief in magic equated to an early stage in the evolution of human culture and intelligence. While diverging from Frazer on the relationship between magic and religion, Tylor was also a supporter of the use of an evolutionary approach towards magical practice,<sup>102</sup> and both he and Frazer perceived of magic as the original basis of religion. In accordance with their theories, magic was an element of primitive society and while remnants of old superstitions and magical practices could still be found in contemporary rural Europe,<sup>103</sup> magic was no longer an issue in sophisticated society. In using these approaches any analysis of magical practices in the ancient world was influenced by the attitude that these practices were intrinsic to a primitive belief system and hence required differentiation from evolved religious forms.

Structural functionalism, strongly influenced by the work of Durkheim and Evans-Pritchard, was also to have an effect on studies of Graeco-Roman practices involving the supernatural. In structural functionalism, the meaning of social phenomena comes to be equated with their social use, and applications of this approach have 'contributed vastly to our understanding of the interplay of the forces active in numerous societies'.<sup>104</sup> Structural functionalism presupposes that equilibrium is the goal of social behaviour. However, the characterisations of social phenomena developed by structural functionalism were also 'irretrievably anchored in the societies in which they were observed'.<sup>105</sup> The work of Evans-Pritchard and his student Mary Douglas were utilised in Peter Brown's examination of sorcery accusations in the fourth century and highlighted the role that changing social and religious conditions played in stimulating accusations in areas of conflict and power.<sup>106</sup> This use of cultural anthropology shed tremendous

light on the accusations and shifted ideas away from the traditional views portraying activities involving the supernatural as a sign of an impoverished society which, due to great social change, was falling prone to the primitive ideas of less sophisticated societies.<sup>107</sup> However, it can be argued that both the work of Peter Brown and the structural-functionalist studies that guided it, in seeking out the seemingly rational function or role of practices could discount the influence of the beliefs and the cosmology that underpinned them.

Also utilising interdisciplinary approaches to Graeco-Roman practices, Winkler and Faraone have produced discerning discussions on Graeco-Roman *agoge*, love spells. Winkler, who himself concludes that social anthropology cannot provide an answer, only enable questions and the provision of comparisons to illuminate ancient material,<sup>108</sup> identifies medical and psychological aspects within a Mediterranean ‘honour and shame’ social setting in the use of *agoge* spells.<sup>109</sup> He identifies personal anxiety within the Mediterranean cultural setting, and proposes that the spells ‘are structured as a system of displacements’, transposing through the intense imaging the protagonist’s illness onto someone else.<sup>110</sup> He progresses to suggest that the spells in effect acted as a method of therapy, of self-help, for victims of the incurable affliction, *eros*.<sup>111</sup>

Faraone’s work on *Ancient Greek Love Magic* seeks to locate erotic spells within the Greek concept of *eros*. The violence, images and victims of erotic spells and curses, as well as the cultural concept of *eros*, are related by Faraone to socially condoned or socially censured relationships (that is, accepted and consented betrothal marriage, and bridal theft and abduction marriage).<sup>112</sup> His manner of consideration for, and the location of, social behaviours, customs and beliefs, produces a result distinct from his predecessor Winkler. Nevertheless both studies offer perspicacious portrayals of love spells and charms by preserving them in their context and utilising modern methods to investigate and interpret them.

Sociological theories have also been utilised and applied to other fields in historical studies. For example, much work has been done on interpreting New Testament society through concepts of social anthropology.<sup>113</sup> Of particular interest for this study is the work of Esler in his analysis of the social world of the New Testament.<sup>114</sup> Esler’s approach involves comparing studies of modern Mediterranean culture with ancient Mediterranean society, identifying similarities, and applying concepts identified in the modern settings to the historical one. Esler argues that:

Our very familiarity with the New Testament texts can itself be a source of difficulty . . . If we do not pierce the veil of familiarity in which we have wrapped the texts, if we do not recognise the cultural gap and seek to bridge it, we are like boorish and uncomprehending

visitors to a foreign country who make no attempt to understand local customs and institutions.<sup>115</sup>

Scholars such as Esler and Rohrbaugh<sup>116</sup> argue for a comparative social study between modern Mediterranean and New Testament cultures, based on similarities between their social scripts. Modern anthropology has shown that certain cultural patterns recur across many nationalities, languages, and religious groupings of the Mediterranean. The patterns which emerge include: honour as a pre-eminent social value; the concept of the collective as opposed to the individual; the competitive and agonistic nature of social relationships; the extent to which identity is a matter of corporate and public assessment; the relegating of females to the private, domestic sphere; the importance of patronage; and the notion of limited good.<sup>117</sup> Utilising such ideas these scholars have applied these cultural traits to New Testament material, providing an exemplary model for other socio-historical investigations.

The present study will follow the interdisciplinary lead of the latter scholars, from Brown through to Esler. The social concepts to be utilised will become clearer in their application during the course of the investigation. Those that will be applied have largely been chosen on the basis of their effective use by scholars of history, or because of their presentation in anthropological studies of communities and behaviours that bear strong resemblances to those of fourth-century Syria and Palestine. These concepts include, for example, the value of honour and shame, the notion of limited good,<sup>118</sup> and gender. The application of this methodology aims to produce a study that surveys the available and relevant extant and published evidence, and also contributes to an understanding of beliefs and behaviours within their contemporary social contexts.

## SYRIA AND PALESTINE

### *A fourth-century background*

Before heading into the body of the study a brief overview will be provided of the wider context that frames the practices and beliefs to be examined. Although more stable than the century that preceded it, conditions in the fourth century could still prove difficult<sup>1</sup> and the period witnessed significant movement away from traditional norms in religious, social, political and economic activities. In the following pages an outline will be provided of the major changes and occurrences that affected Syria and Palestine in the fourth century.

#### **Administration and economy**

Let us begin by examining Roman imperial administration, which underwent some significant changes in the fourth century. Notably it experienced an expansion from the late third century that would see the complexity and scale of the imperial government in the fourth century unmatched in Graeco-Roman history. With this expansion coincided the development of a much more extravagant and intricate court and 'court society'.<sup>2</sup>

The administrative changes and expansion in the operations of the empire meant that a high degree of social mobility was made possible as an increasing number of people were needed to fill the positions.<sup>3</sup> Imperial service now proved an attractive career option to a wider variety of people. Thus, official positions and opportunities for career advancement no longer related solely to birth but to education, and those who had previously been denied opportunities within the state system were now given them, often obtaining senior and powerful positions. As a result, while the senatorial order was the official aristocracy of the empire, its traditional character and numbers had changed. Furthermore, with no hard core of ancient families in the new capital, Constantinople, opportunities existed for others to make their way up the ranks of power. Thus the new senators of the government in Constantinople were drawn from quite varied origins, producing a mixed and non-traditional body, in both origin and religion.<sup>4</sup> In the East the great majority of the official aristocracy whom Constantius, for instance, promoted to the praetorian

prefecture were parvenus. In the West, in contrast, senators, members of the aristocratic families, almost monopolised the praetorian prefecture.<sup>5</sup>

On a provincial level, both Syria and Palestine were major regions in the East, and with the shift of imperial power from Rome to Constantinople they were increasingly affected by the new capital, especially in terms of their human, economic and cultural resources.<sup>6</sup> Yet, even though the imperial bureaucracy was large and the entire administrative system was theoretically under the absolute control of the emperor, the state was still dependent on local government structures, processes and the elites in both the cities and the villages of the empire to achieve its goals.<sup>7</sup> Local authorities thus continued to exercise a considerable degree of power within their domains.<sup>8</sup> Power was assigned to a governor who represented the emperor in that area; however, the governor could be boycotted by the local *honorati* who were on the same level that he was.<sup>9</sup> (Even so, he could still manipulate or abuse a political situation in order to win praise and promotion within the bureaucratic system.<sup>10</sup>)

Administration of the Palestinian province was somewhat atypical. In the course of the fourth century the province was divided into two (Palaestina and Palaestina Salutaris) and then, by the end of the century, three provinces.<sup>11</sup> The administration of the cities appointed as capitals of these areas then operated at a subordinate level to that of the overall province. A large number of towns and cities in Palestine, *coloniae*, administered their own justice and were exempt from some taxes.<sup>12</sup> However, during the course of the fourth century cities continually lost more of their independence to the provincial administration.<sup>13</sup>

The imperial coffers were significantly affected in the fourth century by the expansion of the government system, the extravagance of court, military campaigns, building projects, etc., and much of the century witnessed considerable imperial spending. For instance, Constantine and his sons are noted for their 'lavish munificence and conspicuous spending' in financing building projects and seeking to increase the luxury and splendour of the court. Consequently there were requisite taxation increases and the confiscation and seizure of treasures, temple estates and city lands.<sup>14</sup> Emperor Julian sought to stem some of the lavish spending of the earlier reigns;<sup>15</sup> however, the shortness of his reign would minimise his fiscal impact. Most of the spending of the empire continued to be financed throughout the fourth century by levies and issues in kind, with some emperors, for instance Valentinian and Valens, enacting radical changes in the system of tax collection in order to improve its efficiency by reducing the opportunities for extortion available to officials.<sup>16</sup>

There was also considerable imperial spending on the army and wars. Constantine had greatly increased the size of the field army in his reign and its size was maintained through later reigns.<sup>17</sup> There were also several wars in the century, and, in the Eastern empire, Syria was significantly affected

by them. Although peace had been negotiated with Persia in the late third century, Shapur II attacked the Roman fortress of Amida in 359. It is this attack which possibly acted as a motivation for Julian's invasion of Persia in 363 with the largest army ever taken against that foe, namely 65,000 men.<sup>18</sup> Julian's campaign ended the emperor's life, and it remained for Jovian to conclude peace which surrendered the gains of the third-century agreement as well as the Syrian town of Nisibis.<sup>19</sup>

The economy and society supporting the imperial spending in all its forms was still basically agrarian.<sup>20</sup> Most typical in this period were the great landed estates on which hundreds of sharecroppers (*coloni*) worked, bound to their land.<sup>21</sup> Most people were small farmers or agricultural workers with access to land, but they only held partial control over it. Those who worked their own land were subject to taxes and periodic exactions on the part of state authorities.<sup>22</sup> Rural life could prove difficult and contemporary legislation insisting on hereditary occupation suggests that the government was finding it difficult to tie people to the land.<sup>23</sup> It has been argued that pressures on tenants and workers increased from the third century as an increasing concentration of land shifted into the hands of the wealthy. These added to the tenants' woes in their competition for produce, and the disproportionate influence and power they held in such competition.<sup>24</sup> Although some scholars argue that from the third to fifth centuries of the common era there appears to have been no abandonment of agricultural land, nor decline in agricultural production and productivity in the Roman empire in general,<sup>25</sup> movement is seen in Palestine in the fourth century, when taxation demands, rents, droughts and locusts became an increasing burden and led to migration into urban areas.<sup>26</sup>

Conditions in the urban centres, however, were not necessarily a great improvement for those migrating to them. The working population in the cities consisted largely of artisans and merchants, and opportunities for work could be seasonal and casual for many. In Antioch, for example, people would wait in the agora in the early mornings hoping to gain work for the day from the merchants who were coming to sell at the market.<sup>27</sup> Life was difficult for many, and in the fourth century in Antioch alone there were over a thousand homeless people and countless thousand others living in poverty.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, the urban population was able to make their displeasure felt on various issues; the riot of the statues and the food crises in Antioch in the fourth century serve as examples.<sup>29</sup> Let us briefly consider the food crises. Antioch had a considerable and buoyant population that increased at intervals when an emperor, his court and army took residence there.<sup>30</sup> Yet, even when an emperor did not reside there, the city still played host to an array of imperial officials. For example, the praetorian prefect and the civil and military governors of Oriental provinces had their residences

and office staff at Antioch.<sup>31</sup> The fluctuating population and issues with production could lead to food shortages emerging in public demonstrations and even violence.<sup>32</sup> The first food shortage involved a diminished corn supply in Antioch under Gallus Caesar in 354, during which the consularis of Syria (Theophilus), deemed responsible for the corn shortage (owing to his suspected collusion with the landowning councillors of Antioch), was murdered by a mob.<sup>33</sup> It is possible though that Gallus' preparations for a military campaign against Persia may actually have contributed to a shortage of supplies at Antioch.<sup>34</sup> Consider, for instance, that during Julian's time spent in Antioch preparing for a campaign against the Persians there were also disputes over the problems of the corn supply. Complaints were already heard when the emperor arrived, and he himself was suspicious that the city's councillors' conduct was the cause of the shortage.<sup>35</sup> Libanius 'conceded that insufficient controls might have been imposed by council upon the bakers', and some Antiochenes, showing 'human frailty', were 'too careless, or fast asleep, or eager for more cash'.<sup>36</sup> Socrates records otherwise, however, and believed that the food crisis of 362 was caused by Julian's presence in Antioch with a large army in the months leading up to his Persian campaign.<sup>37</sup>

Although hardship was an undeniable part of living in late antique cities for many people, it should be remembered that cities were also wealthy places offering people various possibilities. For instance, urban centres in Palestine were known for their wealth and employment opportunities. During the Roman and Byzantine periods Gaza became one of the largest and most prosperous cities of Palestine, enjoying a long period of peace and uninterrupted government. Its position on the 'Way of the Sea', fertility and water supply, had long made it a popular place for trading caravans in spice and wine, and also for armies to stop.<sup>38</sup> However, in the fourth century Gaza, as well as Jerusalem and other areas of the 'Holy Land', would benefit from a different type of industry – pilgrimage. Christian pilgrims to the region spent money on food and accommodation, bought relics and paid guides to conduct them around sacred sites, and their traffic increased revenues to the towns of Palestine.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, wealthy pilgrims significantly impacted the building industry with various construction projects undertaken in Jerusalem and other areas, which brought with them employment opportunities and builders and artisans from all over the Eastern empire.<sup>40</sup>

That people were attracted to urban centres for employment opportunities is understandable; there were, however, other attractions that could entice a range of people to the dynamic ancient cities. They were often grand places which could boast sporting arenas and events, public entertainment in the theatre, public baths, grand roads, palatial homes, and, in Antioch, even street lighting.<sup>41</sup> Thus, despite the hardships endured by many living

in them, the urban centres also offered a myriad of splendours and entertainments for their residents. Even the suburbs could be spectacular. Such suburbs, which were settlements with economic and social dependence on a city, included, as an example, Daphne the famous suburb of Antioch. Daphne was known for its temple of Apollo (burned down in the time of Julian), and Libanius praises it for its lovely gardens and cool abundant waters.<sup>42</sup> For educated men, such as Ammianus, a city was a tangible expression of civilised life that ennobled the areas around it, and its residences and public buildings represented the wealth and public spirit of leading citizens. For Ammianus, the cities of Syria, such as Antioch, Sidon, Berytus, Edessa and Damascus, were splendid, and the cities of Palestine rivalled each other in their distinction.<sup>43</sup>

### Culture

The following pages outline some important aspects of Syrian and Palestinian society in the fourth century. While considering Hellenisation, the education system and literary culture, which demonstrate how culturally diverse and also homogenised the regions were, changing attitudes towards marriage and inheritance are also addressed as these were to have an impact in both Syrian and Palestinian society in the fourth century.

Both Syria and Palestine were composed of various ethnic and religious groups which naturally provided for a noticeable degree of cultural diversity; however, many of the distinguished cities in both Syria and Palestine were culturally Hellenised, Edessa being a noteworthy and impressive exception. Graeco-Roman cities had long been established throughout the provinces and Hellenisation had taken hold of many regions. Consequently, individuals could be seen as ‘Greek’ despite different regional, or even religious, backgrounds, a factor that provided for some degree of homogeneity, at least in many urban areas.<sup>44</sup>

Hellenisation, did not, however, override other cultural and linguistic traits. For instance, three languages were used in the Jerusalem Church (Greek, Syriac/Aramaic, and Latin),<sup>45</sup> and in Syria there were overlaps of language with bilingual speakers of Greek and Aramaic/Syriac in many areas (Syriac being used amongst all social classes in the fourth century).<sup>46</sup> Indeed, it has been argued that the powerful, or better educated, in many regions of Syria were able to communicate in Syriac and Greek, and reflected biculturalism as much as bilingualism.<sup>47</sup> This is not only evident in epigraphic material but also in the widespread translation of Greek works into Syriac and vice versa. Greek texts, especially poetry, were often translated into Syriac to increase their accessibility; however, the reverse was also true and Syriac authors were translated into Greek – for example, the work of Ephrem.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the culturally diverse province emerged as a literary

force by the middle of the fourth century, producing material distinctly influenced by Mesopotamian, Jewish and Greek literary cultures.<sup>49</sup>

An important aspect of both the Hellenistic cultural homogeneity and biculturalism was the nature of the education available across the provinces, especially to those of means. Indeed, among the urban elites Graeco-Roman education and culture were valued in themselves as the main possession that distinguished the Romans from ‘barbarians’.<sup>50</sup> It also offered the most important passport for success within the power streams of the empire. Higher education, in particular, was largely based on skills in rhetoric and relied heavily on a knowledge of classical Greek texts, particularly Euripides, Homer, Menander and Demosthenes.<sup>51</sup> As part of a standard education these classical authors were taught without regard for the religious persuasions of either students or teachers.<sup>52</sup> One of the most famous orators and teachers of the time, and an ardent follower of traditional Graeco-Roman religion, Libanius of Antioch, provides an example. He, and other adherents of traditional beliefs, would foster the styles of many Christian students who were to become influential in the fourth century, such as John Chrysostom, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus. These men would come to use their classical education in their Christian teachings.<sup>53</sup>

Education and career were undeniably important in the fourth century; however, marriage – and its ensuing ties of kinship and inheritance – was also a significant factor in late-antique society, especially in terms of social standing, success and even power. Legislative and religious changes in the period, though, would change the way that some people could embrace marriage in the fourth century. Consider, for instance, Constantine’s refinement of traditional laws dealing with marital relationships that allowed people, the upper classes in particular, the freedom to reject marriage. This legislation was a considerable break from traditional practices and would have affected perceptions, expectations and actions, possibly having ‘profound and disturbing effects’ on inheritance and wealth distribution.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, St Anthony is a famous contemporary example of an individual who rejected marriage and accepted asceticism and, as a consequence, and contrary to traditional aristocratic behaviour, redistributed his inherited family wealth with the intention of never perpetuating his family line. In addition to legislative changes, Church Fathers (in a similar vein to many early Christian communities), such as John Chrysostom, also encouraged celibate Christian marriages and discouraged remarriage, reversing traditional understandings and expectations of marriage as a legitimate means for maintaining or increasing populations.<sup>55</sup> These changing conditions also allowed women to abandon both traditional roles as wife and mother and the concerns of remarriage, and this freedom would affect the distribution of personal wealth in both Syria and Palestine in the fourth century.<sup>56</sup>

## Religion

Another integral aspect of people's lives and their societies in fourth-century Syria and Palestine was religion. It has been said that people of the third and fourth centuries had a greater interest in religion than those of any other period of ancient history.<sup>57</sup> This is perhaps largely a reflection of the changes in imperial religion and sanctioned ritual practice which occurred through the course of the century. For many years scholarship suggested that 'It was during the fourth century that Christianity overcame the pagan cult and its magical rites'.<sup>58</sup> However, material and written evidence say otherwise, for instance the *Great Catechism* by Gregory of Nyssa 'strikingly illustrates the extraordinary mixture of religious beliefs and cult that still existed in the empire *circa* A.D. 385',<sup>59</sup> and the work of scholarship in recent years further supports this fourth-century observer.<sup>60</sup>

Much of the stimulus for the most significant religious change of the century was the emperor Constantine. The changes that Constantine as sole emperor would instigate and/or foster would be felt well beyond his reign. Though credited with various achievements through his long rule (for instance the introduction of the *solidus*, the reorganisation of the military and imperial administrative systems, and his relocation of the imperial capital to Constantinople), it is for his conversion to Christianity that he most interests us in this discussion.

Constantine's conversion occurred through a dream-vision that instructed him to place the sign of the Christian God, chi-rho, on the shields of his army. This brought him victory in his battle against Maxentius in 312, and proved to him, and others, that the god of the Christians could win battles and that the divinity showed favour to the emperor and his fortunes.<sup>61</sup> The impact of his conversion, to what was at the time a minor religion in Rome's pantheon of beliefs, would be felt throughout the empire. Not only was the age of Christian persecution definitively over (though the death of Galerius effectively saw the end of the Great Persecution<sup>62</sup>), but also Christians would begin to experience imperial favour, obtaining various privileges and financial support.<sup>63</sup> Constantine also endowed churches with vast estates and encouraged bequests to the Church through a constitution legalising such bequests, issued in 321.<sup>64</sup> This was especially evident in fourth-century Palestine as the Holy Land and its landmarks received particular attention from the emperor, his mother Helena, and other wealthy patrons, with various building projects and funds assigned to the region.<sup>65</sup> Constantine's belief that he was a servant of God also led him to intervene actively in ecclesiastical disputes,<sup>66</sup> such as his instigation of, and involvement in, the Council of Nicaea which would provide the basis of understanding for orthodox belief across the empire.

The Christian faith was upheld by the emperors who were to follow, except for one exception, the emperor Julian. But even Julian in his short

reign was not noted for especial animosity towards Christians, such that he was almost accused of unfairness in not allowing any Christians to enjoy martyrdom.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, Julian even urged priests of the traditional religions to follow some of the examples set by Christianity.

Those emperors to follow Julian subscribed to the Christian faith, and it was Theodosius towards the end of the century who eventually extended the imperial adherence to Christianity to the state. In 380 he issued a constitution recommending that all his subjects adopt the faith delivered by St Peter to the Romans.<sup>68</sup>

Imperial interest and involvement in Church affairs in the fourth century was often concerned with the numerous controversies within Christianity. The main inter-Christian conflict concerned orthodoxy, Arianism and heresy. Constantine was the first of several emperors who, after the Council of Nicaea, sought to reconcile Arius and his followers to the Church. Arianism would, however, remain separate from the Nicene-supporting Church for some time. It had a considerable following, particularly with the Goths, and Sozomen claims that Arians were numerous in Antioch.<sup>69</sup> Certainly Antioch had an Arian bishop, Euzoius, from 361–78 (there were also two rival bishops who supported the Nicene Creed), and the Chronicle of Edessa reports that in 373 an Arian group took and held possession of a church in the city for five years.<sup>70</sup>

From the early fourth century a large body of legislation was issued against heretical beliefs. Following the Council of Nicaea, Constantine issued an edict that banned various minor heresies, such as the Valentinians, Marcionites, Cataphrygians (Montanists), Paulinists and Novatians.<sup>71</sup> Most of these groups still seemed to be tolerated, however, and most heretics were still tolerated under Valentinian, except for the Manichaeans.<sup>72</sup> They were at the top of the list of heresies named in numerous heresy laws, their severe ascetic practices and beliefs often leading to the perception of their social deviance. Interestingly, although ending in sharp opposition, Manichaeism and later eastern orthodoxy were both heavily influenced by a common heritage of Syriac Christian tradition.<sup>73</sup>

Despite Christianity's increasing power and influence, both Syria and Palestine consisted of varying proportions of Christians, Jews, Samaritans and adherents of indigenous or Graeco-Roman religion. This religious mix was to remain evident throughout the fourth century and beyond, regardless of imperial and legislative support for Christianity.<sup>74</sup> Even when Christianity had 'officially' been adopted by individuals, conversion did not necessarily impede adherence to, or practice of, other religious beliefs and rituals. In Antioch, for instance, John Chrysostom criticises the actions of members of his congregation who frequent synagogues, or seek assistance from traditional healers.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, to a large degree, traditional religions still structured and organised the social network of urban or rural society in a religious, festal calendar.<sup>76</sup>

However, having said that Christianity's infiltration of Syria and Palestine was not complete in the fourth century, the religion did undoubtedly play an increasingly larger and more influential role in both regions as the century progressed.

The Christianisation of Syria proceeded at different speeds and through different means at different places. Cities such as Apamea and Harran adhered to their traditional beliefs for a long time,<sup>77</sup> while other cities such as Edessa and Antioch had had Christian communities well before the fourth century (although with a difference in Syrian or Greek influences).<sup>78</sup>

Edessa had a well-established Christian tradition by the fourth century, and it had played host to various forms of Christianity, such as Marcionites, Bardaisanites and Valentinians. Some of these different groups were still evident in the city in the fourth century.<sup>79</sup> For instance, the Arian Christian community at Edessa reportedly assaulted a local heretical meeting of the Valentinians in the time of Julian, and the latter responded by confiscating the lands of the Church at Edessa and its money.<sup>80</sup> Edessan Christianity also produced some significant and influential figures in the fourth century, Aphrahat and Ephrem being the most notable.<sup>81</sup>

Antioch was also a strong home of Christianity, claiming a lineage down to Paul. It hosted several Christian communities, including the Arians, and was a significant player in the eastern Church. In the fourth century, its architectural foundations were also enhanced with Constantine's building project on the island in the river Orontes, which was known as the Great or Golden Church. The grand church was set amid courts and dependencies, including a hostel for a lodging of poor strangers.<sup>82</sup> The city also produced some prominent Christian figures such as Bishop John Chrysostom, his wealthy patron Olympia, and various ascetics within and outside of the city.

As was the case in Syria, different areas of Palestine adopted Christianity at a different pace. For instance, although little is known of the foundation of the Christian community in Gaza, it is apparent from later sources that the community was relatively small and weak until the appointment of Porphyry as bishop at the end of the fourth century acted as an impetus.<sup>83</sup> The majority of the richer, more Hellenised citizens adhered to traditional beliefs and practices, while Christianity drew support from the mainly poorer sections of the population. In Julian's reign Gaza was the scene of mob violence against the Christians in Gaza, in which three men were murdered. The emperor Julian was unimpressed that the governor intended to prosecute the ringleaders for murder, and instead put the governor on trial.<sup>84</sup>

A conspicuous aspect of Christianity in the fourth century was monasticism and asceticism.<sup>85</sup> Holy men and women seeking the ascetic life lived in or around cities and villages as well as in more remote areas.<sup>86</sup> The Palestinian and Syrian monks had an influence on neighbouring communities and, in rural areas, the holy person could become a significant figure in the

community, assisting in the conversion of the population to Christianity, acting as a patron and arbitrator, and proving to be essential to the internal workings of the communities.<sup>87</sup> However, the presence of monks and ascetics was not always appreciated. For instance, there were complaints to the emperor Theodosius (384) about the monks' destruction of temples, and the emperor Julian classified monks as enemies of 'philanthropy'.<sup>88</sup> The collective activism of monks could also often result in violent conflicts, which ultimately resulted in temporary legislation in the late fourth century that forbade monks from staying in cities.<sup>89</sup> For posterity, though, the holy figure was recorded in hagiographies as a performer of miracles, healer, exorciser, battler of dragons and even repairer of the malevolent work of 'magicians'.

It is commonly believed by scholars, and Syriac sources, that monasticism was introduced into Syria from Egypt by disciples of Pachomius, yet there are discernible differences between the ascetic forms in both regions, and, as Brock writes: 'In point of fact, the fourth and fifth century ascetics of Syria, . . . were heirs to a remarkable native ascetic tradition that went back to the very beginnings of Christianity.'<sup>90</sup> There were also monasteries in Syria for those who chose to live a monastic communal life, and celibates and dedicated virgins could reside in communal houses in the cities.<sup>91</sup> However, Ephrem, who spent the final years of his life in a cell in the hills north of Edessa, provides a vivid picture of the more famous type of Syrian ascetic.<sup>92</sup> He writes that in order to be free and in peace to converse with God, an ascetic lives in the desert or mountains like a wild animal with long nails and shaggy hair, separated from civilisation, living out in the open, exposed to the elements and extremes of temperature, eating roots and wild fruits, and wearing straw or leaves tied together (if anything at all).<sup>93</sup>

The Syrian ascetics living in the desert and mountains, practising their various mortifications, won great fame among rural and urban populations throughout the empire.<sup>94</sup> Hagiographies tell of numerous figures who adopted such a lifestyle and were consequently able to perform extraordinary feats such as healings and exorcisms (discussed in Chapters 8 and 9). Furthermore, this lifestyle was not necessarily appealing to just a special few. Adopting an ascetic way of life apparently held an increasing appeal in the fourth century. The bishop John Chrysostom himself lived some time as an ascetic outside of Antioch, and young middle-class men in Antioch considered adopting the lifestyle, much to the dismay of those around them.<sup>95</sup>

It certainly seems to be the case that Syria developed a special type of holy man, often sanctified in hagiographies, who would ultimately, in the desert or the city, represent divine power.<sup>96</sup> This was also the case for Palestine, with several famous monks' and ascetics' lives recorded in hagiographic writings.<sup>97</sup>

Monastic communities did begin to appear in the fourth century in Palestine. Jerome ascribes Hilarion with the inception of monasticism in the region due to his exemplary life and miracles.<sup>98</sup> However, the *Life of Chariton* reports hermits living at an oasis south of Jericho in the early years of the fourth century, and Chariton founded a monastery of Pharan and went on to establish monasteries in two other parts of the desert. What these alternative traditions surrounding the origins of Palestinian monasticism demonstrate is that the region was experiencing a similar phenomenon to that 'which appeared spontaneously in different parts of the Christian world in the same period'.<sup>99</sup>

Regardless of their origins, there seems to have been two different types of Palestinian monasticism. Firstly, communities of ascetics located along the Philistine coast, the desert of Judaea and various places that are mentioned in biblical narratives. Secondly, monasteries such as those founded and governed by westerners. For instance, Melania the Elder's monastery for women at Jerusalem, the monastery of Rufinus on the Mount of Olives for men, Paula and Jerome's monasteries for men and women at Bethlehem, and the monastic communities presided over by Melania and Gerontius on the Mount of Olives.<sup>100</sup> In addition, as was the case in Syria, there were also ascetics and consecrated virgins who lived in the major cities, as well as other fourth-century monasteries founded on the proceeds of landed estates from extravagant imperial and private donations to the Church of the Holy Land.<sup>101</sup>

Ascetics, monks and the sights of the Holy Land led to an increasing traffic of pilgrims to the East in the fourth century. Indeed, the buildings of the Holy Land, which included churches at significant sites, hostels, hospitals and monasteries, were a monument to the piety, wealth and needs of pilgrims.<sup>102</sup>

Pilgrimages to the area from the West began in the second half of the second century, but it was from the early fourth century that pilgrimages increased in popularity as people wanted to visit the holy places, attend festivals celebrating events in Christ's life where they occurred,<sup>103</sup> and also see the monks of the East. One of the early, and influential, pilgrims was Constantine's mother Helena who went from Rome to the Holy Land in 326. In the years to follow, at her or her son's instigation, significant Christian buildings would be erected at the place of Christ's birth, the Holy Sepulchre, the Mount of Olives at the place of ascension, and Abraham's communication with the angels at Mamre.<sup>104</sup> Helena was in turn the first among many distinguished and wealthy female pilgrims from the West, some of whom consequently donated to the Church or invested in monasteries as mentioned previously.<sup>105</sup> But the wealthy and female were not alone. The pilgrim from Bordeaux travelled in 333 CE and provides an illuminating introduction to a pilgrim on his travels, even giving details of the route, the hostels, the required organisation, the staging-posts, etc.<sup>106</sup>

Pilgrims were not all from the West, however; there were also an increasingly large number from the East, including Armenians, Persians and Indians.<sup>107</sup>

The phenomenon of pilgrimage led to an influx of the population, not just from the pilgrims themselves but also through tradesmen, artisans, etc. There was a growth of small trades and tourism opportunities available, from souvenir sellers to tour guides.<sup>108</sup> The Church authorities in fourth-century Jerusalem also had to contend with problems of security, crowd control,<sup>109</sup> and the theft of relics, such as the wood of the cross. There was great enthusiasm for pilgrims to possess the powerful relics of apostles, martyrs and holy men in both Palestine and Syria, and in Palestine the range of 'Holy Land relics' was extended to include holy soil and sanctified oil that were easy for pilgrims to carry home.<sup>110</sup>

Given the increasing conversions, the construction of prominent buildings, the ascetics as well as the pilgrims, Christianity must have been increasingly visible in both Syria and Palestine. Nevertheless, as has already been mentioned, people in both regions continued to adhere to their non-Christian beliefs. In terms of traditional Graeco-Roman and indigenous beliefs and practices, evidence suggests that rural populations<sup>111</sup> and the urban educated were the most resistant to the new religion. Indeed, it was really amongst the students and intellectuals of the East that traditional beliefs and practices survived the longest. Though Libanius is representative of the latter traditionalists, his works do not suggest great personal animosity between non-Christians and Christians. This was not unusual, and it appears that Christians and non-Christians in the civic aristocracies were connected by so many ties of family, education, social life and politics that real antagonism was not possible.<sup>112</sup> Though religious affiliations were by and large not assured amongst the governing classes, they were largely determined by social origin; consequently in the East where people had risen from a lower status, the senate was becoming increasingly Christian.<sup>113</sup>

The Syrian area had never had religious unity, and traditional beliefs and practices included Phoenician cults, famous religious centres such as Baalbek-Heliopolis, Babylonian influenced beliefs, and the various cults of the Arabian desert population.<sup>114</sup> That people's affiliation with the various non-Christian beliefs and practices remained well beyond the fourth century is clear. For instance, in Christian Edessa, adherence to Nebo, Bel and Dea Syria Atargatis was apparent when Egeria visited the city in 384,<sup>115</sup> and Joshua Stylite complains of the spring festival being celebrated, which included dancing and the singing of 'heathen tales', at the end of the fifth century.<sup>116</sup> Also, in Antioch, John Chrysostom comments on the 'lascivious' Maioumas water festival held at Daphne.<sup>117</sup>

Generally the response of Christian emperors to mainstream Christianity and non-Christian religions was relatively mild in the fourth century, with a general note of religious tolerance.<sup>118</sup> Even when sacrifice had been outlawed, Libanius observes that peasants altered their religious behaviour in

response to anti-sacrifice laws – but not their *religio mentis*. Hence they still honoured traditional festivals, drank, burned incense, sang hymns to traditional divinities and invoked gods through their toasts.<sup>119</sup> During Julian's reign things were a little different and temples that had been closed were declared opened.<sup>120</sup> For instance, the emperor had the dilapidated temple of Apollo at Daphne renovated. However, it was destroyed by fire on its completion and the local Christian community was blamed for the fire and punished through the closing of the Great Church.<sup>121</sup> In Palestine, Julian harshly punished the Christians of Caesarea who had destroyed the third temple in the city by fining the city, confiscating the Church's property, enrolling the clergy as officials of the *praeses*, and making the town's laity liable to *capitatio* by putting them on the rural census.<sup>122</sup> Contrast this with Theodosius' reign during which, though no order was given, the closure, destruction, or conversion of temples was not condemned and a large number of temples were subsequently destroyed.<sup>123</sup> It has been suggested that the Theodosian legislation of the early 390s indicates a stepping up of imperial prohibitions concerning traditional non-Christian religious activities.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, as has already been outlined, traditional beliefs and practices would continue well into the next century and even beyond.

Finally, the Jewish community was also represented in Syria and Palestine, both in urban centres such as Antioch, Jerusalem, Caesarea and Gaza and in rural settlements.<sup>125</sup> There were some wealthy and flourishing Jewish communities in Syria in the fourth century, the community at Apamea being of particular note. In Antioch the Jewish community is believed to have been one of the first to have settled in the city seven centuries earlier, and appears to have had three distinct communities in the city and its vicinity.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, the Antiochene Jewish community was quite 'prominent and unavoidable' with very public festivals held in the city.<sup>127</sup> John Chrysostom speaks of the community on several occasions, noting his concern for people's dual adherence to both Christianity and Judaism.<sup>128</sup> The shrine of the Maccabees at the Cave of Matrona near Antioch is also testament to Chrysostom's concerns as the site was venerated by both Christians and Jews.<sup>129</sup> Judaism was a strong rival to Christianity and this set off some hostility between Jews and Christians; but such animosity was not regular, rather it was exceptional.<sup>130</sup> In Jerusalem, the Jewish community gradually increased over the course of the fourth century,<sup>131</sup> and its position would have been initially bolstered by Emperor Julian's temple project. The emperor had instructed that the temple of Jerusalem be rebuilt; however, an earthquake destroyed the area when the project was to begin in May 363, and the project ended.<sup>132</sup>

The fourth century is seen as a period in which the status of Jews in the empire rapidly changed with a variety of legislative edicts addressed to them. However, studies have revealed that Jewish communities were affected by economic prosperity or restriction just as others in society were, and that there was an evident 'flowering of Jewish material culture' in this period.

Such evidence, as well as that of Antioch for example, suggests that legislative restrictions or religious tensions with Christians were not significant impediments to the Jewish communities in Palestine or Syria in the fourth century, and that their communities were well integrated into their broader societies.<sup>133</sup>

The religious diversity in both Syria and Palestine in the fourth century exemplifies the dynamic society and cultures that these two regions hosted. As the discussion in this chapter demonstrates, political, economic, social and religious changes did have a varying impact in both regions. These changes, however, also contributed to the cultural jigsaw that already existed, particularly in the cities and towns. Rich and poor, educated and uneducated, Greek-, Latin-, Syriac- and Aramaic-speaking, Christian and/or non-Christian, blended together in splendid cities through which traders, pilgrims or armies passed and also left their marks. Christianity became an increasingly visible and influential religious force in both regions, yet it still coexisted with a multitude of other beliefs and practices throughout the period. The cultures were thus both homogeneous and diversified, and provided an engaging context for the practices and beliefs involving the supernatural that also interspersed themselves within them, and which will be investigated in the following chapters.

## CURSES FOR COURSES

### *Heavy tactics in the hippodrome*

The third firmament is filled with storerooms of mist from which the winds go forth, and inside it are encampments of thunder from which lightning emanates. Within, three princes sit on their thrones . . . RHTY'L is in charge of every chariot of fire causing it to run (successfully) or to fail.<sup>1</sup>

That Rhty'l's celestial concern would extend to the terrestrial stadium seems probable.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, according to extant appeals for their assistance, divine or daimonic beings were concerned with late antique chariot races. It was, after all, a very popular sport. Throughout the Roman empire major cities boasted grand arenas that could hold thousands of spectators, and the staging of competitions could bring towns and cities to a standstill. Palestine and Syria participated in the trend. Antioch's hippodrome, for instance, provided allocated seating for an audience of 80,000.<sup>3</sup> Yet even with its great capacity, people still crowded onto roofs and any other places from which they could catch sight of the action. Furthermore, on race days, as John Chrysostom laments, Antioch was brought to a standstill. Racegoers began gathering before dawn, and they were prepared to wait for the event and to enjoy the spectacle, in any weather conditions and at any time of the year.<sup>4</sup>

Enthusiasm for the event must have been strengthened by people's allegiances to the particular teams (factions) for which the charioteers and their horses were competing. The most prominent factions were the blues and the greens, although two other smaller teams, reds and whites, also operated.<sup>5</sup> Fans were dedicated to their particular factions, and fanaticism for the teams, sport and competitors could be intense and periodically result in dangerous or excessive behaviour.<sup>6</sup>

Within this highly popular and competitive sporting arena, people utilised supernatural methods in order to enhance the performance of, protect, or inhibit the charioteers and their horses.<sup>7</sup> Their methods could include charms to protect from malevolent attack, incantations to incite horses, as well as curses to hinder opponents. These methods, for which Palestinian

and Syrian evidence exists, will be presented shortly. It should be noted here, before the material is presented and discussion offered, that in the collation of evidence for the chapter, in line with the overall aims of the study, it was intended to include supernatural material linked with any form of entertainment in the fourth century in these regions. However, the evidence did not enable any clear association of supernatural activity with any type of public amusement outside of chariot races for fourth-century Syria and Palestine. This should not be seen as a definite indicator of a fourth-century focus for supernatural attentions relating to entertainment. It may simply reflect the availability of evidence at this time. Consider for instance an extant curse tablet from third-century Apheca aimed at Hyperchious who was performing for the pantomime of the blue team. The existence of this tablet alone arouses suspicions of fourth-century supernatural involvement beyond the racing arena.<sup>8</sup> Thus the focus of this chapter is dictated by the extant evidence, and hence concerns chariot racing alone, in both Syria and Palestine.

Following the survey of the material it will be proposed that certain aspects of contemporary social behaviour and belief can be suggested as plausible stimuli for and influences on the use of supernatural methods against those involved in chariot races (including the horses). These influences include: the agonistic context of the sporting event; people's financial concerns regarding the races, for example gambling; and the popular perception of the powerful charioteer.

### Syria

The discussion begins with an investigation of Syria, from where only a limited number of extant fourth-century *defixiones* have been published or deciphered. Unpublished evidence, which is still being processed, includes tablets from the hippodrome at Antioch.<sup>9</sup>

The evidence includes a fourth-century *defixio* from Damascus, which is fairly fragmentary. However, Jordan argues that certain words in the inscription such as *κάμψαι* and *[μα]σκιλλι μασκελλω* suggest that the text is aimed at a charioteer.<sup>10</sup> The evidence from this fourth-century example, as well as from the unpublished material, is scant, but it does suggest that the cursing of charioteers was practised in Syria during this period. Furthermore, if examples for the previous and successive centuries are considered, it can be argued that some continuity of practice existed and hence some insight can be gained into the possible motivations and intentions of fourth-century tablets. Having said this, however, it is acknowledged that *defixiones* generally followed relatively standardised formats, as is demonstrated in the various collections of the tablets from numerous regions of the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>11</sup> The following two examples precede and succeed the fourth century respectively.

A *defixio* from Beirut dated to the late second or early third century CE,<sup>12</sup> which has also been assigned a date of the fourth or fifth century,<sup>13</sup> is directed against horses and drivers of the blue faction. A drawn figure resembling a bound human which appears to be under attack from the head of an incomplete figure which is probably a snake accompanies the text on the tablet.<sup>14</sup> The text aims at restraining the horses and charioteers. Accompanying various *voces magicae*<sup>15</sup> on the tablet is the demand that the ἄγιοι ἄγγελοι attack and harm both the horses and the named charioteers of the blue team. The angels are to *συννοίσατε* [*sic*] καὶ κατάσχετε them, ‘attack, bind, overturn, cut up, chop into pieces the horses and the charioteers of the Blue colors’.<sup>16</sup> It is very specific about its victims, and lists the names of the charioteers and horses concerned, four charioteers and the horses grouped into teams of four, concluding with the command: ‘bind and CHRAB, damage(?) the hands, feet, sinews of the horses and charioteers of the Blue colors’.<sup>17</sup>

The second example is from Apamea on the Orontes and dates to the late fifth or early sixth century CE.<sup>18</sup> The text, appealing to *χαρακτῆρες*, and with notable Jewish characteristics,<sup>19</sup> is concerned with the chariot racing in the hippodrome of Apamea, and as with the previous example is also an attack against members of the Blue team. It appeals to *χαρακτῆρες* to:

tie up, bind the feet, the hands, the sinews, the eyes, the knees, the courage, the leaps, the whip [?], the victory and the crowning of Porphuras and Hapsicrates, who are in the middle left, as well as his codrivers of the Blue colors in the stable of Eugenius.<sup>20</sup>

Porphuras and Hapsicrates are not to eat, drink or sleep. From the starting gates, they are to see daimones and spirits of those who have died prematurely and/or violently. Also, when they are about to compete in the hippodrome, the text requests that its victims on that entire day ‘not squeeze over . . . not collide . . . not extend . . . not force [us] out . . . not overtake . . . not break off’. The tablet wants Porphuras and Hapsicrates to be ‘broken’, ‘dragged’ and ‘destroyed’.<sup>21</sup>

The form, language and religious nuances of the two tablets show some variation, and are interesting for what they reveal about the form of curses. Of greater relevance and concern for this study, however, is the motivation that lies behind their use. This is most immediately observed in the similar intentions of both examples. These tablets aim to harm and impede the performance of the Blues. The texts seek the assistance of supernatural beings to attack competitors and horses, and use a relatively standard discourse of restraint (binding), damage (including physical harm) and impediment, which is adapted to the racing context (including, for example, collisions and overtaking). It is noteworthy that in both cases the instigators demonstrate specific knowledge of their victims. The first example lists twenty-nine charioteers, and in the case of the second example, while fewer

charioteers are named, reference to them is still made, as is the name of the supplying stable. Hence it is clear that curses involving chariot races could include specific ‘team targets’, identifying competitors individually or as members of a group. Such specification implies that the instigators of the curses did not wish ambiguity to hinder the success of the daimonic and angelic assignments.

Late antique evidence suggests that curse victims as well as the sport’s fans were not ignorant of the act of supernatural meddling in the arena. Take for instance a fifth-century hagiographical account in which the audience is told about a sick man who is directed by Cosmas and Damian:

if you find it difficult to drink the three measures of the cedar-flavoured wine for your own salvation, pour them into a jar, and go to your home, and then very late at night, go to the Hippodrome and dig a hole in the far turn of the course, and without letting anyone see you, deposit therein the jar of cedar-flavoured wine.<sup>22</sup>

The sick man did as he was told, but his actions in the hippodrome were observed. This observer saw that the sick man was burying something in the race course and that his servants were there, yet standing apart, and so he suspected that the sick man ‘was working magic and sorcery against one of the factions of charioteers’.<sup>23</sup> He therefore ran off and quickly returned with reinforcements who seized the suspected sorcerer and threatened to harm him and turn him over to the law unless he revealed both the name of the instigator behind his machinations and the faction against which the ‘magic’ was directed.<sup>24</sup>

The sick man in the arena on the evening of this account, though a rabid fan of the hippodrome, was not actually seeking, as the witnesses surmised, to affect the outcome of the races but simply to instigate a cure for a tumour in his chest. Taking into consideration the primary concern of the hagiographical report – to promote the healing powers of Cosmas and Damian – and the problems associated with misreading and misrepresenting the formulaic texts of the genre,<sup>25</sup> the excerpt is still illuminating. The author, in an attempt to appeal to his audience with a familiar and believable context, is providing the modern reader with valuable social information. Given that *defixiones* were buried at night, and that racing ones were often deposited in the hippodrome, the suspicion of supernatural activity aroused in the observer firstly suggests that the use and placement of *defixiones* were known. Secondly, the observer actually responded to the perceived malevolent behaviour by seeking to overcome and detain the alleged miscreant. This implies that the alleged supernatural interference was both threatening and unacceptable to the individual in this instance, and suggests that it may have held a similarly objectionable meaning for the wider community. Finally, when he was questioned, the actions, or profession, of the alleged

sorcerer were secondary concerns to the revelation of the instigator(s) and targets. This both acknowledges the perceived effectiveness of supernatural methods in its concern for the victims and, in seeking the main protagonists, it also reveals an understanding of the nature of this activity. That is, it suggests that people were aware that the suspected ‘sorcerer’ was not the instigator of the supernatural attack, merely the agent for another maleficent party.

The idea of a public acknowledgement of supernatural sabotage in the arena, and of public concern for such activity, is supported by remarks from Libanius. The orator tells us how rumours that a star charioteer had come under a spell would quickly lead to public outcry across the city of Antioch.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, in one oration he complains of his students’ interests being diverted to the circus. In his speech he mentions people seeking out individuals who could reveal which charioteer would win a race, as well as individuals who profited by saying something to the horses, and through them (i.e. the horses) to the charioteers. This seems to be a reference to diviners who were able to reveal the results of a race, and the ‘horse-whisperers’ may very well be a reference to *moratores* reciting charms to the horses, the effect of which would be transmitted to the charioteers who drove them.<sup>27</sup> In this case, however, Libanius is not so much concerned with the supernatural element of the circus but with the fact that the races and related activities distract his pupils’ attention away from their education.<sup>28</sup>

Participants’ awareness of supernatural attacks is also apparent in the use of apotropaic devices to protect both charioteers and horses.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Heintz proposes that magic workshops existed in this period, and that these provided complete ‘packages’ for clients which included aggressive devices for use against competitors, encouragement methods for horses, and protective measures for charioteers and horses.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, he argues that in the late antique circus ‘magic’ was universally and routinely employed and ‘faithfully replicated and transposed onto the supernatural plane what was actually taking place on the track’. Thus various supernatural techniques utilised can be seen to parallel aspects of the sport, suggesting quite a complex system of supernatural activity in the arena.<sup>31</sup> Such a proposition leaves little room for speculation regarding ignorance of supernatural activities, at least amongst those involved with the sport. As yet, however, no evidence has been presented in this discussion to confirm such an industry in Syria. Even so, Heintz’s assertion should not be dismissed, as the fourth-century Syrian evidence presented is limited, and the material from neighbouring Palestine does offer some support for his proposition.

### Palestine

The evidence for Palestine is not even as solid as that for Syria, as extant and published material for the region and period is difficult to find. Nevertheless

there is some hagiographical evidence which suggests that supernatural activities were not precluded from the Palestinian hippodrome.

Jerome tells us of a charioteer from Gaza who was 'stricken by a demon in his chariot' and as a result was unable to move his hand or neck.<sup>32</sup> Upon his conversion to Christianity and his promise to leave his occupation, he was healed by Hilarion. This ailment, which is here clearly assigned a supernatural cause, has striking similarities with the intended outcomes of *defixiones* which often seek to render their victims physically powerless. Consider for instance the command: 'just as this rooster has been bound by its feet, hands, and head, so bind the legs and hands and head and heart of Victoricus the charioteer of the Blue team';<sup>33</sup> or 'hinder them, hobble them, so that tomorrow morning in the hippodrome they are not able to run or to walk about'.<sup>34</sup>

Jerome's second reference to racing involves a Christian Palestinian, Italicus, who kept horses to compete in the circus against those of the *duumvir* of Gaza, a follower of the god Marnas. The author states that this was an old Roman custom followed in Roman cities. Victory in the races, which involved racing seven times around the circus, lay with the team which tired out their opponents' horses. We are told that Italicus' rival had paid a magician (*maleficus*) to incite his horses and to restrain his opponent's horses on the track with 'demoniacal incantations' (*daemoniacis impre-cationibus*). The Christian Italicus then sought the aid of Hilarion, not to injure his competitor but to protect himself. The holy man did not consider this worth while and urged Italicus to sell his horses instead. However, the latter explained that his office and involvement was not so much a choice, but a public duty, and that as a Christian he could not employ *magici artes*. Instead he would rather seek assistance from a servant of Christ, particularly against the non-Christian people of Gaza who would, with a victory, triumph over the Church rather than over Italicus himself. This persuaded the holy man, and he had water poured into one of his cups. Italicus then sprinkled this water over his stable, horses, charioteers, chariot and the barriers of the course.<sup>35</sup> Jerome's account of the event following this supernatural preparation is suspenseful:

The crowd was in a marvellous state of excitement, for the enemy in derision had published the news of what was going to be done, and the backers of Italicus were in high spirits at the victory which they promised themselves. The signal is given; the one team flies towards the goal, the other sticks fast: the wheels are glowing hot beneath the chariot of the one, while the other scarce catches a glimpse of their opponents' backs as they flit past. The shouts of the crowd swell to a roar, and the heathens themselves with one voice declare Marnas is conquered by Christ.<sup>36</sup>

The success led to calls for Hilarion as a Christian magician (*maleficus Christianus*) to be dragged to execution. Yet this victory, and several others in successive games of the circus, brought many to convert to Christianity instead.<sup>37</sup>

One can almost hear a racing commentator when reading this account by Jerome. The intention of Christian promotion and conversion is overwhelming. Nevertheless it can be argued that in both of Jerome's accounts he is playing with the public perception of the circus as an arena for supernatural activity.<sup>38</sup> By presenting the arena with supernatural associations, Jerome is utilising a discourse of power identifiable by his audience in both a physical and a supernatural sense. Within this discourse he portrays Christianity as a dominant force. Interestingly, he does this by firstly distinguishing the hero from the usual portrayals of potency in the stadium, and secondly by assigning the Christian holy man supremacy of power despite, or because of, this differentiation. That is, firstly, the holy man is distinctive because of his initial dismissal of the event followed by his widely recognised involvement. This occurs only when he is told that it is Italicus' public duty to participate in the event, and that the latter would prefer not to use non-Christian methods in a competition in which the non-Christian opponents would certainly be using supernatural methods against his teams. Secondly, Jerome highlights Hilarion's use of what may have been seen as protective, or defensive, rather than aggressive, strength to defeat the antagonists. That is, Hilarion utilises water (there is no mention of it being blessed by him) which serves to protect Italicus' teams. He does not utilise a curse or spell of any sort against the opponents. In this portrayal can be seen the delicate and manipulated line between Christian, sanctioned, and unsanctioned supernatural authority, an aspect of hagiography that, as is seen several times throughout the investigation, allows Christianity to triumph in the discourse of supernatural ascendancy while dissociating itself from the traditional behaviours that form the discourse.<sup>39</sup>

In opposition to this line of argument, Heintz's reading of Jerome's account should also be considered. He proposes that Hilarion's actions actually contain all three aspects of the supernatural activity that could usually be found in the circus – apotropaic, aggressive and performance-enhancing.<sup>40</sup> Thus while the sprinkled water is seen as a defensive measure protecting Italicus' teams from his opponent's spells, the extraordinary performance of the horses is seen by Heintz to be the result of performance enhancement. Furthermore the *duumvir*'s teams are also impeded, suggesting that the binding spells he had aimed at Italicus' teams had rebounded, a possibility of spells often recorded in hagiographical accounts. If Heintz's argument is accepted, then the proposal made above regarding a Christian realignment of supernatural behaviour is invalidated. Nevertheless, Heintz's proposal further strengthens the holy man's position as a potent figure, for Hilarion

excelled in all aspects of those practices that used the supernatural that could possibly be observed in the arena.

Thus it is argued that these hagiographical accounts reveal, in the social settings of their scripts, the use of supernatural methods against, or for, those competing in the Palestinian hippodrome. However, whether these supposed methods – for example, those that were apparently to be used against Italicus' horses and charioteers – included the curse tablets seen in the Syrian evidence cannot be ascertained with certainty. It can be said though, that the symptoms of the immobile charioteer, as well as the alleged malevolent intentions of Italicus' opponents, do imply the use of aggressive methods, of which *defixiones* are a feasible and effective option. Certainly Heintz asserts that the basic facts and protagonists in the account are entirely credible. In addition, Heintz also highlights in his discussion of the episode the context for the intensity of the competition that Jerome portrays, lending further credence to the notion of hagiography as a beneficial source of information. The intensity, Heintz argues, can be understood in the political context of the period.<sup>41</sup> The race is being staged by two magistrates, one from Gaza and the other from a rival city, Maiuma. Thus the competition, even hostility, between these two cities, their magistrates, and their inhabitants who made up the audience would have provided an extremely competitive setting, not only for the races but also for Jerome's portrayal of ascendant Christian power.

Before moving on to discuss the possible motivations behind the inclusion of supernatural arts in chariot racing, it is worth considering a decree of the *Codex Theodosianus* which states:

If anyone should hear of a person who is contaminated with the pollution of magic or if he should apprehend such a person or seize him, he shall drag him out immediately before the public and shall show the enemy of the common safety to the eyes of the courts. But if any charioteer or anyone of any other class of men should attempt to contravene this interdict or should destroy by clandestine punishment a person, even though he is clearly guilty of the evil art of magic, he shall not escape the supreme penalty, since he is subject to a double suspicion, namely, that he has secretly removed a public criminal from the severity of the law and from due investigation, in order that said criminal might not expose his associates in crime, or that perhaps he has killed in his own enemy a more atrocious plan under the pretence of avenging this crime.<sup>42</sup>

This section of the *Codex* is obviously concerned with the public disclosure, labelling and punishment of those individuals who are involved with the *pollutum maleficiorum*. Of special interest is that this section of legislation

also specifically refers to the employment of these arts by charioteers and their accomplices, either directly or through others (we could assume that professional practitioners of supernatural arts and the like would be meant here). Not only does it state that they should not disobey this law, it also adds that they should not ‘destroy’ the person who is guilty of *maleficiae artis*. This insinuates that a charioteer might seek to cover up his own involvement by doing away with the evidence; that is, the individual who used the arts.

The unusual nature of this law does suggest, by its very explicitness, that it reflects some degree of social reality.<sup>43</sup> We see from the decree that people, including charioteers, were involved in using the supernatural arts in racing, with a sincere desire to hinder opponents, such that murder could also be a result. Though not involving murder, Ammianus tells us of the use of *veneficium*<sup>44</sup> by a charioteer in Rome and of the involvement of his alleged upper-class accomplices who ‘were brought to trial on the ground that they were said to be making much of the charioteer Auchenius, and were his accomplices in the use of poisons’. In this case the accused were acquitted.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the acquittal of the accused, both Ammianus’ account and the legislation of the *Codex* make it clear that the activities suspected in the hagiographical passages above, and exemplified in the Syrian curse tablets, were neither socially nor legally condoned. Furthermore, Ammianus in particular, and even Libanius,<sup>46</sup> demonstrates that action was taken by authorities against the perpetrators of, as well as accessories to, the use of performance-inhibiting supernatural methods. Hence the activities for which evidence exists would not have been used lightly by individuals who would have been aware of the possible consequences should their actions or involvement become known.

### Motivations

The image presented by the evidence above is of a popular and competitive sporting event in which curses, supernatural performance enhancers, and apotropaic devices play a distinctive role. While the popularity of a sport is familiar to a modern observer, the involvement of the supernatural seems unfamiliar and even unusual, although ritualistic behaviours in modern sportsmen and women are recognised as a means for attaining or maintaining good fortune.<sup>47</sup> In the fourth century, the additional use of more aggressive methods is not readily understood without some comprehension of the society that fostered it. A few contextual social factors seen as influential in the use of these methods are presented for consideration in the following pages. They include: the agonistic context of the event; financial interests; and the power perception of the charioteer.

The agonistic context inherent in chariot racing itself is probably the most provocative motivation for the adoption of supernatural interference with the event. As Gager writes of the *defixio*:

The inconspicuous lead tablet, inscribed, folded, and buried in the dust beneath the starting gates, symbolized the invisible world of Rome – a world of gods, spirits, and *daimones* on the one side, of aspirations, tensions, and implicit power on the other . . .<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, it has been proposed that the essential feature of circus curses is that they refer to agonistic relationships – relationships of rivalry and competition, which are intensified by the social pressures for status and reputation, made vulnerable through the nature of the competition.<sup>49</sup> Chariot races provided rivalry and competition in an arena of chance. The outcome of a race remained uncertain and victory was not assured. If we consider Malinowski's work, it is precisely in this environment that supernatural assistance is sought. Malinowski proposed that magic could be found wherever the elements of chance and accident, hope and fear were prevalent and not wherever outcomes were certain, reliable and controllable.<sup>50</sup> Taking these elements into consideration, a clear provocation for supernatural activity in the races can be established. Yet, for whom were the elements of competition and chance so threatening that supernatural control was required? The charioteers themselves are the most logical candidates given their immediate experience of these factors. However, an argument can also be made for the susceptibility of others to the pressures of competition and chance; namely, those involved with staging the event, from aristocrat through to supplier, as well as fans of the sport.

Let us consider the charioteers first. Chariot racing was a popular sport, and through victory charioteers stood to gain fame, glory and fortune. The rivalry between competitors would have been intense, and the uncertainty of the race's outcome, as Malinowski argued, could provide adequate motivation to resort to supernatural methods in order to secure victory. That charioteers would utilise such measures was not a strange notion in late antiquity, as was seen in the decree of the *Codex Theodosianus* and in the accounts of Ammianus Marcellinus previously mentioned. Indeed, Cameron noted that 'it came to be generally believed that the charioteer not only consulted magicians but was one himself'.<sup>51</sup>

However, charioteers were not the only ones for whom the contest provided an antagonistic environment (although this assertion has recently been negated by Heintz).<sup>52</sup> Cameron argues that fans are the main source of the curse tablet, and that their use of it is not related to their playing unfairly but to the fact that to them it would have seemed obvious that, in order to keep winning, charioteer X must himself be using magic.<sup>53</sup>

Considering the loyalty fans were known to show for competitors and factions, Cameron's assertion is not surprising. Yet the elements of intense rivalry and chance could also feasibly provide motivation for loyal supporters to try to influence results as much as possible. That fans can become emotionally involved with sporting competitions can be seen on any television sports coverage. That fans could act on their emotions is exemplified in the baseball games of the Pueblo Indians. At the games, serious accusations of witchcraft could be made amongst the (female) supporters aligned with opposing teams, through social and family networks, to explain or excuse results on the field.<sup>54</sup> Although in this particular case people sought to explain results through the accusations of witchcraft, the Pueblo Indians still demonstrate a belief that the supernatural could affect their games. In addition, it was the fans and not the players who were associated with the instigation of this interference.

Parties involved with staging the event could also be motivated by the agonistic environment of chariot races. While the emperor was taking over some of the costs in the fourth century, in the eastern provinces in particular this was not yet the case, and the responsibility for the event, and the prestige associated with staging it, was accepted by the high-ranking members of Graeco-Roman society, *agonothetes*.<sup>55</sup> Young city councillors, for example, sponsored the races and games of the new year's festival,<sup>56</sup> which involved hiring charioteers, horses, veterinarians and so on.<sup>57</sup> Magistrates were generally responsible for the upkeep of teams, individual charioteers and fans.<sup>58</sup> Since the prestige associated with the event was considerable, there would have been tremendous pressure on the sponsor to ensure that the event went smoothly and was impressive, so that the sponsor's honour could be enhanced. Perhaps, however, there were particular pressures brought about by the staging of the event that would have inspired the use of curse tablets against particular participants. For example, it is possible that others could wish to sabotage the successful running of the event sponsored by a social or political rival. Heintz also argues for a more simple motivation – namely, that *agonothetaleditores* would have sought to increase their team's chance of winning.<sup>59</sup> The involvement of these high-profile figures in practices utilising the supernatural does seem possible, and the evidence of the *Codex Theodosianus* (suggesting illicit involvement by people of any social class), Libanius (in his complaints on his students' inattention), and Jerome (portraying the involvement of the *duumvir* and Italicus) must also be considered as strong support.

In addition to these parties, those who supplied equipment for the races may also have had motivation to hinder the success of rival suppliers. Recall, for instance, the clear alignment of horses for a particular stable in one of the Syrian examples presented above. In the eastern provinces of the empire in the fourth century, horses and equipment were still supplied for profit by business men, or *domini factionum*.<sup>60</sup> For these men sabotaging

their opponents' products, and thereby their business, could have bolstered the sales appeal of their own successful horses and chariots in what must have been a competitive marketplace. Certainly having successful horses in a race was paramount for the staging of the event.<sup>61</sup>

Many of the motivations for interference already mentioned in relation to the agonistic context of the races involved financial concerns. One example is the prize money for charioteers. This could have inspired charioteers' involvement in supernatural activities, for not only would honour and glory be received through victory, but also significant amounts in prize money.<sup>62</sup> These combined motives of victory,<sup>63</sup> fame, honour and wealth do not seem like unreasonable motives for the utilisation of supernatural methods aimed at impeding rivals. In addition, there were also the financial incentives of those business people who supplied horses and equipment.

It is here suggested that gambling may also have provided an incentive for the use of curse tablets against racing participants. There is no distinct evidence for gambling in fourth-century Syria and Palestine outside of that related to dice games, and Heintz argues that 'there seems to be no evidence of a link between betting and magic in late Antique chariot racing'.<sup>64</sup> However, it can be argued that the parallels of Syrian tablets to Roman, and the similar enthusiasm for the sport, suggest that gambling may provide a clue for the use of *defixiones* in the hippodrome. This suggestion is largely based on the argument by Toner in his work on leisure in Rome, in which he discusses the extension of gambling in Roman society to include the placing of bets on the races. Toner states: 'Gambling, it is clear, was not just part of the "emotional glue" which brought the crowd together, it also divided them into factions, and thus framed and shaped the context of the event itself.'<sup>65</sup>

Despite the absence of an organised betting industry, betting commonly happened informally amongst individuals. These punters were informed of racing details, such as the name of the horse, pedigree, gate number, the trainer and the charioteer, through the race cards and placards which advertised horses and their drivers at the circus. However, these details were only secondary concerns to the faction colours. As there were no bookmakers, the nature of the gambling was simple and readily practicable, secured through betting on teams rather than on individuals or horses. This could be further simplified by narrowing the stakes to two parties by joining the smaller teams with the major players (such that the blue and red were joined against the green and white).<sup>66</sup>

As noted, Toner's argument is based on his study of Rome, but it does seem possible that gambling existed in other provinces.<sup>67</sup> The races, as already mentioned, were extremely popular and loyalty to particular teams strong. In addition, we also know that gambling was widespread throughout the Graeco-Roman world. John Chrysostom, for instance, comments on the gaming tables in Syria.<sup>68</sup>

The characteristic preoccupation of the curse tablets with several riders and horses, often clearly aligned with particular teams, was a characteristic not just of Syrian tablets but also those of North Africa and Rome.<sup>69</sup> This characteristic parallels the placing of bets on teams rather than on individual racers or races. Hence it does seem possible that the use of curse tablets could well be linked to the practice of gambling on the events. The situation may have differed in Antioch, however, where it is alleged that factions were not apparent until the late fifth century.<sup>70</sup>

If this assertion is correct and individuals were placing money on the races, there would be inevitable concern with race results. Although Toner argues that betting did not involve high stakes and that the law did not allow for the collection of debts, he does propose that it was related to honour and status, and hence that a lot more than money was associated with winning.<sup>71</sup> Gambling for money and honour could provide a motive for individuals to seek to hinder the event, a practice that goes beyond the basic notion of sport's fanaticism. Introducing the element of gambling into the mix could also help to explain why the use of supernatural aids would concern members of the public, such that they would call the authorities or prosecute when suspicious of foul play. It may well have been their own money and reputation which were on the line, not just that of their teams.

The final influence proposed here involves community perceptions of charioteers. It is of special interest that in the *Codex Theodosianus* and Ammianus' history charioteers are associated with condemned supernatural activities. While the motivations already discussed may have played a significant role in this association, it is here suggested that there is a social perception of a charioteer's power that aligns him with supernatural malpractice. Thus we are slightly realigning and reassessing the idea, contained for example in Cameron's argument mentioned on p. 47, that fans used curses against charioteers as they would have assumed the latter to undertake similar actions.

The charioteer was incredibly popular; indeed he has been likened by scholars to the holy man. This was a man of physical strength and ability, whose victory on the racecourse was aligned with imperial victory.<sup>72</sup> Is it possible that the power of the charioteer, in public perception, was extended to include the supernatural? Perhaps his profile placed him beyond a level of perceived normality. Consider, for instance, that the charioteer's victory was equated with the emperor's victory. The emperor in the Christian fourth century was closely aligned with the divine and placed above the rest of the empire's residents. Was the association of the charioteer's victory with a victory for the emperor also an acknowledgement of the former's exceptional power?

It is proposed here that an assignment of supernatural power to the charioteer can be understood through consideration of envy in the Graeco-Roman world. The notion of limited good which pervaded late-Roman

thought, and which appears throughout this study, conceived of all fortune as limited. That meant for every one person who succeeded, another failed. This win–lose scenario could and would provoke envy.<sup>73</sup> Envy in this world-view could bring on misfortune – indeed it was expected to do so.

If the charioteer and his fortunes are introduced into this framework of thought, it follows that the skill and success of the charioteer would arouse envy.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, considering not just the nature of the game, but also the notion of limited good, continuous victory for one competitor would mean continuous loss for another. This imbalanced amount of success would cause envy. If a high-profile charioteer is incurring great envy then he should, by the reasoning of envy, suffer some misfortune. However, what if he does not? It is possible that in public perception the charioteer's victory and exemption from misfortune would suggest that he held exceptional apotropaic powers. In addition, this power to repel misfortune (or to challenge the perceived 'rules' of nature) could be extended to include an understanding that the charioteer was imbued with particular power, strength, or knowledge that enabled him to manipulate supernatural forces. That is, the charioteer's invulnerability to the natural consequences of envy excluded him from the norm and accredited him with power both deviant (in terms of curses, for example) and exalted (in terms of supra-human imperial status).

Thus the very nature of the occupation, its popularity and the high profile of its victors (which even included statues in cities), could all serve to imbue the charioteer with supernatural strength. This in turn would mean not only that the charioteer could use supernatural methods such as *defixiones*, but also that in popular perception *defixiones* would be seen as the most appropriate method of inhibiting him. That is, supernatural power was required to fight supernatural power.

## Conclusion

The powers sought and repelled in the arena were only viable within a social context or framework that granted their existence and efficacy. The desired effect of *defixiones*, for example, would have been the successful invocation of the supernatural powers and their consequent ability to hinder the opposition. It is possible that, because the use of the tablets was known amongst the circus and wider community, the direction of them against the opposition was expected and could be used as a form of intimidation or method for unsettling rivals. However, this reason would underscore the point that within their fourth-century contexts these methods were seen as effective or they would not have been able to intimidate or concern those who were their targets. Thus, the successful invocation of the other-worldly forces of god(s), angels, *daimones* and the spirits of the untimely or violently dead,

would grant the instigator a considerable amount of power and a definite unfair advantage in the competition of the racecourse.

This chapter, then, has presented and discussed the forum for supernatural activities in the racing world of fourth-century Syria and Palestine. Despite scanty evidence it has been argued that these activities were apparent in this period and in these regions, and that their use, though acknowledged, was not condoned. As possible and plausible social influences on the use of these methods several issues were proposed: firstly, the agonistic context of the competition; secondly, the financial concerns of those involved, supporting, or viewing the event; and thirdly, the social perceptions of power assigned to the charioteer. Furthermore, included in these suppositions was an incorporation of the social constructs of honour and envy and the association of these with the provocations of competition, money and power.

## SUPERNATURAL SABOTAGE

### *Ensuring a successful livelihood*

Concern for the success and survival of a business, farm or career, is a universal constant. In the fourth century this livelihood anxiety is demonstrated, or epitomised, in the curse tablets and so-called sorcery accusations of the period, the latter having already received considerable attention both from late antique authors and modern scholars.<sup>1</sup> The Palestinian and Syrian evidence for these practices is varied and, while sparse in material such as curse tablets, is comparatively abundant in evidence for accusations in the period. As all these forms of evidence revolve predominantly around people's livelihoods and career concerns, they are all considered within this chapter. However, the evident disparity between the curses and hagiographical accounts on the one hand, and the sorcery accusations on the other, in both form and apparent socio-economic context, lends itself to a natural separation in the consideration of the evidence. Hence the two strands will be considered independently. The extant curse tablets and relevant hagiographical material will be considered in the first part of the chapter, to be followed by a discussion of the trials for high treason which culminated in accusations of *γοητεία*.

Social, economic and political factors can be seen as variably influential in the extant evidence, and it will be proposed in the course of the respective discussions that these elements, in conjunction with the Mediterranean understanding of limited good and the associated notion of envy, can be seen as contributing factors in the use, alleged or real, of enhancing or inhibiting supernatural practices.

### Curses and invocations

Curse tablets and the hagiographical accounts of Theodoret are the main sources of evidence in the following section. The material for Syria and Palestine is presented separately, but both regions are considered together in the discussion that follows. It is proposed during the course of the analysis that the agonistic social and economic context, coupled with the belief system

incorporating limited good, envy and honour are influential factors in people's inclusion of the supernatural in matters concerning livelihood.

### *Syria*

The Syrian evidence provided by John Chrysostom illustrates that some business people would take advantage of supernatural measures to ensure their own commercial viability.<sup>2</sup> In addition, people could seek out seers to find money that they had misplaced.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to these activities, and largely concerned with individuals' own fortunes, two Antiochene curses demonstrate that people's ambitions for success were not always so simply directed. In a similar vein to the *defixiones* discussed in the previous chapter, these extant tablets seek to achieve individual aims through hindering the progress of another party.

The first example comes in the form of two curse tablets which had been deposited in a well at the House of the Calendar at Daphne, a wealthy suburb of Antioch. Both tablets are aimed at a greengrocer named Babylas.<sup>4</sup> The two curses invoke Iao and Seth, as well as other daimones, and provide them with precise details on how to identify (genealogy) and locate (topography) their target, Babylas. They mention, for example, 'the three different aliases the shopkeeper's mother assumed, as well as the city block and even the precise location on a colonnaded street of his vegetable stall'.<sup>5</sup> In the familiar style of *defixiones* the protagonist(s) wishes for Babylas to be bound, chilled and sunk for his impiety and lawlessness, adding to this wish a hope of inflicting harm not upon him alone but also on his livestock, as well as his household.<sup>6</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether the same person or persons might have been responsible for both curses aimed at Babylas. The specific Jewish elements of only one of the tablets could suggest that the differing religious alignments of the tablets reflect the respective religious affiliations of the protagonists.<sup>7</sup> However, given the eclectic manner of many curses and the fact that we know that people would freely appeal to divinities not prescribed by their own religious doctrines if they were believed potent, it is not possible to make such an assertion confidently.<sup>8</sup>

The motive for these two attacks on Babylas is also unclear. We know only that he is a greengrocer with a stall on a colonnaded street, and that his property details (home and livestock) were known to others. Indeed, even his mother's details appear to have been well known. According to one tablet Babylas had acted impiously and lawlessly. Yet if he had, we are not enlightened as to how. This may simply reflect the feelings of Babylas' enemy and/or the formulaic rhetoric of *defixiones*. It is likely, as Heintz argues, that 'the curse tablets aimed at Babylas were commissioned by one of his fellow, and rival, greengrocers', as bickering and even factions were known to develop amongst shopkeepers and craftsmen.<sup>9</sup> While the bickering,

or even general business rivalry, may have provoked the use of *defixiones* against Babyllas, he may perhaps have caused some greater offence or posed a more significant threat, related or unrelated to his business activities. Nevertheless the identification and cursing of Babyllas' occupation and property suggest that financial sabotage was the intention of both tablets. They demonstrate the serious and intense ambitions of the attack and, if, as seems likely, they were instigated by a rival or rivals, they illustrate a business environment in which potentially severe competitive measures were used.

The literary Syrian evidence does not represent the same aggressive form of commercial competition. On the contrary, Theodoret of Cyrrihus' accounts are more concerned with the supernatural protection of livelihood. The reports are presented in a hagiographical context and hence the material must be considered in light of its innate aim of promoting the figure of the holy person. Yet despite the narrative aims it is possible to gauge in the accounts the concerns, beliefs and behaviours of the hagiographer's audience.<sup>10</sup>

The first of the two accounts that interest us tells of a locust threat to the land and income of a small farmer and his family. The threatened farmer appeals to the holy man, Aphrahat, for assistance. The latter places his hand over some water and asks God 'to fill the water with divine power'.<sup>11</sup> The farmer, following instructions, sprinkles the blessed water around the perimeter of his property, and this provides an invincible defence for the fields. The problematic locusts thus, though 'crawling or flying like armies', were unable to breach the barrier and 'retreated backwards in fear at the blessing placed upon it'.<sup>12</sup>

Theodoret here intended to communicate to his audience the splendour and power of Aphrahat and his God, utilising strong biblical allusions in the narrative in order to do so.<sup>13</sup> Despite these factors, it is plausible that the scenario (that is, locusts) was a familiar one to sections of Theodoret's audience. It is not just the scenario, however, that is conceivable but also the farmer's application for supernatural assistance. The petitioner is an independent farmer and the locusts provide a very real threat. Given a world in which the supernatural was interwoven in so many aspects of daily life, it is hardly surprising that the farmer would appeal for supernatural assistance in situations which threaten his livelihood and for which no tangible solution readily presents itself. Such speculation is supported by a provision in the *Codex Theodosianus*, which permits the use of 'assistance devices' for the well-being of crops. Section 9.16.3 states:

But remedies sought for human bodies shall not be involved in criminal accusation, nor the assistance that is innocently employed in rural districts in order that rains may not be feared nor the ripe grape harvests or that the harvests may not be shattered by the stones of ruinous hail, since by such devices no person's safety or

reputation is injured, but by their action they bring about that divine gifts and the labors of men are not destroyed.<sup>14</sup>

In another of Theodoret's accounts he writes of a non-Christian landlord of a village, Letoius, pre-eminent in the council of Antioch, who demanded considerable tithes from the village.<sup>15</sup> The holy man, Maësymas, acted as the mediator and on behalf of the community requested kindness and leniency from the landlord, though unsuccessfully.<sup>16</sup> When the latter refused the holy man's application he found that the wheels of his carriage would not move because Maësymas was 'imprecating a curse' for which 'it was right to conciliate him'. As a consequence the socially powerful Letoius fell prostrate at the holy man's feet and 'begged him to relax his anger'. Upon this supplication, the chariot wheels were freed from their 'invisible bonds'.<sup>17</sup> This depiction is of interest for its inversion of the typical positions of power by deeming the powerful figure of Letoius unable to proceed because of the superior potency of the holy man. Thus Maësymas is placed in a position of dominance by the hagiographer. In this way the person with social authority ironically also becomes the appellant, not just to the ascendancy of the holy man but also to the community that the latter represents.

Thus from Syria we see examples of curses against a greengrocer, quite possibly instigated by his competition, and we also see the supernatural agency of the holy man benefiting the livelihood of rural residents. The Palestinian evidence that follows propels us back to the medium of the curse tablet and the urban setting, while also directing the discussion towards the issue of gender and the commercial world.

### *Palestine*

Palestine provides two extant published fourth-century curse tablets. While one is well preserved and the inscription extensive, the other is considerably fragmented and does not permit too much discussion beyond that which relates to its specifically litigious setting. Nevertheless both provide further insight into the commercial environment of the fourth century, as their immediate intentions differ to those of the *defixiones* presented above.

Deposited in a well in Beth Shean in Galilee was a curse tablet commissioned (perhaps, though unlikely, also inscribed and even placed by) a Christian woman named Pancharia.<sup>18</sup> With this *defixio* Pancharia hoped to inhibit the investigations of three individuals who were to have access to her accounts. The subject of the curse is of considerable interest for it presents an aspect of fourth-century commercial life not yet seen in the evidence – namely, the dread of auditors. The *defixio*, through various ritual words and signs, and the invocation of both Semitic and Egyptian daimonic entities, seeks to bind the physical and psychological capacities of one man

and two women.<sup>19</sup> The sections of the spell from which it is possible to gauge Pancharia's intentions read as follows:

Lord angels, bind, bind fast the tendons and the limbs and the thought and the mind and the intention of Sarmation, to whom Oursa gave birth, and Valent[ia], to whom Eva gave birth, and Saramannas, to whom Eusebis gave birth – muzzle them and blind them and silence them and make them dumb . . . blind in the presence of P[ancharia] to whom Thekla gave birth.

Lord angels, muzzle and subject and render subservient and bind and slave and restrain and tie up Sarmation, to whom Oursa gave birth, and Val[entia], to whom Eva gave birth, and Saramannas, to whom Eusebis gave birth, in the presence of Pancharia, to whom Thekla gave birth, choking them, tying up their thoughts, their mind, their hearts, their intention, lest they inquire further after an account or a calculation or anything else . . . from Pancharia, but (let) merciful fortune (come to) Pancharia throughout (her) life.<sup>20</sup>

This text is intriguing, for it raises numerous questions about Pancharia's activities. Was Pancharia possibly a shopkeeper in the agora? Perhaps she was a landowner? What was she concerned about? The terms of the text certainly suggest that Pancharia had something to fear and probably also had something to hide. It is not possible to determine Pancharia's occupation and fears. Nevertheless, her concerns and the financial association with her three targets do enable some speculation. For instance, perhaps she was a wealthy woman who had attracted an imperial audit. It is possible that Pancharia was a shopkeeper whose financial affairs were being reviewed for reasons of loans or taxation. Alternatively she may have been involved with lending money, as this occupation required lenders to show their accounts. Indeed in the Roman empire at various times it seems women could be involved in moneylending, and all bookkeepers (male or female) were required to show their accounts in times of litigation.<sup>21</sup> Possibly Pancharia was seeking to protect her husband's affairs, although one would suspect mention of him, if this were the case. If these scenarios do reflect the context of the tablet, then the *defixio* would raise some interesting points regarding the financial involvement of women in fourth-century Palestinian society.

On the other hand, having raised these various scenarios, it is worth returning to the text and noting the degree of knowledge Pancharia has of her auditors. Pancharia not only knows the names of those concerned, she also knows the vital names of their mothers. While this information is beneficial and used in most curses,<sup>22</sup> acquiring these details cannot have been easy

when targeting people relatively unknown to the curse's instigator. This does suggest some degree of familiarity between the parties concerned. Furthermore, two of the targets are females. Perhaps auditors could be female in these periods, but it seems highly unlikely that women would have held such official roles within the imperial administration. Although the employment of women for commercial auditing may have occurred, it does not seem likely given the social and educational expectations of women at the time.<sup>23</sup> Hence it is worth considering Youtie and Bonner's proposal that the text demonstrates that Pancharia 'fears' those whom she targets in the curse:

apparently because she has had in her hands, and probably mis-managed or lost, certain property for which they may demand an accounting. Whether a loan, a partnership, or an inheritance is concerned does not appear. The circumstance that more women than men are involved in the quarrel may make the third of these possibilities more probable than the others.<sup>24</sup>

Although only speculative scenarios rather than concrete propositions have been offered to contextualise the tablets, it is clear that there are several potential settings able to frame this curse. All of these possibilities, however, revolve around key, critical aspects of the tablet's inscription. Firstly, Pancharia is involved in financial matters which require investigation. Furthermore, her fear of exposure as a result of an investigation into her accounts suggests that she is in no way ignorant of the financial affairs about which the interested parties seek information. Finally, the gender of the protagonist, Pancharia, is of interest because she is utilising an aggressive supernatural method to protect herself from an unwanted outcome: 'lest they inquire further after an account or a calculation'. Thus, she is a woman with knowledge of finances, a fear of retribution or exposure, and the capability to utilise supernatural means to attain her ends.

Another Palestinian tablet was found in a room in a house also in Nysa-Skythopolis (Beth-Shean).<sup>25</sup> The tablet provides scanty indications of its concerns, making mention of a lawsuit and a creditor. The text includes angels' names and ritual signs; however, most of the tablet's text is said to be incomprehensible. The curse seems to invoke the *κυρι<οι> αγγι<οι> θεοι* to make a man named Judas, and possibly also others, lose a lawsuit. It also makes mention of an Onias who was a party to the lawsuit.<sup>26</sup> Though there is little information provided by the fragmentary text, we do know of the existence of *defixiones* related to lawsuits from various other regions and periods. Indeed they make up the second largest subgroup of published tablets.<sup>27</sup> It has been proposed that the use of curse tablets against opponents in litigation was in fact a regular feature of the legal process in the Graeco-Roman world and that, commissioned by prospective defendants, they were deployed in the preliminary phase of the preparations for an anticipated

trial.<sup>28</sup> Thus it is likely that this *defixio* against Judas was formulated and deposited in a similar litigious context.

These two Palestinian tablets, Pancharia's and that involving a lawsuit, are quite distinct in intention though similar in motive as both are primarily concerned with the defence or protection of the instigators from the potentially damaging actions of others. Pancharia's curse is especially interesting for the questions it raises regarding female commercial interests and occupations, though unfortunately it does not easily answer them. In the following pages these tablets are discussed, along with the Syrian evidence, and possible motivations for the inclusion of the supernatural in livelihood are proposed.

### Discussion

Firstly, the discussion addresses the *defixiones* previously presented. Heintz argues that we see in the commercial curses, in particular the two Babylas examples from Syria, a method for enhancing economic and social success. In his view these spells must be seen within the social systems of late antique Antioch and within a larger, integrated system of ritual power. The magician or supernatural specialist could assist the business person by providing powerful talismans designed to improve trade by attracting customers.<sup>29</sup> Hence, for Heintz, these curses represent one aspect of a complete supernatural package that could be supplied to business clients and included protective methods aimed both at the evil eye<sup>30</sup> and at those binding spells directed against individuals by competitors.<sup>31</sup> While Heintz sees supernatural activity as a regular part of business, the limited extant number of *defixiones* (due to the hazards of time, trade and locational limitations on excavations) do not allow for an assertion of such prominent use in fourth-century Syria or Palestine.

Heintz's ideas convincingly portray an aspect of the social system within which curses, in particular, operated; they are, however, limited to the context of power and economic success. It is here proposed that other aspects of social belief and behaviour, such as the agonistic context as well as the notion of limited good, can also be seen as influential in the use of the supernatural practices presented above.

The agonistic nature of social relationships can be seen to be influential in the case of *defixiones*.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the previous chapter on practices in the hippodrome discussed not only the competitive and agonistic character of Palestinian and Syrian society in this period but also how this setting could provoke people to make use of *defixiones*. Such agonistic characteristics are also identifiable in relation to the material evidence presented above.

In a commercial environment the possibility that others were threatening the success of a business would have been a consistent menace and, when intensified by the concept of limited good, could indeed provide provocation for the use of a curse against a rival. It is here proposed that the competitive

context was intensified due to the notion of limited good. As this prevalent belief decrees that all fortune is limited,<sup>33</sup> the deficiencies of one business could be seen as the result of the apparent success of another; after all, one person's gain is another person's loss. Hence, only the impairment of the successful business could rectify the balance and eradicate the failing business's loss, supernatural means providing one option for ensuring this.

The setting of a litigation process is not only competitive and agonistic, it also culminates in a definite win or loss. Thus, when desiring to sway the laws of probability in one's favour, and push the balance of the judicial scales, the supernatural provided an option not only for assistance but also some assurance in an arena of uncertainty.

Finally, the possibility of an investigation into accounts also implies an uncertain and threatening situation which could provoke the use of extraordinary means. Consider especially the possible social, legal, or financial ramifications of faults uncovered in any such investigation.

A further consideration for the context of these aggressive supernatural attacks relates to social behaviour and perception. Honour and shame, for instance, were significant influences on behaviour in the Graeco-Roman world. Honour was assigned through the perceptions of the community and affected individual identity, as well as the image of the family unity.<sup>34</sup> Avoidance of shame, and the loss of individual and family honour that would result, could arguably provide considerable inducement for resorting to aggressive supernatural means to influence, or alter, an unfavourable situation. Thus it is possible that Pancharia feared not only the retribution of the three individuals coming to see her books but also the social shame that could result from any discovery of fraudulence. Yet what of the probable consequences were the use of the *defixio* to be discovered? If Heintz's proposal is correct and the curses form part of general business practice, then no shame would be associated with using such aggressive supernatural tactics. On the other hand, it was shown in the previous chapter that the use of curses against charioteering teams was not generally viewed favourably by the wider community, even if their utilisation was acknowledged. So why would such a measure be condoned when it directly affected livelihood? It can be argued, then, that the use of *defixiones* against ordinary people (that is, not charioteers) might also have been seen as unacceptable behaviour. Consider as well a phrase in the *Codex Theodosianus* decree cited above in which actions or devices by which 'no person's safety or reputation is injured' are accepted. Using a *defixio* to harm someone's business – that is, sabotaging their livelihood – could injure an individual's reputation and security considerably. Therefore, although condemnation or condonation of the use of aggressive spells is not easy to ascertain in this context, it is quite possible that a negative association existed, and that by using a *defixio* Pancharia may have been risking considerable shame should her action be uncovered (although its existence in the well must have provided a reduced

risk of discovery). If such an argument is accepted, then the intensity of the provocation that would lead an individual to risk the shame of being discovered using a *defixio* must have been significant.

One final point concerning Pancharia's curse tablet. This *defixio* is especially curious for the gender of its caster. In most cases it is male names that are found on *defixiones*,<sup>35</sup> so the involvement of a woman is notable. It could be that Pancharia is involved in a social and financial environment that allows her to utilise the practices considered suitable to the context. Alternatively, it is proposed that perhaps her use of the aggressive supernatural method reflects Pancharia's particular social position; namely, that she is viewed as socially (and financially) powerful and therefore able to trespass into a predominantly male domain. However, it is also conceivable that Pancharia could simply have used this method because the penalty and public humiliation of being found guilty of corrupting or mismanaging the books would be unbearable enough to warrant severe avoidance procedures.

It has been suggested here that various social provocations could have led people to utilise supernatural methods, particularly to curse those believed to be a threat. This idea of using the supernatural in an agonistic setting is now expanded to include supernatural practices distinct from *defixiones*. Examples of this are well demonstrated in Theodoret's two hagiographical accounts introduced on pp. 55–6. In the hagiographical account portraying Maësymas as a mediator, an agonistic setting is also evident. Pressures existed for rural communities and farmers not only to survive but also to pay the tithes demanded by the empire to local figures.<sup>36</sup> The additional demands of the landlord aggravated an already stressful situation. Hence a supernatural tool, the holy man, is pitted against a significant and powerful threat, the landlord.

As already discussed (p. 56), in this instance traditional positions of authority and status are inverted such that the landlord Letoius finds himself in a subservient role. In this display of power the holy man shows remarkable parallels with the idea put forward by Smith regarding Jesus Christ in the Gospels: 'For the authors of the gospels, since Jesus controlled spirits, he also controlled men.'<sup>37</sup> In this way Maësymas controlled the socially and economically powerful Letoius through his ability to command an extraordinary, and supernatural, activity. As a consequence the normal social roles of power were inverted and the economically and politically weak holy man was propelled into the position of control and authority.

It is noteworthy that it is a curse which transforms an unfair and stressful situation into a favourable one for the holy man and the people he represents.<sup>38</sup> What is more, it is a curse utilised in an agonistic context. In this case, though, no tablet was required since the holy man enabled the action without the need for traditional rituals, producing the same 'binding' result. Perhaps it is this setting that provoked such aggressive and unusual behaviour from the holy man. Such activity deviates from the standard

hagiographical depiction of the holy figure as a protector through defensive measures (recall for instance the protective measures of the holy man Hilarion in the previous chapter, although note also Heintz's divergent interpretation of his method). Furthermore this act of cursing is, because of its motive, portrayed as a positive action. That this use of supernatural power against an individual weak in the arena of the preternatural could present the holy man favourably does suggest that a socially acceptable context for cursing existed – a point reinforced if Heintz's interpretation of Hilarion's influences in the hippodrome is also taken into account.<sup>39</sup> In the case of Maësymas the curse is effectively rendered positive because of the negative behaviour of the landlord. Furthermore, by using a curse the holy man is excelling in a traditional method and therewith the hagiographer utilises a discourse of supernatural practice understood by his audience, thus presenting the holy man as supreme.

The examples discussed above all involve the use of assertive supernatural activities in order to achieve some form of 'equity' within agonistic contexts. The approach of potentially damaging locusts would also have provided considerable anguish for a small farmer. However, there is no human rival against which the farmer is pitched; there is no individual or individuals who can be cursed in order to bring about some form of perceived 'equity' to the protagonist. The threat here is environmental; it is out of the control of any human. How would locusts be cursed? Although a threat to livelihood, these pests are not a constant source of rivalry for business in a persistently volatile and competitive marketplace. Thus in this case a protective measure is taken in order to ensure that the non-human threat is rendered ineffective and innocuous. Of interest are the strong parallels between the sprinkled, blessed water and baptism. The latter served not only as an initiation ritual for those entering the Christian faith but also as a cleansing and apotropaic ritual that protected the initiate from evil spirits which could bring misfortune.<sup>40</sup> Thus the blessed water around the field was protecting it from the misfortune of a natural, yet not human, calamity which retreated through 'fear of the blessing'. The extreme threat to the farmer's livelihood still provoked him to seek supernatural assistance, and this inhuman, and virtually infallible foe required that apotropaic protection for supernatural misfortune be assigned it. Dealing with the inhuman was like dealing with the malevolent supernatural.

The material and hagiographical evidence discussed above are products of a social context and belief system within which people were able to seek supernatural assistance for either the benefit or detriment of others. Such daimonic, or divine, assistance could be sought as a remedial response to a competitive and agonistic environment in which livelihood and even identity were under threat and could be detrimentally, perhaps even irreversibly, affected.

### The competitive career: surviving accusations

Also intricately linked with people's livelihoods were the so-called 'sorcery' accusations which marked periods of the fourth century in both Palestine and Syria. These accusations have been relatively well treated by scholars. Indeed they seem to be the most popular, and often only, aspect of fourth-century supernatural activity that many scholars take into consideration.<sup>41</sup> Their popularity may to a large degree be associated with the disturbing and dramatic portrayals of the subsequent trials in Ammianus Marcellinus' history,<sup>42</sup> as well as the reports in Libanius' writings<sup>43</sup> and the work of the historian Zosimus.<sup>44</sup> These portrayals have led many scholars to speculate that the phenomenon was chronologically restricted and hence reflects severe social change and uncertainty in the given period. An example is the now-dated argument that proposed 'that the fourth century was darkened by the most degrading of superstitions in a manner that can only be compared to the benighted condition of western Europe in the later Middle Ages'.<sup>45</sup>

Although the recording of such grim accusations and trials is especially noted in the fourth century, it should be acknowledged that the events of the century in general are especially well documented relative to any other period of Graeco-Roman history. Furthermore, the reports of so-called sorcery accusations occurring in the fourth century reflect the concerns and writing styles of contemporary authors, both of which would change over the following centuries.<sup>46</sup> Thus the inclusion by antique authors of the accusations and trials does not necessarily reflect an increase, or isolated occurrence of them; rather it reflects the individual motivations of the authors as well as the survival of their particular works.

Consideration must also be given to the religious persuasions of Ammianus, Libanius, and Zosimus,<sup>47</sup> as they were adherents of the traditional Graeco-Roman religions, the customary practices and beliefs of which were being increasingly condemned. Thus formerly accepted activities such as the consulting of soothsayers, astrologers and diviners became, during the course of the century, serious crimes punishable by death.<sup>48</sup> That these laws could be, and were, also enforced in the period is amply demonstrated in the treason trials, which will be addressed later, as well as in the personal recollections of Libanius, who was forced to disguise his own correspondence with soothsayers. In sum, it must be noted that the extant impression of the trials and accusations presented for discussion is largely determined by the accounts of men whose traditional belief structures were being gradually undermined and condemned, and that possible and related grievances may shade their reports to varying degrees.

Before progressing to the trials and accusations it will be apparent that at the core of all the excitement is the charge of high treason which is levelled at people using divination in order to ascertain the emperor's successor.

Although divination is not included within the parameters of the study,<sup>49</sup> it is deemed necessary to include this evidence in this instance because the charges of treason through divination create scenarios of fear and manipulation into which other practices involving the supernatural are drawn.

### *Syria*

When Valentinian had become successor to the imperial throne and was on his way to Constantinople he became ill, 'which excited his bad-tempered nature to even greater cruelty and fits of insanity, so that he falsely attributed his sickness to some witchcraft contrived by Julian's friends'.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Zosimus records that Valentinian did level accusations against a few famous people, but that these were prudently dismissed by Salustius, the praetorian prefect.

This is not an isolated occurrence of blame and accusation. It seems that throughout the fourth century there were spates of treason trials in which guilty and innocent alike were charged and punished. The accounts that Ammianus, in particular, provides are shaded by an alarming representation of terror. Although not relating to either Syria or Palestine, the following comment by Ammianus encapsulates the apparent mood of many throughout the events and throughout the empire:

For if anyone consulted a soothsayer about the squeaking of a shrew mouse, the meeting with a weasel on the way, or any like portent, or used some old wife's charm to relieve pain (a thing which even medical authority allows), he was indicted (from what source he could not guess), was hauled into court, and suffered death as the penalty.<sup>51</sup>

During the reign of Gallus in 354 a certain Serenianus was tried for treason in Antioch. Ammianus tells us that he had 'enchanted by forbidden arts' a cap and sent it off with a friend of his to a prophetic shrine to find out through omens whether he would gain the imperial power he wanted. People thought there was no way that he could be acquitted of the charge, yet he was freed 'almost without any strong public protest'.<sup>52</sup> Thus a man allegedly capable of enchanting his clothing and seeking information on his chance as successor to the throne was not condemned.

Serenianus' case, however, was not to be the last that Antioch saw, and his acquittal did not set a precedent. In the winter war-break of 371/2, the emperor Valens took up residency in Antioch. While he was there two men, Palladius (hired as a poisoner, *veneficum*) and Heliodorus (*fatorum per genituras interpretem*), were accused of having assisted a certain Procopius in his attempt to kill the *comes rei privatae*, Fortunatianus. These two were handed over to the court in order that they might tell what they

knew of the matter. However, instead of speaking about this affair Palladius said 'he would tell of other things more important and fearful, which had already been plotted with great preparations and unless foresight were used would upset the whole state'.<sup>53</sup> Thus he alleged that the ex-governor Fidustus, as well as Pergamius and Irenaeus, had by detestable predictions (*detestandis praesagiis*) learned the name of Valens' successor. Fidustus confessed that he had done what was alleged, along with Hilarius and Patricius (*vaticinandi peritis*).<sup>54</sup> Under torture he also admitted that he believed the predicted successor, Theodorus, had attained this information himself from Euserius (*virum praestabilem scientia litterarum*).<sup>55</sup> After the latter had been imprisoned and Valens informed, a stream of accusations and arrests was instigated, as 'Valens' monstrous savagery spread everywhere like a fiercely blazing torch, and was increased by the base flattery of many men'.<sup>56</sup> Theodorus was to be brought back from Constantinople and, while he was being fetched, 'as the result of sundry preliminary trials, which were carried on day and night', a number of men of high rank and birth were brought to Antioch from various places.<sup>57</sup> The prisons and dungeons were filled to overflowing and even private houses contained prisoners in irons, all of whom feared for themselves and their families.<sup>58</sup>

That Valens was suspicious of people trying to overthrow and kill him is, according to Ammianus, understandable given that the emperor had experienced many attempts on his life:<sup>59</sup>

But it was inexcusable that, with despotic anger, he was swift to assail with malicious persecution guilty and innocent under one and the same law, making no distinction in their desserts; so that while there was still doubt about the crime, the emperor had made up his mind about the penalty, and some learned that they had been condemned to death before knowing that they were under suspicion.<sup>60</sup>

Ammianus criticises the emperor for being at the mercy of others and being influenced by 'their bloodthirsty flatteries'.<sup>61</sup> Both parties, he implies, were greedy and profiting from these acts. The emperor profited from people's incarceration (or extermination) through the confiscation of their property for his own treasury. Those who survived their condemnation had to resort to beggary.<sup>62</sup> This confiscation was completely legal. The *Codex Theodosianus* stipulates that the rules of inheritance should be disregarded in those instances in which a person is condemned for crimes of high treason or *magicae*, and that the property in such instances should go to the emperor instead.<sup>63</sup>

Ammianus states that many innocent people were accused and found guilty and, though the judges attempted to follow the law, they were controlled by the emperor.<sup>64</sup> While providing what he calls a brief and summary

account of the affair, Ammianus mentions many people of varied social standing and occupation who were accused (particularly in relation to the divination treason), then tortured for further information and names, and ultimately found guilty and sentenced to death or exile.<sup>65</sup> While Ammianus mentions that people of all backgrounds were involved, he only tells us of the educated and wealthy who were accused, and Zosimus writes that the emperor suspected and accused 'all the most celebrated philosophers and men of letters as well as various honoured men at court'.<sup>66</sup>

There was also apparent suspicion of the validity of confessions and accusations gained through torture. Consider, for instance, Ammianus' account of Alypius, the retired vice-governor of Britain, who was accused with his son Hierocles of being guilty of 'magic' (*veneficus*), and was consequently tortured in order to give the testimony people wished to hear.<sup>67</sup>

Torture was not, however, the only information-extraction tool; bribery also seems to have played a role. Heliodorus, 'that hellish contriver with Palladius of all evils', was enticed by kindness, food and money for concubines, and as chamberlain displayed 'the warrants of the Father of his People, which were to be a cause of grief to many'.<sup>68</sup> Heliodorus abused his power and the privilege of his position as an informant, striking fear into people, and accusing various individuals, such as the consuls Eusebius and Hypatius, of seeking information about the sovereignty.<sup>69</sup>

However, as the charges and trials spread across the empire, the limits of dubious behaviour went beyond torture and bribery. We are told that:

in order that even wives should have no time to weep over the misfortunes of their husbands, men were immediately sent to put the seal on the houses, and during the examination of the furniture of the householder who had been condemned, to introduce privy old-wives' incantations or unbecoming love-potions, contrived for the ruin of innocent people. And when these were read in a court where there was no law or scruple or justice to distinguish truth from falsehood, without opportunity for defence young and old without discrimination were robbed of their goods and, although they were found stained by no fault, after being maimed in all their limbs were carried off in litters to execution.<sup>70</sup>

According to Ammianus, people were framed in a period when the possession of 'privy old-wives incantations' and 'love-potions' was a serious offence. Zosimus sums it up: 'Anarchy was so widespread that informers and the mob simply broke into homes at random, looted what property they found and handed over the people to their appointed executioners without any trial.'<sup>71</sup>

Amongst this record of suspect allegations and abuses, there were some who, despite incriminating evidence, were acquitted of all charges. A classic example relates to the tribune Numerius, who was convicted

on his own confession of having dared to cut open the womb of a living woman and take out her unripe offspring, in order to evoke the ghosts of the dead and consult them about a change of rulers; yet Valens, who looked on him with the eye of an intimate friend, in spite of the murmurs of the whole Senate gave orders that he should escape unpunished, and retain his life, his enviable wealth, and his military rank unimpaired.<sup>72</sup>

Considering the perceived injustices and the frenzy of the persecutors, it is hardly surprising that a mass burning of books ensued. Libraries, which had been pronounced as unlawful, were gathered and burnt under the eyes of judges,<sup>73</sup> while other people, believing that evidence could be planted and fearing incrimination, elected to destroy their entire libraries.<sup>74</sup> The fear associated with possessing potentially incriminating evidence is exemplified by John Chrysostom who tells of an incident in his youth when he and a friend recovered a book from the river. They were disconcerted when they found their discovery to be a book *ἐγγεγραμμένα μαγικά*. Their anxieties about being caught in possession of such a document were immediate and soon intensified when they were approached by a soldier. Fortunately, they were able to conceal the article and safely dispose of it later.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, it seems to have been a time of trepidation for many.<sup>76</sup>

The events in Antioch were not, however, the only instances of injustice. Festus,<sup>77</sup> the governor of Asia, is recorded as having committed extraordinary crimes against those under his rule. Ammianus writes that he punished the innocent in order to gain promotion, having heard that such actions proved successful for another ambitious ruler. Festus' activities even went beyond legislative boundaries with his condemnation of the user of healing amulets, a practice exempted from punishment in the *Codex Theodosianus*.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, Zosimus records that Festus was sent by the emperor 'so that no educated person might be left alive'.<sup>79</sup> Thus the governor executed a philosopher; an old lady who cured fevers with charms and who had treated his own daughter for a fever; a distinguished townsman who had in his possession a horoscope for Valens, his deceased brother; and a young man who at the bath was touching the marble and his breast while counting seven vowels in order to aid stomach trouble. All were put to death; the latter being tortured and beheaded.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to Ammianus, Libanius offers a first-hand account of an individual accused and maligned. Libanius was a high-profile rhetor from a well-regarded and distinguished family in Antioch,<sup>81</sup> operating in an extremely

competitive industry (in which rhetors were known to pay students to attend class),<sup>82</sup> who maintained a high social standing as a result of his speaking skills and educational instruction. Given Ammianus' and Zosimus' comments regarding those most readily targeted by accusations, it is perhaps not too surprising that Libanius and his colleagues, and/or rivals, were also subject to the levelling and manipulation of treason and *γοητεία* accusations.

With a similar sentiment to Ammianus', Libanius records the paranoia of Valens:

Every soothsayer was his foe: so was any who, in his desire to learn from heaven something of his own fortunes, had recourse to this art, for it was hard to believe that, with a soothsayer handy, his services would not be employed on matters of greater moment.<sup>83</sup>

Libanius records that he himself was also one of Valens' targets, saying of the leader: 'It is said that he personally asked Irenaeus whether I was party to the plot and was surprised to hear that I was not.'<sup>84</sup> However, Libanius' concerns did not end with this incident. Following Valens' suspicions of him, the rhetor was struck with fear on account of events related to a soothsayer to whom he wrote. In this instance, though Libanius deliberately referred to the practitioner as a physician in his correspondence, a slave of the former had kept his master's letters as a form of protective insurance. He then sought to prosecute his master for the latter's auguries, placing his reliance 'upon this correspondence, for the governor would know exactly what "physicians" meant, and the emperor would in any case set up a hue and cry against anyone so entrapped'.<sup>85</sup> Many people entreated the slave not to take such action, and with relief Libanius writes that eventually the slave changed his mind, returned the letters, and consequently lost the case through lack of evidence.<sup>86</sup>

An unsuccessful threat of associating Libanius with divination and treason was also made against the rhetor. In this instance, he records that Eustathius (the *consularis* in 388/9) allegedly incited the ruined decurion Romulus to accuse him of divination against the emperor.<sup>87</sup>

Apart from divination, Libanius was accused of using *γοητεία* against others, including the emperor. For example, Festus, the *consularis Syriae* of whom Ammianus also made mention, appears in Libanius' autobiography as having attempted to link Libanius and Eutropius with activities of a *γόητος*, Martyrius.<sup>88</sup> At another point Libanius tells of how, at a time when his 'declamations were numerous and of the kind to attract students',<sup>89</sup> a boy was bribed with the promise of being able to sleep with a dancer if he went to the emperor with the allegation that Libanius had decapitated two girls and kept their heads in order to use them against the emperor and his senior colleague.<sup>90</sup> To the surprise of those behind the allegations, who had anticipated Libanius' immediate execution, the matter was taken to

court. However, the boy who made the allegation did not appear, and the case was not pursued.

Libanius points out while relating his story that the boy who was bribed was promised a dancer ‘who obeyed my rival the sophist’s clique in everything’.<sup>91</sup> Here, Norman proposes, he is referring to the leader of a faction opposing his own.<sup>92</sup> Thus it appears that the accusation made against Libanius was made by a fellow sophist, a rival. Taking this into consideration, it is also worth noting that Libanius’ opponents, in his view, believed that, in spite of the falsity of the accusation, the emperor would still consider Libanius disloyal and display this publicly. Fortunately for the orator the expected imperial suspicion and public reproach did not materialise.

This is not the end of Libanius’ troubles. While on a trip to Bithynia, during which he was praised for his oratory, the rhetor was accused of making a professor’s wife suffer from mental illness, ‘and he, refusing to believe that this was due to any physical ailment, tried to pin the blame on to me’.<sup>93</sup> The wife died and the matter was taken to court. Libanius himself insisted that the trial be held, and the whole escapade culminated with the humiliation of the professor who had made the accusation.<sup>94</sup>

On a separate occasion, a certain Sabinus produced the head of a corpse and alleged with a forged letter that the decapitation had been the deed of Libanius.<sup>95</sup> Whether this in any way relates to supernatural uses for the corpse or is simply a false accusation of murder is uncertain; it is only clear that Libanius was in conflict with Sabinus over various other matters.<sup>96</sup>

Libanius seems to have been a relatively popular target for he was also accused of being ‘intimate . . . with an astrologer who controlled the stars and through them could bring help or harm to men’.<sup>97</sup> He states that the accusation came about because his rival, and accuser, could not get to Libanius’ drink in order to infuse it with poison. Thus, ‘he went around with the fairy tale that he had been worsted by magic’ because of Libanius’ apparent connection with a powerful astrologer.<sup>98</sup> The developments of the charge are intriguing. Libanius records that his accuser ‘could not outstrip me in his oratory any more than he could actually outpace me: there was only one thing for it – to put an end to me’.<sup>99</sup> To strengthen the allegation, the orator also found allies among schoolmasters and professors.<sup>100</sup> However, Libanius escaped any conviction due both to a lack of evidence and to an opportunity to remove himself to Nicomedia. What must also be noted about his extraordinary account, and a point that will receive greater attention later in the discussion, is that Libanius understood that the schoolmasters and professors would join against him as ‘chagrin, fear, and envy’ (*λύπη, φόβος, and φθόνος*) made them his accuser’s accomplices.

A further point to be made about this incident is that even though declaring that the charge was ridiculous and clearly implying that it was the result of professional rivalry and jealousy, the accusation does suggest that astrology could be seen to be more than a reading of the stars. Intricately

linked with the Graeco-Roman concept of fate was the idea that all things were predestined and hence an astrologer by reading the stars could understand an individual's predetermined path. On the other hand, in this allegation it appears that in the late antique mindset it was also believed that an astrologer could influence the course of the stars; Libanius certainly does not dispute the plausibility of the practitioner's authority. Thus, it can be argued that the very fact that such a charge could make it to court, regardless of its truth, suggests that it may have been widely believed that astrologers could change the alignment of stars and thereby change the course and destiny of people's lives. If this were the case, then an astrologer could be seen to possess extraordinary power.

A final instance in which Libanius is associated with supernatural power occurs after he visits people in prison during a spate of accusations under Gallus. The rhetor writes that the day after he had visited the individuals they were released 'and the rumour spread that some kindly spirit had entered with me, and by its agency the storm had been stilled'.<sup>101</sup> This form of supernatural agency does not, however, appear to have any of the qualities of the *γοητεία* otherwise mentioned by Libanius. No deliberate supernatural act is here implied; rather, Libanius is attributed with bringing good fortune in with him. He is associated with the ability to change people's fortunes.

The rhetor was not just the alleged protagonist of *γοητεία* and the like; he was also the victim. At the time of Valens' winter of sorcery accusations in Antioch, while Libanius was having trouble with his students, he was also suffering from a migraine (which had not bothered him for sixteen years) and gout. Every day and night was filled with pain for him, and despite this his soothsayer forbade him from opening his veins as a means of relief. Thus worried by external stresses and physical illness, Libanius had a dream. He explains:

I saw two boys sacrificed, and the dead body of one was put in the temple of Zeus, behind the door. On protesting at this sacrilege, I was told that this would be the position until evening, but that, when evening came, he would be buried. This seemed to portend spells, incantations, and the hostility of sorcerers. And so it turned out in actual fact, when all those fears obsessed me, and I desired nothing save to die.<sup>102</sup>

Libanius was consequently terribly distracted, both by his malady and by the supernatural cause of it. Furthermore his doctors, because of the cause, were unable to help him, and also attributed his unusually lengthy bout of gout to the same cause: 'My doctors bade me seek the cure elsewhere, for there was no remedy for such maladies in their art.'<sup>103</sup> Interestingly, once

the verdict had been reached that the cause was supernatural and the nature and extent of his maladies were considered, people foretold that he would soon die; this portent, as well as the rumour that he had already expired, also spread to other cities. As a result Libanius' friends urged him to prosecute certain people who were rumoured to be responsible for his suffering, but Libanius suggested prayer rather 'than to have folk arrested for secret machinations'.<sup>104</sup>

Things changed, however, for the ailing Libanius when a dead chameleon appeared in his classroom.<sup>105</sup> The long-dead specimen had been placed in a pose that suggested that it was intended to make Libanius both lame and speechless. The chameleon's head was tucked between its hind legs, one of its front legs was missing, and the other leg closed its mouth in silence.<sup>106</sup> Despite intimating that following this event he could readily do so, Libanius did not name anyone as responsible for the dead lizard's appearance. Rather than pursue legal reprisal, Libanius was content with the easing of his suffering, for 'it seemed to me that the guilty parties were overcome by panic and relaxed their pressure, so that I was able to move about again'.<sup>107</sup> Indeed the rhetor considered it good fortune that 'what had been buried deep should lie above ground, exposed for all to see'.<sup>108</sup>

Libanius' illnesses caused him considerable suffering. They were immediate impediments to his ability to perform adequately as a professor and orator. The dream was interpreted by him, and accepted by others, as an unquestionable indicator of the supernatural origin of his maladies. This acceptance that he had been the target of supernatural foul play even led people to predict his speedy death. That his dream was believed to be an accurate informant also seems to have been largely accepted by others. This was most likely due to the fact that oneiromancy was a long-practised and accepted Graeco-Roman method of receiving supernal communications. In addition to the acknowledgement of supernatural causes, there was clearly a community acknowledgement that a certain individual, or individuals, was responsible for the act, since Libanius is encouraged to prosecute those believed to be involved.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, the appearance of the chameleon offered Libanius not only a release from the spell that was harming him, but also further proof that a supernatural attack had been made against him.<sup>110</sup> The use of the chameleon, and its association with such practices, demonstrated to the community that people had truly been out to get him, and vindicated his illness and consequent erratic and confused behaviour (for example, he tells us that he was unable to concentrate in his classes), for it was controlled by the machinations of others.<sup>111</sup> Despite this, and much to the disappointment of Libanius, people did not display their indignation adequately upon learning that the rhetor's suffering had indeed been the result of maleficent supernatural activity.<sup>112</sup>

*Palestine*

Palestine was not exempt from treason and *γοητεία* charges in the fourth century. In 359 a number of letters of enquiry, which had been sent by various individuals to the oracle at Besa in the Thebaid, Egypt, were collected and sent to the emperor Constantius. The emperor became suspicious and promptly had high-treason trials organised, to which Palestine played host.<sup>113</sup> Paulus, a man whom history does not portray well, was sent to administer them. Ammianus writes of Paulus that ‘as his determination to do harm was fixed and obstinate, he did not refrain from secret fraud, devising fatal charges against innocent persons’.<sup>114</sup> Thus tainted, the treason trials were conducted and held in Scythopolis in Palestine, a location that was both secluded and about half way between Alexandria and Antioch, the cities of residence for most of the accused. People from all social standings were brought from ‘almost the whole world’, some in chains and some in agony.<sup>115</sup> People, including those of high social standing or education such as ex-prefects, scholars and philosophers, were charged and tried for having consulted the oracle at Besa about the succession or gaining of imperial power.<sup>116</sup> As with the trials in Antioch, the charges soon diverged from treason divination to include almost any supernatural practice. Ammianus writes:

if anyone wore on his neck an amulet against the quartan ague or any other complaint, or was accused by the testimony of the evil-disposed of passing by a grave in the evening, on the ground that he was a dealer in poisons, or a gatherer of the horrors of tombs and the vain illusions of the ghosts that walk there, he was condemned to capital punishment and so perished.<sup>117</sup>

Once again a situation developed in which people were readily taken to trial, while intimidation and fear were again prevalent. As with his report on the trials instigated by Valens, Ammianus is understanding of the emperor’s position and his need to be vigilant and protective of his leadership. Nevertheless, the historian does not condone the measures and injustices undertaken in the context of the trials.<sup>118</sup>

Ecclesiastical politics was not immune to accusations of *γοητεία*. Athanasius, while bishop of Alexandria, was brought to trial in Tyre. Athanasius caused considerable conflict and controversy in the Church during his period as bishop of Alexandria. Sozomen writes that ‘the plots of the enemies of Athanasius involved him in fresh troubles, excited the hatred of the emperor against him, and stirred up a multitude of accusers’.<sup>119</sup> The Tyre meeting came two and a half years after he avoided the synod to which he had initially been called and to which he had not gone for fear of the opponents who would have influence there. When the synod eventually met at

Tyre it was attended by a large number of bishops from the Eastern sees. Numerous charges were brought against Athanasius, which included the breaking of a mystical chalice and the throwing of an episcopal chair, as well as more serious allegations concerning his ecclesiastical behaviour.<sup>120</sup> Sozomen notes that, as generally happens in such a plot, many of those considered his friends were amongst his accusers.<sup>121</sup> One of the charges involved the claim that he had cut off, for the purposes of ‘magic’, Arsenius’ arm. This was proved to be laughable and slanderous, for he later led Arsenius into the trial and showed the judge both of his hands, and then requested his accusers to account for the arm which they had exhibited. The latter devised some story, saying that they believed Arsenius was dead because he had not been seen after apparently escaping from a cell in which he had been enclosed at the instigation of Athanasius. After several sessions and varied accusations against him, there was great tumult and confusion in the synod and eventually Athanasius had to flee for fear of his life. While he was absent the synod condemned him, and his accusers and a multitude of others around the tribunal cried out that Athanasius ought to be deposed *ὡς γόητα καὶ βίαιον καὶ ἔρωσύνης ἀνάξιον*.<sup>122</sup>

That Athanasius was associated with supernatural activities is also suggested by Ammianus, who records that Athanasius was said to have been highly skilled in the interpretation of the prophetic lots of the omens indicated by birds, and that he had sometimes foretold future events.<sup>123</sup> Numerous instances, outlined previously, inform us that these were considered serious offences in secular legislation, a concern reflected in the Church canons of Laodicaea and the works of various Church Fathers.<sup>124</sup>

A final example is offered as a supplement on Church attitude. Sozomen reports on Eleusius, who was deposed because he had made a man deacon who had, before his feigned conversion to Christianity, been a priest of Hercules at Tyre. In that position he had been accused of *γοήτεία*. Eleusius’ offence was not that he had somehow himself been involved with these alleged activities but that ‘after having been apprised of these circumstances’ [he] had not excommunicated him.<sup>125</sup> Thus the notion of punishing those allegedly involved in supernatural activity is here reinforced with the chastisement of perceived laxity and inappropriate action.

### *Manipulating preternatural power*

It is evident from the material discussed that laws relating to *mathematici*, *malefici* and *divinandi* were manipulated and even exploited in order to eliminate threats and competitors in both Syria and Palestine. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that various analyses of the accusations often highlight the variable and unstable political and social context in which they were set.<sup>126</sup> While it is accepted that these factors did contribute, it will be proposed here that social belief systems including honour, limited good and

envy also played an influential role in the accusation phenomenon, promoting a recourse to actions that drew upon a social understanding of the supernatural and its infringement upon and impact on human life.

Taking these points into consideration, the discussion begins by considering the more evident motivations for the imperial trials, both in Antioch and in Scythopolis – treason. That both Constantius and Valens were keenly suspicious of individuals seeking to usurp their ruling position is not surprising. It was a volatile age and the seat of the ruler was insecure; both emperors had survived assassination attempts while in power.<sup>127</sup> Thus the instigation of the trials and the initial charges can be seen to represent valid concerns for the protection of the throne.

Having said this, on the face of it seeking some letters on a tripod hardly seems a dastardly plot or assassination attempt. Indeed, in the case of the treason trials in Antioch and Scythopolis the emperors were acting upon information relating to revelation – the foretelling of future events only – and not to the actual planning and act of overthrowing the emperor. Given this, it can be argued that in the emperors' immediate and dramatic retaliations to the charges of high treason by divination there can be seen an innate belief in the validity of divination and/or an awareness of other people's belief in its efficacy. This being the case, it was not, then, the envisaged successor who alone posed the threat but the possibility of other people's belief – that is, the public's belief – in the revelations. Late antiquity had inherited from its predecessors a belief in fate, burdened with the notion that one's future had already been determined and was virtually unalterable.<sup>128</sup> Recall, for instance, that the tripod revelations that instigated such pandemonium were not dismissed as erroneous, for the future did indeed present the empire with a ruler whose name began with the letters THEOD!<sup>129</sup>

Considering this notion of fate, as well as what seems a fairly widespread belief in divination,<sup>130</sup> the revelation of the tripod, or the oracle, or any other divinatory methods, would have been understood as the unveiling of a certain future. If then there resided in a community, or segments of the community, a dissatisfaction with an emperor, and knowledge regarding a successor, possibly a favourable one, was obtained, this could feasibly pose a legitimate threat, or at least some reasoned anxiety, for the emperor. For if fate had already decreed the other as successor, and the emperor could do little to alter destiny, the latter's hold on loyalty and thereby power could be affected, let alone his tenuous grasp on an already insecure life (recall Ammianus' references to assassination attempts). Thus all the measures taken, not only to eliminate the threatening Theodorus but also those who were evidently displeased with the current regime and already shifting loyalty to the next predestined ruler, can be understood. These dissenters were loyal to a very real rival to the throne, one who had been destined for it. Such dissension consequently required discipline, and a public display of this. The emperor's own position of power and control could thus be reaffirmed, and

the revelation furthermore proved to be incorrect (by the eradication of the predicted emperor). It is no wonder then that Firmicus Maternus instructs astrologers to:

See that you give your responses publicly in a clear voice, so that nothing may be asked of you which is not allowed either to ask or to answer. Beware of replying to anyone about the condition of the Republic or the life of the Roman emperor. For it is not right, nor is it permitted, that from wicked curiosity we learn anything about the condition of the Republic.<sup>131</sup>

Accepting this idea of fate and the consequent threat of divination does not, however, assist in explaining the extension of the treason trials into arenas for unjustified and malevolent attacks on countless individuals across the empire. In a bid to better understand these seemingly rampant accusations, several factors will be discussed as possible influences underlying people's allegations of deviant activities utilising the daimonic.

It is possible that the trials acted as a tool for religious persecution.<sup>132</sup> Divination, auguries, *μαντική*, oneiromancy and astrologers, were relevant to the traditional non-Christian religions, and these were the practices that figured prominently in the trials. Thus the sorcery accusations offered a means by which non-Christian figures, especially the more prominent, could be eliminated, exiled, or humiliated and impoverished. Furthermore, the alignment of traditional religious and secular divination with deviant and aggressive supernatural practices may have been an attempt at transforming and tainting perceptions of traditional religious practices.<sup>133</sup> This could explain the vivid and condemning accounts of the non-Christian informants. However, this being said, the motivation for a religious cleansing is unclear, unless authorities (though unlikely to have been totally Christian) sought to strengthen Christianity's hold at various levels of Graeco-Roman society.<sup>134</sup> This argument is also considerably weakened by the record that Christians were counted amongst the victims of the trials.<sup>135</sup> Thus it seems doubtful that religion could have provided motivation for the accusations.

A motive to which Ammianus and Zosimus both alluded was the economic benefit of the trials. In the case of the proceedings in Antioch we are told that people's property was sealed off and confiscated before the individuals were charged, the author's blunt suggestion being that the imperial coffers were consciously being filled through these exercises.<sup>136</sup> As was mentioned on p. 65, the *Codex Theodosianus* decreed that when a person had been found guilty of practising supernatural arts the normal rules of inheritance became invalid and possession of all property was relegated to the state. If, then, the terror that Ammianus describes reflects the reality of the situation, many wealthy individuals were counted amongst the victims of the accusations. With their arrests, their wealth was transferred to the

empire. Families were left deprived of their income, and subsequently their social position, and the treasury increased its holdings significantly. Given the reports that people's possessions were immediately acquired upon their arrest, and not their sentence, financial incentive seems a quite feasible motivation for those accusations levelled by the state.

This latter point leads on to another aspect of the accusations – the fact that they successfully eliminated (through death or poverty) many people in prominent social positions. This particularly relates to those officials who pointedly, according to Ammianus, manipulated the actions of the emperors and the subsequent trials. These individuals not only benefited financially from the prosecutions but also managed to eliminate or impair former or current rivals or enemies. Such attacks on a rival are exemplified in the accusations levelled against Libanius in an attempt to weaken his abilities and position, even to 'eliminate' him. Or as Peter Brown wrote:

Taken altogether, the purges that followed accusations of sorcery and illicit divination point, not to any increase in a 'terror of magic', but to a more precise, if more prosaic, development – to an increase in the zeal and efficacy of the emperor's servants, and their greater ability to override the vested interests of the traditional aristocracies of the Empire, whether to collect taxes or to chastise the black arts.<sup>137</sup>

Thus the trials can be seen as a means for unsettling the traditional ruling structures in the provinces. Aune proposes that accusations could be used 'as a means of social control and definition'. In keeping with this scenario, the dominant social structure, in this case the emperor and his official governors and rulers, was seeking to control and label (as deviant) those in unstructured and ambiguous areas of society.<sup>138</sup> Brown similarly proposed that 'Late Roman society was dominated by the problem of the conflict, between change and stability in a traditional society'.<sup>139</sup> The argument held that within a changing society there existed articulate power (the traditional power structure) and inarticulate power (represented by fluidity and mobility within the power structure). When and where these two forms of power overlapped there existed a clash between change and stability, and 'sorcery' accusations could be found.<sup>140</sup> Thus, the accusations were the result of a changing power structure and the need of individuals operating within that framework to assume a position of strength by destabilising those who most threatened that situation.

Both Athanasius and Libanius can be seen as examples of this apparent power-struggle context. They were in ambiguous positions of power in highly competitive and volatile industries, in which success depended largely on public perception and evaluation. To take Libanius as an example, his esteemed position and popularity as both orator and educator were never

certain; nor were those of his rivals. Given this relative insecurity, and according to Brown and Aune's theories, it is not surprising that Libanius would consequently be subject to accusations. It is thus noteworthy that it was at those periods when he was 'publicly successful' – that is, presenting well-received orations and holding classes filled with students – that allegations were levelled against him. Such accusations, either for *γοητεία* or some other unacceptable supernatural practice, seemed to offer a very public method with which to attack and also undermine a successful rival. Libanius, however, claims much more sinister ambitions behind such assaults, for he records that accusing him of such behaviour was an easier option for a rival than trying to slip poison into his drink. By making an accusation of behaviour involving the supernatural, a public profile and career, already vulnerable to criticism and disfavour, could be publicly labelled as deviant, and severe damage could be done to an individual's image and position. Furthermore, were the accusation supported by the decisions of the court the accused would be a successfully 'eradicated' opponent, for high treason or sorcery carried a penalty of death, or at the very least exile.

It is also proposed that through the elimination or discrediting of influential persons or rivals, such as Libanius, accusations could additionally serve to reinforce faction boundaries.<sup>141</sup> For example, the allegation against Libanius concerning his possession of decapitated heads for use against the emperor and his colleague was made by a rival sophist and his clique. It appears that Libanius was not just an individual competitor in oratory, but also the mouthpiece for an opposing faction.<sup>142</sup> Thus the accusations provided an arena for discrediting or removing a representative of a rival group by asserting the deviant associations of the latter, possibly also tainting the reputation of the entire group.

However, allegations may not have had the sole purpose of rival eradication. It has been proposed that accusations for supernatural practices made in situations of conflict may have acted as a substitute for physical forms of confrontation.<sup>143</sup> The oratorical and educational arena was certainly an area of conflict and intense competition,<sup>144</sup> so it is possible that accusations made against Libanius were a substitute for physical assaults on him. However, it seems unlikely that the extraordinary situations in Scythopolis and Antioch resulted simply as a means of avoiding physical confrontation, especially when considering that in many cases physical torture formed part of the ordeal. Even in Libanius' case, hiring thugs to take care of the rhetor must also have presented as a relatively easy form of reprisal in comparison with making public and legally legitimate accusations.

It is also conceivable that an accusation of an unacceptable supernatural practice could provide a publicly acceptable explanation for illness and/or poor performance. Libanius once again provides evidence for consideration in his account of his suffering through *γοητεία*. The resultant illness distracted him from his work and affected his performance, although it did

not affect his reason.<sup>145</sup> He tells how, pursuant to his dream and its portent of the use of *φάρμακα δὲ καὶ μαγγανεύματα καὶ πόλεμον ἀπὸ γοήτων ἀνδρῶν*,<sup>146</sup> his fears obsessed him and he ‘avoided all the books containing the works of the classics, and the writing and the composition of my orations, and my eloquence was undone’.<sup>147</sup> Thus his work suffered, and his eloquence and orations – that is, his public performance – suffered. Considering such a scenario, it has been argued that orators performing poorly ‘continued to blame witchcraft for sudden lapses of memory and moments of inexplicable stage fright’.<sup>148</sup> In Libanius’ case, in particular, the blaming of *γοητεία* is seen to have offered not only an explanation for his illness, with the dream being the first step towards self-healing, but also to have provided Libanius and his friends with a strategy for restoring his former personality with minimal damage to his image. This could be achieved because the *γοητεία* allegation presented an explanation not only accepted by the rhetor but also by his society.<sup>149</sup> If this were the case, it does offer an explanation for why Libanius insists on telling his audience that he and his friends were aware of who would have caused him such trouble. It also helps to explain why the orator devotes an entire speech addressing the affair and exonerating his own behaviour from any provocation (for the attack) and responsibility for its consequence.<sup>150</sup>

However, in adopting such a perspective it is important to recognise the concept of supernaturally caused illness which allows for such a connection to be made.<sup>151</sup> Thus, it is only upon the social understanding of illness, and the possible supernatural cause of it, that such ‘blaming of misfortune’ can be founded. Consider for instance the accusations made against Libanius with regard to the illness of a rival’s wife. This allegation is perceived as legitimate (regardless of whether the accused is found guilty or not) because society accepts that it is possible. Therefore it is probable that accusations provided a forum for the ‘blaming of misfortune’. This provocation alone, however, could not have instigated the flurry of accusations across Syria and Palestine.

It is here proposed that the belief in limited good and the concept of envy may also underlie sorcery accusations in the fourth century, assisting and complementing an understanding of the phenomenon. The prevalent concept of envy, and the related pervasive belief in the evil eye, appears throughout this study, and can be seen to have influenced not only the explanation for misfortune but also an array of consequent behaviours.<sup>152</sup> Considering this pervasive power of envy, it can be argued that the *γοητεία* accusations were a means by which people’s envy could directly, and often dramatically, affect other people’s fortunes. That envy was indeed a motivating factor behind some accusations can be seen in Libanius’ work, for the rhetor states: ‘Thus it was by good fortune that I was not harmed by the fangs of envy, but passed this time in my usual congenial labours rather than in most unwelcome toils’.<sup>153</sup> On that occasion, when he was wrongfully accused of conspiring with an astrologer against his accuser, the latter gathered up a

gang, made up of schoolmasters and professors to support him, and Libanius writes that ‘Chagrin, fear, and envy made them his accomplices – all these emotions in the case of the professors, envy in the case of the rest’.<sup>154</sup>

Closely related to envy is the notion of limited good, a concept that also recurs throughout the study. It is limited good which can be seen to invoke envy and competition, for it dictates that all things, tangible and intangible are finite and in limited supply, and thus one person’s gain must necessarily mean another person’s loss.<sup>155</sup> This does not on first encounter appear to be a motivating factor in the instances presented above, until honour and success are considered. As a pivotal social value and feature of Mediterranean societies, honour was highly valued – both for individual and familial identity and reputation – and the acquisition of it was solely determined by social perception of behaviour.<sup>156</sup> Thus ‘Honour means the perception someone has of his or her own worth and an appreciation of how he or she is rated by a relevant social group’.<sup>157</sup> As honour was also something in limited supply, enhancing honour could only be done at the expense of another.<sup>158</sup> If it is thus considered that honour is assigned by others, and if Libanius’ situation is once more deliberated, it can be argued that with oratorical success Libanius accrued honour. In the world of the rhetor success could fluctuate, and the receipt of honour was completely reliant on public response and approval. It is noteworthy, then, that it is particularly at these successful moments that the rhetor also seemed the most susceptible to accusations. If the notion of limited good is now considered, Libanius was acquiring this honour and public esteem at someone else’s expense at those favourable periods – and once lost, such an important asset was difficult to regain. Is it therefore not possible that in levelling an accusation of supernatural activity and manipulations at an individual, in this case Libanius, an envious rival was granted the opportunity to strip the target of such a valuable asset as honour by tainting his reputation with the dishonourable accusation of shameful and deviant behaviour (treason or *γοητεία*)?

This assertion leads on to an interesting question: if honour had been lost, how could it be regained? Here again Libanius provides an example in his claim that *γοητεία* had been used against him. Indeed, it can be argued that Libanius in so doing was able to restore in some measure his honour by associating his maladies and consequent behaviour (suffering orations and motivation) with supernatural causes which he would be helpless to withstand. Thus by associating behaviour with supernatural malevolence and misfortune an individual may have had a means for the retrieval of honour and the consequent recuperation of social standing.

Finally, in support of this argument concerning the influence of envy and limited good, attention remains with Libanius and the rhetor’s lament for the *γοητεία* used against him, and his assertion of irreproachable conduct. That is, in one particular oration he addresses those issues which he perceived would have made him insulting or neglectful in some sense to

all manner of people, such as ‘commoners’, senate members and pupils.<sup>159</sup> By pointing out proper behaviour, he makes a contrast with actions that would have been perceived as offensive or culpable in his social context. Rivalry is not stressed as a cause; instead Libanius stresses that he sought not to outshine his colleagues, instead mixing with all, never claiming to have an advantage, and living with each on an ‘equal footing’.<sup>160</sup> In doing this Libanius appears to be discounting his own success and, it can be argued, publicly pronouncing that any perception of his unequal receipt of success or honour was erroneous, and that he was therefore not a deserving target of anyone’s envy. Within a social world-view that includes limited good and the evil eye, such modest behaviour can be seen as an attempt to minimise perceptions of the unequal receipt of goods, thereby reducing the likelihood of envy-related misfortune – that is, the evil eye.<sup>161</sup>

Thus envy and limited good help to explain why people valued their assets, both tangible and intangible. Their honour, their good fortune, their success, were all vulnerable to the envy of others, the latter capable of producing misfortune in any number of ways. In the case of the accusations of the fourth century, it can be argued that the competitive and uncertain environment highlighted by Peter Brown provided a context in which these vulnerable assets of honour and good fortune were increasingly threatened, and the allegations of ‘sorcery’ and other supernatural manipulations provided an opportunity to affect, beneficially or maliciously, those valuable social assets.

## Conclusion

This chapter has considered a diverse range of material, including the curse tablets and hagiographical accounts presented in the first section of the discussion and the comparatively high-profile sorcery accusations presented in the second section.

In the initial discussion on the involvement of curses and holy men in relation to livelihood, it is proposed that the notion of limited good, combined with an agonistic context, as well as honour and shame, could be seen as influential in the use of both defensive and aggressive supernatural measures. Hence it is argued that the evidence discussed involved the use of assertive supernatural activities in order to achieve some form of ‘equity’ within agonistic contexts.

With regard to the sorcery accusations that occurred in both Syria and Palestine, it is proposed that a number of factors could be considered as evident motivators – namely, honour, the notion of limited good, envy and the pervasive belief in supernatural potency. It is argued that the *γοητεία* accusations were a means by which people’s envy could directly, and often dramatically, affect other people’s fortunes, within a context of social change and a cultural framework that harboured the concepts of limited good and honour.

## DEMANDING DESIRE

### *Rituals of love and lust*

Lotions, potions, spells, curses and charms for love and desire had a long history in the Graeco-Roman world. The extant material and literary evidence for these passionate practices is abundant and widespread. As a proportion of extant curse tablets alone, those dealing with ἔρως account for one-quarter of the total tablets published.<sup>1</sup> The evidence for both fourth-century Syria and Palestine, however, is limited to hagiographical accounts and an Aramaic amulet. The lack of material evidence is somewhat puzzling, given both the popularity of the amatory practices across the Mediterranean as well as the claim that the aphrodisiac-type curse, for instance, emerges in North Africa and Syria in the second century CE and is evident through to the fourth century CE.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless the material which we do have does allow for some speculation to be made on love practices involving the supernatural in the fourth century.

Theodoret's Syrian accounts of Aphrahat and Macedonius are the first to be presented. The Palestinian evidence follows and includes a love amulet and Jerome's account of Hilarion's involvement in assisting the victim of a love spell. These accounts allow for an interesting discussion on the social context and influence of gender roles, family, as well as honour and shame in the use of love spells and potions in both regions. Consequent to these considerations, it is proposed that in the Palestinian and Syrian evidence can be seen an attempt both to reassert social norms and to manipulate social expectations.

### Syria

Theodoret of Cyrrhus provides a glimpse of erotic enchantment in Syria in two episodes recounted in his *Religious History*. As with his and other hagiographical reports utilised, the evidence must be treated with care, taking into consideration the aims of the author and the narrative style of the genre. The two accounts discussed below present interesting scenarios, aspects of which can be corroborated to varying degrees by curses and spells from the late-antique Graeco-Roman world, suggesting not only a degree of credulity in

the concerns identified in the accounts but also the narrator's awareness both of these concerns and of the contemporary supernatural methods utilised to deal with them.

The first account concerns the monk, Aphrahat, who reluctantly assists a woman 'of noble family', whose husband has been bewitched (*γοητικῆ*) by a courtesan. Theodoret writes that the woman 'came to this blessed man bewailing her misfortune. She told how her husband, in his attachment to a concubine, had been bewitched by some magical enchantment and become hostile towards the wife yoked to him in lawful wedlock.' The holy man took pity on the woman and 'quenched the power of the magic by prayer, and blessing by divine invocation a flask of oil she had brought', with which she was to anoint herself. Consequently, the woman 'transferred' her husband's love back to her and brought him back to the 'lawful bed'.<sup>3</sup>

It is possible that Theodoret only incorporated this story because it provided a novel context for another example of Aphrahat's superior supernal abilities. However, while the holy man's actions are seen as noteworthy, the nature of the problem (a husband's bewitchment by a courtesan) receives no introduction by the author as an anomalous occurrence. Indeed, there is a contemporary account of an actress in Antioch who was rumoured to have been so desired by men that she wrecked numerous households, using not just her beauty but *γοητεία* and *φαρμάκα*.<sup>4</sup> In addition, and most importantly, there are undeniable parallels between Theodoret's account and traditional Graeco-Roman practices and spells. Indeed, it is these parallels that strongly suggest an element of social reality to Theodoret's report. Thus it can be argued that the occurrence of this story in the hagiography provides some indication of *ἔρω*s practices in the ascetic's social context – namely fourth-century Antioch.<sup>5</sup>

The woman's concern for her husband's bewitchment by his courtesan is the first practice for which parallels can be found. There was a long tradition in the Graeco-Roman world that placed the courtesan in the role of bewitcher. The instrument of control that was used by the concubine could involve such common aphrodisiacs as wine and herbal infusions, also associated with *magicae artes*.<sup>6</sup> However, the degree of influence implied in the passage extends beyond the comparatively limited effect of the aphrodisiac and suggests the use of a love spell with binding properties.<sup>7</sup> It is not possible to determine what type of enchantment the courtesan may have used in order to bewitch the man concerned, but extant Graeco-Roman evidence does provide some clues, particularly in the papyri and *defixiones*.<sup>8</sup> Thus the courtesan may have been utilising techniques aimed at maintaining her lover's affections (rituals more commonly associated with females), or alternatively overwhelming him with *ἔρω*s (rituals generally associated with males, but not unknown to have been used by females).<sup>9</sup>

The source of the wife's concern for the courtesan's hold over her husband appears to be his consequent hostility towards her. There are, however, other

factors that could have provoked her distress and recourse to action. Certainly the hostility of a husband provides adequate grounds for seeking an altered domestic situation, for such behaviour may have entailed physical or emotional abuse. Perhaps, though, jealousy motivated her response; she was after all his wife, and Theodoret does affirm that the holy man's beneficial assistance ensured that the husband's *ἐρωτα* was transferred to the wife, thereby asserting the desire of this attention. Yet in addition to these more immediately apparent motivations, it is also possible that the husband's increased hostility to the wife was threatening her position as the matron of the household.<sup>10</sup> For centuries Roman law allowed a married man to have a concubine and even to live with her in a socially accepted relationship when not married. Divorcing a wife would not pose a serious problem for a man, and it was common for men to divorce their wives after legitimate offspring had been produced in their union. While the latter scenario has not been alluded to in Theodoret's account, it is nevertheless worth considering that the courtesan posed a threat to the woman's marriage and that this could have provided considerable provocation for the woman to address her husband's 'bewitchment'.

The reason for the wife seeking assistance from a holy man in matters of matrimony is unclear though not implausible, given the supernatural control exercised over the husband. Her choice, however, was a good one for Theodoret reports that the original spell of the courtesan was repelled through the simple act of prayer by Aphrahat. What is especially interesting about this account, however, is not only that a holy man had such abilities – for the supernal strengths of holy men are exhibited throughout this study – but that at the point of counteraction and success in this account (that is, breaking the courtesan's bewitchment), Aphrahat takes his treatment one step further. Indeed, the holy man blessed the woman's oil flask and told her to anoint herself with the oil.<sup>11</sup>

It is intriguing that Aphrahat not only repelled the concubine's spell but also provided the woman with a lotion of her own, a lotion for which parallels existed in the traditional *philia* potions used to maintain or increase affection in a spouse or lover.<sup>12</sup>

Thus the hagiographer is utilising contemporary discourse on supernatural love rituals, thereby placing the holy man in a role rivalling that of the traditional practitioner. This portrayal allows for the promotion of Christian power in an aspect of life which, given LiDonnici's arguments regarding the elite users of love spells, was particularly relevant to the aristocratic patrons of the holy man.<sup>13</sup> It will be further argued below that this short account has deliberately narrated the holy man's involvement – not that he might be seen as a 'love practitioner' as such but in order to support a contemporary, emerging Christian construction of marriage and adultery.

One final point on this passage concerns the role of the male victim. In this scenario, the husband is seen only as the pawn between two women, indeed a victim of their supernatural methods. He appears to have no control over his passions and affections, and this impotence is actually maintained through the holy man's assistance. Indeed, even his display of hostility towards his wife is portrayed as the result of the courtesan's bewitchment. Such a description of the man may have been used by the narrator merely as a means to highlight the manipulative methods of women. On the other hand, as will be discussed below, such a portrayal within the context of contemporary understanding of ἔρωσ and masculine control represents this male as both unacceptably weak and vulnerable.

Theodoret's second account involves the holy man Macedonius, whom he knew personally, and who lived in the mountains outside Antioch. He reports that this holy man expelled a daimon possessing a girl who had been made crazy by a love spell cast on her by a young man. Recounting the affair, he writes that 'A girl still kept at home was suddenly possessed by the action of an evil demon'. Her father hurried to Macedonius and begged for his daughter to be cured. Macedonius prayed and ordered the 'demon to depart from the girl immediately'. The daimon replied that 'he had not entered her willingly but under the compulsion of magic spells; he even told the name of the man who had compelled him, and revealed that love was the cause of the enchantment'.<sup>14</sup> When the girl's father heard this he

did not contain the onrush of his anger or wait for his child's cure, but repairing to the official over the chief officials, presiding over several provinces, he brought a charge against the man and related the crime. On appearing before the court, the man denied the charge and called it a false accusation. The father, having no other witness to call except the demon who had served the magic, begged the judge to hasten to the man of God and receive the evidence of the demon.<sup>15</sup>

The judge did this, but took the case out of the court room, where

Under the pressure of the greatest duress, the demon pointed out the man who had compelled him by magical charms and also the maid-servant who had administered the potion to the girl . . . the man of God ordered him to keep silence and to depart somewhere far from the girl and from the city. As if obeying an enactment of the Master, he did what was ordered and rushed away.<sup>16</sup>

Macedonius rescued the girl from her frenzy, but then also saved the accused man from the charge and a death sentence, arguing that the daimon's

evidence should not be used to impose the death penalty, and that repentance should be his due.<sup>17</sup>

Theodoret here presents Macedonius as a supernatural adept, displaying his superior powers of control over daimones. Indeed, in curing the afflicted girl, Macedonius proved able to communicate with, command, expel and exile the daimonic. And once again the author seems to have drawn upon contemporary understanding of practice and belief in his presentation of the holy man and his abilities. As such, several interesting observations can be drawn from this account relating both to the use of supernatural love rituals, for which contemporary parallels can be found, and to possible avenues for legal prosecutions in relation to their use, in which motivation, and execution, appear to differ significantly from the trials discussed in the previous chapter.

Let us begin with the startling similarities between this account and the erotic binding spells, *defixiones* and *agogai*.<sup>18</sup> The first information revealed to the audience is that a girl still living at home was suddenly possessed by a daimon. However, this daimonic attack is not recognised as ἔρωξ, until the daimon itself revealed what had compelled it to assault the girl. What is thus apparent from this detail is that the victim had assumed some behaviour deemed as reflective of daimonically possessed behaviour, and that this action or ailment could also be readily perceived to be a symptom of love enchantment. This then allows for some speculation both on the nature of the victim's ailment and on the method used by the protagonist to inflict it. In order to do this, a slight excursion must be made into the antique concept of ἔρωξ and its association with disease, pain, fever and madness. Winkler writes of ἔρωξ: 'The core experience represented in erotic literature is that of powerful involuntary attraction, felt as an invasion and described in a pathology of physical and mental disturbance'.<sup>19</sup> This dramatic notion of ἔρωξ was not, however, merely a literary device. Indeed, the affliction of ἔρωξ was treated as a serious topic of medical debate.<sup>20</sup> Recognised as an illness with both physical symptoms and social ramifications,<sup>21</sup> it was relatively easily discerned and diagnosed, but not so easily remedied.<sup>22</sup>

It is thus proposed here that the girl has been struck by ἔρωξ, for the latter is seen as an invasion of a person, which produces physical and mental symptoms, and the victim in Theodoret's scenario has both been invaded – she is daimonically possessed – and has displayed apparent physical or mental symptoms, indeed a 'frenzy' (*μανία*), that led others to the conclusion that she was possessed.<sup>23</sup> There are also distinct similarities between the victim's ailment and the daimon's information and extant evidence for Graeco-Roman erotic supernatural practices. Furthermore, despite popular literary portrayals,<sup>24</sup> evidence shows that in the majority of instances females were actually the victims (not instigators) of ἔρωξ rituals, these methods usually being employed by males who sought to instil erotic passion in the

women.<sup>25</sup> The female victim in Theodoret's account exhibits the symptoms sought by erotic spells of the period; for example, the desire to make the victim go 'mad' with desire (ἔρωτι μανικῶ;<sup>26</sup> for instance, 'seize Euphemia and drive her to me, to me Theon, loving with mad desire'<sup>27</sup>) or to be frenzied (for example, 'in fear, seeing phantoms, sleepless because of her passion for me and her love for me'<sup>28</sup>). The objectives of many of the spell formulae include burning organs of the victim, which have been interpreted to represent inflaming the victim with desire.<sup>29</sup> Thus the spell-caster intends for the victim to be in a frenzy, a frenzy of ἔρωσις.

Theodoret even narrates how the frenzy came to possess the girl. The daimon was compelled by a man μαγγανεία βιασθῆναι γοητευτικῇ and ἔρωτα εἶναι τὴν τῆς γοητείας αἰτίαν. The manner in which the spell was effected was through charms that compelled the daimon, and a potion administered to the victim by a maidservant. Contemporary prescriptions provide parallels for such use of a potion as an accompaniment to an erotic spell.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Ammianus Marcellinus makes mention of the 'old lady' who supplies love potions to people.<sup>31</sup> Thus it is quite credible that Theodoret was describing a known supernatural method for instilling desire in a female.

A significant part of the action of this love drama revolves around the legal action taken by the female victim's father. The account suggests that accusations of erotic supernatural practice were admissible within Syrian law courts in the fourth century, and also suggests that either local laws banned erotic supernatural attacks or that the local courts worked with the Roman laws of the period (which, as seen in Chapter 5, could be enforced to prosecute supernatural activities).<sup>32</sup> The *Codex Theodosianus* places restrictions on the use of supernatural love practices, declaring that

the science of those men who are equipped with magic arts and who are revealed to have worked against the safety of men or to have turned virtuous minds to lust shall be punished and deservedly avenged by the most severe laws.<sup>33</sup>

Theodoret relates that the victim's father, upon hearing that the daimon was brought upon the girl by a spell inspired by love, immediately brought a charge against the perpetrator.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Theodoret is careful to point out that this charge was brought to the ear of a very high official in the region, and the case was admitted into the court. And, as if by the letter of the law prescribed by the *Codex Theodosianus*, the sentence which could have been applied in Theodoret's account was death. Yet, despite the pursuit of the case in court, the inability to provide any proof to rebut the accused's declaration that a false accusation had been brought against him appeared to jeopardise the father's prosecution. Evidence had to be provided in a tangible form. The judge was clearly reluctant to hear

the evidence of the possessing daimon and, while he was eventually convinced to consider it, he would not do so within the space of the courtroom. By taking the case outside of the courtroom it can be argued that the judge had dismissed the formal hearing of the trial and would only deliberate on this supernatural evidence informally.<sup>35</sup> However, the daimon's implication of the man, as well as the maidservant who administered the potion (who must have been part of the prosecutor's household, given the proximity required to serve the victim with the potion), highlights the ultimate point of the trial – to make public, and punish, human crimes. That is, while belief in the supernatural is evident, the latter merely served as a tool for human machinations and was not ultimately to be held accountable for those actions.

A final point in relation to the trial concerns the ability and desire of the holy man to dismiss the case and see the instigator of the troubles and afflictions go free. While his action seems a little baffling, it could simply be a narrative tool allowing for the incorporation of the Christian message of repentance. On the other hand, it will be argued below that the restoration of family honour and the sanctity of familial consent to marriage may have been a strong motivation for Macedonius' actions.

### Palestine

The fourth-century Palestinian evidence includes an inscribed tablet and an account from Jerome regarding the ascetic Hilarion. There also exists an *ἔρωσ* spell prescription dated third to fourth century and assigned a provenance of either Egypt or Palestine by Gager.<sup>36</sup> However, given the ambiguity of the actual source of this spell, the *Sepher Ha-Razim*, it will not be included in this discussion.

The extant curse from Palestine that is included is a potsherd that was inscribed with Aramaic text before firing. The tablet comes from Horvat Rimon, 0.5 km south of Kibbutz Lahav and 13 km north of Beer-Sheba, and was discovered in excavations near the ancient synagogue.<sup>37</sup> It adjures the angels to 'burn the heart of R[. . . son/daughter of] [Mar]ian after me', turning her/his organs and mind so that he/she will do 'my desire'.<sup>38</sup>

There was some discussion on pp. 85–6 of the form of the love spell which most likely brought about the symptoms of the frenzied girl whom Macedonius assisted. This inscribed potsherd offers similar insight into the love designs of spell-casters. The form of this spell (a potsherd) is, however, a little different to that of the *defixiones* inscribed and buried under people's doorsteps or disposed of in cemeteries or wells. Nevertheless, this method of spell-casting is prescribed in spell-recipe collections such as the *Sword of Moses*, and in some of the texts of the Cairo Geniza.<sup>39</sup> In these documents can be found instructions for inscribing a spell on clay before throwing it in for firing, a method particularly associated with love charms.

Thus this sherd offers an example of an alternative method available for instilling desire in another person. Although the medium differs, the intentions of the text, as well as the narrative style, are extremely similar to contemporary *defixiones* and spell prescriptions.<sup>40</sup> The intention of burning the organs of the victim is seen as a means of inciting desire for the caster in the feelings and mind of the victim, as has been mentioned on p. 86.<sup>41</sup> Two of the more noticeable differences between the *defixiones*, Egyptian papyri, and this sherd relate to the language of the text and to the invocation of angels as opposed to *daimones* or divinities.<sup>42</sup> Given the eclectic nature of most texts and the inability to determine the religious affiliations of caster or target from the information provided in such a short inscription, however, these differences do not allow any cultural or religious inferences to be made.<sup>43</sup> It can be said, though, that the use of Aramaic might suggest the existence of a localised industry, which while drawing on a wider tradition, as is represented in the parallels of formulas, allows for indigenous language (and possibly also practitioners) to be utilised. Unfortunately it is difficult to glean any further information from this artefact; even the gender of both the instigator and the target are unknown.

Providing more information than the potsherd for the possible use of supernatural love practices in fourth-century Palestine is Jerome's account of Hilarion's role as 'love practitioner'. In a similar vein to Theodoret's hagiographical narrative Jerome tells of a love-struck youth in Gaza whose attempts to win over 'one of God's virgins' were unsuccessful. Because he could not attract the girl, he went to Memphis, Egypt, to train in *magicis artibus* to acquire skills to use on the virgin. The youth was instructed for a year and

he came full of the lust which he had previously allowed his mind to entertain, and buried beneath the threshold of the girl's house certain magical formulae: and revolting figures engraven on a plate of Cyprian brass. Thereupon the maid began to show signs of insanity, to throw away the covering of her head, tear her hair, gnash her teeth, and loudly call the youth by name. Her intense affection had become a frenzy.

Her parents subsequently brought her to Hilarion, at which the daimon

began to howl and confess. 'I was compelled, I was carried off against my will. . . . You force me to go out, and I am kept bound under the threshold. I cannot go out unless the young man who keeps me there lets me go.' The old man answered, 'Your strength must be great indeed, if a bit of thread and a plate can keep you bound. . . . But the saint would not command a search to be made for either the young man or the charms till the maiden had

undergone a process of purgation, for fear that it might be thought that the demon had been released by means of incantations, or that he himself had attached credit to what he said. He declared that demons are deceitful and well versed in dissimulation, and sharply rebuked the virgin when she had recovered her health for having by her conduct given an opportunity for the demon to enter.<sup>44</sup>

There is a variety of information which can be extracted from this passage concerning not only the use of supernatural passion practices but also regarding the possible motivation for such action by the male protagonist, the reaction and perception of the victim, and the narrative's role in displacing and minimising traditional practices through a portrayal of Christian supremacy.

Jerome's text suggests a degree of familiarity by the author with the usual Graeco-Roman supernatural *ἔργως* practices.<sup>45</sup> Whether this knowledge was shared by his audience is difficult to determine. Nevertheless Jerome's ability to relay an account utilising knowledge of supernatural training and ritual similar to that demonstrated in extant contemporary evidence is noteworthy. The author explains that the love-struck youth decided to go to a magician<sup>46</sup> in order to be 'fortified with his arts' (*magicis artibus armatus*) so as to be able to use these skills on the girl not responding to his attentions. This information conforms to the traditional accounts that such skills could be taught and learnt over a period of time, and that such instruction could be gained in Egypt – even with the priests in Memphis.<sup>47</sup> While a knowledge of Egyptian magicians might represent popular understanding, Jerome demonstrates more detailed insight when he reveals aspects of ritual and practice. Firstly, he mentions the use of the plate of Cyprian brass inscribed with 'magical formula' and 'revolting figures'.<sup>48</sup> This reference bears a striking resemblance to the inscriptions found on *defixiones* which, though in most cases made of lead, are inscribed with spell formulae, and often accompanied by *voces magicæ* as well as drawings of symbols or figures.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, Jerome writes of the plate being buried under the threshold. This information suggests that Jerome is certainly referring to a curse tablet, as these were frequently deposited under the threshold of the victim's home. Thirdly, the author makes reference to a thread bound to the plate which served to bind the daimon to the victim's threshold. This suggests a variation on the practice of sealing the curse that is frequently associated with the lead tablets, although the latter were folded and pierced with a nail (the softness of the lead allowed for such flexibility). Finally, Jerome refers to the need to find the charms in order to disarm the spell. Once again this reference can be paralleled with other evidence suggesting the need to remove the detrimental objects in order to deactivate a binding spell.<sup>50</sup>

Jerome's account also offers some insight into possible motivations for casting such a love spell. In this case we are told that the perpetrator is a

youth. He makes all the regular advances and flirtations, and is unsuccessful in all his attempts. It appears that out of desire and the frustration of unrequited love he deliberately sets out to receive tuition from someone able to understand his predicament, and able to train him in a method enabling him to alter the situation to his advantage. Thus the youth is portrayed as a love-struck male, the victim of ἔρωϛ, who is unable to win over the girl he desires and consequently resorts to more esoteric methods to achieve his ends.

The portrayal of the object of the youth's affections is extremely interesting. This young woman is labelled as pure, mad, and blameworthy throughout the course of the account. Jerome begins by introducing the victim of the love spell as 'one of God's virgins'. In the account there are several references to her relationship to God and to her chastity. Thus the image is projected of a virginal, chaste maiden, and one who is able to reject the repeated advances of an eager youth. However, we are also made privy to the presentation of the mad victim, the female frenzied with passion for the youth she had previously rejected. Indeed, she shows signs of 'insanity', throwing away the covering of her head, tearing her hair, gnashing her teeth, and calling the youth by name. These images portray her as immodest (discarding her head-covering), bestial (gnashing of the teeth), and hysterical (tearing her hair like someone in mourning). The reason for her radical change is made clear; she is possessed as a result of the youth's supernatural machinations (and the similarities of her symptoms with contemporary erotic spells is noteworthy).<sup>51</sup> Thus she needs to be cleansed; the daimon in her must be removed. She must be saved and her purity, her chastity, must be preserved; indeed, Hilarion explains to the daimon: 'that I might preserve her as a virgin'.<sup>52</sup> The virgin is threatened by a youth and saved by the old holy man. However, although she is clearly portrayed as blameless, her innocence in the matter is denied by the holy man. She is ultimately held responsible for her frenzied daimonic possession. Indeed, it is her weakness and vulnerability that enabled the daimonic, immodest, threatening and frenzied possession to affect her in the first place. So she is rebuked 'for having by her conduct given an opportunity for the demon to enter'.<sup>53</sup>

A final point regarding Jerome's account concerns his narrative style and intentions. There are noticeable similarities between his account of Hilarion and Theodoret's record of Macedonius mentioned on pp. 85–7. Both concern young women under the frenzied possession of love spells orchestrated by men who are unable to gain the girls' attentions. In both cases the daimon is exorcised and there is some communication between the respective holy man and the intruding entity. This deliberation provides a generous amount of evidence regarding the perpetrators, while also demonstrating daimonic readiness to act upon the orders of the Christian ascetics. Furthermore, in both cases the matter is brought to the attention of the holy men by concerned parents.

Yet in addition to these points, Jerome, like Theodoret, is also promoting a Christian agenda. He is seeking to illustrate the supremacy of Christian power, such that his holy man, Hilarion, facetiously says to the daimon: ‘Your strength must be great indeed if a bit of thread and a plate can keep you bound’.<sup>54</sup> He is mocking this traditional practice and, by demonstrating the holy man’s prowess in controlling and confronting the daimon, he is minimising its effectiveness. This is further highlighted by the dissociation of the ascetic from behaviours that seem to be aligned with those of the non-Christian practitioner. Hence Hilarion sought to dispel any idea that the daimon had been released by incantations and that he had given the daimon’s words any credence.

### Engaging enchantment

Having thus examined the extant evidence, the following section will consider the social beliefs and understandings which may have influenced the use of love spells in fourth-century Syria and Palestine, and the social reaction to their use. In the course of this discussion issues regarding gender, social perceptions of behaviour, family, honour and shame will be proposed as relevant social factors in the use of supernatural love practices.

The potsherd from Palestine unfortunately does not lend itself to any significant discussion given the partial nature of the evidence it presents and the uncertainty concerning its dating. Of course, if it is fourth century (rather than fifth or sixth), then it does support the idea presented by the hagiographies, in particular Jerome’s account of the Gaza incident, that supernatural passion practices were indeed utilised at this time and that the hagiographers’ narratives are informed by some knowledge of contemporary activities.

The discussion thus concerns the remaining evidence: the hagiographies of both Theodoret and Jerome. There are two forms of love-spell genre portrayed in this evidence. The first form is that portrayed in the first account, presented on pp. 82–4, in which a courtesan and wife are the two figures to administer love potions to a man. The second form of *ἔρωσ* practice concerns the impassioned possession of two female victims of love spells cast by men, as described by both hagiographers. Thus the two forms will be discussed separately, though there will be some overlap between the two regarding issues of gender and social behaviour.

Firstly, then, let us consider the role of women as the utilisers of love enchantments. The scenario which encapsulates this is the first hagiographical account discussed – Theodoret’s portrayal of the wife who seeks assistance from the holy man Aphrahat in order to reclaim her husband from the bewitchment of a courtesan. This action by courtesans, it has been argued by Faraone, provides a means for placing them within the socially constructed role of the aggressive female, enabling the courtesan to act as a male

would do in the arena of desire. That is, the socially constructed ‘passive’ female adopts the socially constructed role of the ‘aggressive’ male, and in so doing inverts the social norm.<sup>55</sup> It is evident from Theodoret’s account that the wife is concerned that her husband has come under the influence of another woman’s spell. That is, he is not in control of his own actions and desires. This victimisation of the male can be seen in much earlier Greek literary accounts of courtesans using male-targeting erotic practices associated with the supernatural. In such situations the erotic supernatural practice involves an “unnatural” usurpation of male power’ by taking control of the culturally conceived natural power of the masculine identity and passion.<sup>56</sup> However, in this situation, while obviously under the spell of his courtesan, the male victim has become hostile towards his wife. Perhaps the subjugation of his masculinity with his concubine has served to intensify his aggressive masculine role in his relationship with his wife, or perhaps the display of hostility to a female also serves to highlight his weakened masculine role.

Faraone’s discussion of *philia* methods and their use amongst Greek literary and non-literary women has interesting parallels with the story related in Theodoret. With *philia* techniques, unlike *ἔρωσ* rituals utilising binding spells and *agogai*, images of madness, burning passion and torture are entirely absent; instead the results aimed for involve docility and amiability.<sup>57</sup> Faraone argues (within the Greek literary context) that:

In nearly all of these situations, the high social status and personal power of the person employing the aphrodisiac depends solely on the esteem and good will of the victim, usually a powerful king or his counterpart in the microcosm of the Greek family the head of the household. In each case the love potions are used by wives almost in a defensive way to prevent the eclipse of their personal influence with their husbands.<sup>58</sup>

In Theodoret’s account a woman is being treated with hostility by her husband. She seeks assistance to invalidate the spell she believes is being used against him, but she also returns to him using a potion which fixes his attentions and affections on her. Thus, his hostility towards her diminishes and his affection for her increases. It can be argued that what we see here is the continuation of a long tradition of female association with aphrodisiac and *philia* practices in order to maintain or enhance relationships. The use of such techniques has been recorded in literature for centuries; in this case we see the same tradition caught within the new genre of hagiography.

The lot of the husband in this case is almost one of enervation. Indeed, the husband seems to be the least in control of his own desires. The passivity of the male brought about by aphrodisiacs and erotic spells has been seen as a threat to male authority, as Greek male sexual identity was invariably linked

to the man's ability to control his own sexual desire.<sup>59</sup> Actions which aimed at increasing masculine desire, unavoidably also weakened the self-control of males, effectively stripping victims of much of their maleness.<sup>60</sup> Certainly Theodoret's account gives no power to the male in this situation. He is effectively rendered impotent. It could be argued that by restoring the conjugal unit, the holy man had restored the man to his rightful place as head of the family, affirming him as a man who is no longer subject to the whims and controls of his powerful, spell-laden concubine. However, Aphrahat goes one step further and by providing the wife with oil for anointment ensures her husband's affections are directed towards her. By doing this, although the husband regains his role, he is again placed in a weakened and impotent position, this time under the control of his wife.

The holy man's involvement in this affair is a little puzzling. What was Theodoret trying to convey to his audience by including this love story in his collection? It is here proposed that, given the social context, the holy man may have been acting to restore a culturally constructed view of order. For centuries Roman law had allowed the taking of a concubine by a married man. However, laws in Rome in the fourth century suggest that a Christian element was being included in the laws on concubinage. The *Sententiae Pauli* II.20.1 decrees that a Roman could not be married and have a concubine at the same time. One of Constantine's laws (*Codex Justinianus*, 5.26.1) introduced the prohibition which has consequently been considered to result from Christian influence in this period.<sup>61</sup> It can be argued that Aphrahat involved himself in assisting the woman and providing her with a love potion in order to ensure that the 'new order' of marriage and adultery should be enforced. Indeed, Theodoret stresses that the husband is finally enticed away from the 'unlawful' bed and back into the 'lawful' one, thereby making a clear association of concubinage with an unacceptable, 'unlawful' relationship. Thus in the telling of this story Theodoret sought not only to illustrate the superior power of the holy man but also to present the importance of the conjugal relationship. That is, it can be argued from the narrative that Theodoret sought to highlight the importance of familial stability and respectability, and to promote non-adulterous marriages in which concubinage was no longer acceptable. The story and Aphrahat's involvement appear to assist Theodoret in reinforcing this model of the family unit.

Yet what of Theodoret's and Jerome's accounts of the desperate males instilling frenzied passion and madness in the objects of their desire? These accounts differ considerably from that just discussed. These reports firstly introduce male perpetrators and female victims, and secondly the effect of these love spells is considerably different to the 'bewitchment' under which the husband referred to above was held. Indeed, here we have males seriously affecting the minds and bodies of females who have no established relationship

with them. What is more, the victims' families take decisive and immediate action in rectifying the unsatisfactory situations.

The forms of love spell which the two respective males utilised have already been discussed. What is under consideration here is the motivation for resorting to enchantments, and furthermore why these particularly aggressive supernatural forms were used. Why anyone would want the object of their desire to suffer madness and intense physical discomfort has prompted a number of theories by various scholars. The most prominent of these theories can be broadly categorised as: (1) lovesickness, (2) the transposition of desire, (3) social climbing and lovesickness, and (4) gender construction and marriage practices. While a detailed examination of these various approaches is not necessary here, their main arguments will be briefly outlined.

The first classification of 'lovesickness' has been predominantly and persuasively presented by Winkler in his study on desire within the context of the social constructions of antiquity.<sup>62</sup> The approach involves the utilisation of anthropological and especially psychological methods in attempting to understand the ancient mindset, and proposes that the violence of language and gesture in many erotic spells is due to the projected intensity of the performer's own sense of victimisation by a power he is helpless to control. Therefore the pain he wishes the victim to suffer is a reflection of his own suffering of ἔρωϛ. The actions serve as a last-ditch effort and therapy to the love-struck perpetrator. Because of the cultural construction of ἔρωϛ (the intensity of which was discussed on p. 85), the control that is exercised by the agent represents a form of control over his own desperation, and may be an attempt to pass the infliction onto someone else. Alternatively, it is proposed that it might be healthy for a self-conceived victim of love to act out a scene of mastery and control to see just what the torments look like.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, Winkler argues that the *agoge* spells, which seek to lead a woman to a man, are usually aimed at women who are guarded and watched. In a world with a very strong honour and shame ethos, a woman who acts on her own sexual desires would bring shame with her actions. However, if the family can say that a daimon made her do it, they can minimise family shame. It is argued that the *agoge* spells are a discourse of female desire, and the social implications of this autonomous desire are alluded to in various texts that request the forgetfulness of parents and relatives, husbands and children.<sup>64</sup>

Closely aligned with Winkler's ideas is the idea of 'burning' presented by LiDonnici, in which the idea of the victim's body burning represents the inflammation of desire in the body and mind of the victim. Inflicting fever is a means of restoring lost self-esteem, due to frustrated love, by placing a higher degree of desire in the victim than that felt by the protagonist (who thereby regains some self-control), or afflicting the victim to the point where the spell-caster is accepted as a lover. LiDonnici argues that both

of these notions of reasserted control worked together.<sup>65</sup> As ἔρωϝ was a negative force, knowledge of which could damage reputation and career, LiDonnici argues that the secret rituals of these spells could provide psychological benefits through the control of desire. However, she notes that this argument does not explain what spell-casters believed they would achieve, thus asserting that if self-worth included a measure on how one controlled desire, then there would have been few legitimate, socially sanctioned, methods to eliminate ἔρωϝ. Hence when no legitimate means existed for addressing the issue, people went underground and utilised methods which were hidden – that is, ‘magic’.<sup>66</sup> Cyrino’s presentation of the poetic image of ἔρωϝ supports LiDonnici’s argument. Cyrino writes

that the poetic image of the physical disease of love expanded so readily to include the ideas of mental disorder and erotic madness seems to derive from the archaic Greek conception of the organs of thoughts and emotion as corporeal entities: the palpitation of the heart easily becomes the more metaphorical heartache, which in turn translates into abstractions such as an ailing soul or a mind disturbed by erotic desire. One thing is clear in this equation: the return to health and sanity may only be possible through the fulfilment of shared eros.<sup>67</sup>

The third interpretation of erotic spells and curses proposes that the imagery and desires of the spells represent social competition and love sickness. In this case, when the spells are seen within the general social context of competition, the erotic spell appears to be a way of obtaining a female of good standing, one who would not normally be accessible to a particular male.<sup>68</sup> This being the aim, it does explain why the spells generally seek a permanent union. Given the seclusion of females and the success, standing and honour associated with a good marriage, this social ladder-climbing hypothesis seems to provide a good explanation for the desperation apparent in the *agoge* spells and binding spells.<sup>69</sup> Here, however, the few spells made by women and the presence of a few homosexual spells question the role of erotic spells solely as a method in the struggle for position and social goods. Therefore, an element of ‘lovesickness’ is also admitted into this hypothesis, arguing that the spells could be used by an individual in an emotional crisis who is provoked by mad love for a person who seems out of reach.

Faraone suggests that the utilisation of both *philia* (seen in Theodoret’s earlier account) and ἔρωϝ spells allows us to see socially constructed gender (that is, not biologically defined gender) in the ancient world. It is argued that the erotic spells, such as the binding and *agoge* spells, seek to invert the ‘natural’ gender construction (passive female and aggressive male) by inflaming the naturally passive and mild female into a passionate individual (hence the use of fire imagery etc.). In essence, they masculinise

the feminine. The few anomalous examples of female and homosexually commissioned binding spells serve to highlight how gender is socially constructed in the world of love ‘magic’.<sup>70</sup>

This interpretation further argues that parallels can be drawn between the two types of supernatural love ritual and two types of Greek marriage (betrothal marriage and bridal theft/abduction marriage), the crucial difference between these two forms of marriage being the public consent involved and the willingness of the bride. Faraone argues that the similarity of abduction marriages and *agoge* spells lies in such aspects as the violent imagery, the unwillingness of the victim, the lack of parental and public consent, as well as the use of transitory violence until the female is free for the man alone.<sup>71</sup> Faraone writes: ‘I seek to explain the violence of *agōgē* magic not as some universally recognizable feature of a lovesick or jealous practitioner, but rather as a traditional and practical response to problems of access to women of marriageable age.’<sup>72</sup>

Thus several alternative, though in many ways interrelated, theories have been proposed and utilised by scholars in understanding the phenomenon of love spells. Given the evidence presented for Syria and Palestine it seems feasible to argue that all of these approaches to the material are applicable, especially if used in combination. For instance, the final two proposals, which include social climbing, and the link of the erotic spells to the inaccessible victim, as well as the parallels which can be drawn between the *agoge* spells in particular, and abduction marriages, can all be related to both Theodoret’s and Jerome’s accounts of the possessed girls. Likewise ideas of frustration and psychological torment suffered by the victim of *ἔρωσ* (the male) could inspire the use of ‘burning’ passion rituals on the female. To this can also be added the concept of the female and her sexual shame, the vulnerability of which is highlighted through the use of the *ἔρωσ* spells – something which is seen in two of the hagiographical accounts above.

Let us begin by looking at the inaccessible spell victim. In this instance there are two scenarios involving inaccessible females. As has already been outlined on pp. 94–5, both the ‘lovesickness’ and ‘lovesickness and social climbing’ theories involve the protagonist’s desire for the inaccessible female. In Theodoret’s account, it is recorded that the girl is still kept at home. This suggests that she is unmarried, and also that she is kept at home out of social contact as social etiquette ordains in this period. This being the case, it also suggests that the victim is not from the lower socio-economic class for whom such isolation may not have been possible. While her inaccessibility may provide some of the motive behind the supernatural, erotic attack, the father’s actions suggest that there is a greater threat posed by the use of such a spell. It is here that Faraone’s suggestion of bridal theft and its relation to *ἔρωσ* spells seems applicable. If, as Faraone suggests, parallels can be drawn between the violence of bridal theft and *agoge* spells, then perhaps we can go one step further and propose a link between

the actual use of  $\xi\rho\omega\varsigma$  spells and a real bride abduction. That is, perhaps the father was wary that the abduction would follow. There is nothing apparent in Theodoret's account to suggest this. Nevertheless, the impact that knowledge of the spell had on the father, and the spell-caster's apparent love for the girl, do allow for some speculation on this possibility. That is, the supposition can be made that the girl's father objected to the male suitor (hence his immediate reaction) and that the latter could therefore possibly attempt a union without familial consent.<sup>73</sup>

Jerome's account of the female victim also alludes to her inaccessibility, while the reactions of the family and the holy man suggest that similar concerns to those just discussed are also relevant in this instance. This girl is a virgin of God – she is virginal and labelled as unapproachable; she is in effect portrayed as special, one whose honour must be preserved. It is this social presentation of the girl that the family and the holy man, Hilarion, wish to uphold. She is the ideal, a virgin, and to Hilarion she is a sacred virgin. The youth is a threat to her honour, her female integrity, and her family's honour. Although his advances are rebuffed, he seeks alternative and more powerful means to win her over. The image presented by Jerome is of religious purity being overcome by daimonic powers.

The possible wedlock of a daughter to a suitor not approved of by the family was a serious issue in antiquity. The father not only had practical issues of inheritance, and the lack of control over finding a 'suitable' match for his daughter, but there was also the cultural taboo of shame against unsanctioned marriage. Faraone uses bridal theft as a model to explain the violence of the *agoge* spell as a necessary but transitory step in creating a new social alliance not altogether welcomed by a female's family.<sup>74</sup> Certainly in Theodoret's account the idea of the alliance is not welcome, and the contemporary threat of bridal theft provides an applicable model.<sup>75</sup> A woman's status defines the status of the males related to her; as a result maintaining a female family member's honour is crucial to maintaining the father's.<sup>76</sup> Consider for instance Campbell's argument that

the law of reciprocity applies: when insulted or injured the man of honour must retaliate in at least equal measure if his personal prestige is to be upheld, and the man of honour is at his most sensitive when a woman from within the family group is in any way threatened.<sup>77</sup>

The Mediterranean world in this period was ordered very much by public opinion and the honour and shame that accompanied it. In Jerome's account, the very identity of the female is constructed as that of a 'virgin of God'. The youth, with his effective erotic spells, threatens to pollute her integrity and ultimately that of her family. He threatens to make an unsanctioned union.

By bringing the matter to the attention of the courts in Theodoret's account, and thereby making it a public matter, the father possibly sought to restore any honour that had been lost, or alternatively to ensure that no shame could be brought upon his family.<sup>78</sup> This is not just an attack against the female victim, but against her family. The shame is a family shame, not an individual shame. The *Codex Theodosianus* supports this idea, for it is the *Codex* itself that states that bad practices such as love spells can damage a person's safety and reputation.<sup>79</sup> This implies that turning another's mind to lust through *magicae artes* would damage a victim's safety and reputation. Within a Mediterranean social context this can be extended to include the reputation of the victim's family.<sup>80</sup>

The force of ἔρωϛ, as already mentioned, was uncontrollable and could have tremendous psychological and physical effects on an individual. Furthermore, it imposed itself forcibly on an individual from an external position of power, and it was ἔρωϛ that was utterly in control of the stricken individual's destiny.<sup>81</sup> Hence it is necessary to take into account the male protagonists of the two ἔρωϛ spells one final time. If the power of ἔρωϛ is considered, then these males are in effect not to be seen as deliberately out to disrupt social order by instigating their devious supernatural behaviours. Indeed, they could be regarded as the frustrated victims of ἔρωϛ, powerless over their actions. If this ancient view of all-powerful and destructive ἔρωϛ is here used to explain the actions of the youths, then it can be said that they appear to have a passive role of diminished responsibility (possibly a reason why they receive very little punishment in both hagiographical accounts). Furthermore, if the argument made above regarding unsanctioned matrimony and family honour is extended a little, this limited liability on the part of the youths, had their spells been successful and the holy men not interfered, may also have diminished some of the shame associated with their actions and the consequent shame they cast on the girl and her family. That is, if an alternative outcome is considered (one of unsanctioned marriage, abduction or another scenario, with which a family must attempt to appear socially honourable), by saying 'ἔρωϛ made me do it', the youth cannot be blamed. He is not responsible for his deviant behaviour. In such a scenario where the union is achieved (the spell is successful) the family can possibly maintain some respect by associating all the deviant action of spells and inflamed passions (by both the afflicted male and female) with the supernatural force of ἔρωϛ.

Having thus considered the male protagonist as himself a poor suffering victim of ἔρωϛ, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that the most immediate victims of the intense ἔρωϛ spells are the inaccessible females. Although the men are the dominant players in these two accounts, the female victims also play a particular role. They, after all, are the ones who are daimonically possessed. They are the targets for men's desires and must be protected from any physical advances. Furthermore, if the male protagonist in each case was

struck by the uncontrollable and devastating force of ἔρωσ, then it was not their female victims who were responsible for igniting their desire. Indeed both hagiographical accounts support such a notion by stressing the girls' inaccessibility and even disinterest, and as such they are dismissed as the causes of the desire. Thus there is a representation of innocence, an image of which the girls' families can be proud, an honourable picture.

In contrast to this notion of purity and honour, however, stands the portrayal of the frenzied girls, the possessed girls, whose behaviours, and their male associations, threaten the family unit. That their behaviours and the cause of them would threaten the family's reputation can be understood within the framework of sexuality in the Mediterranean, and the alignment of sexual shame with women. Thus women were to avoid provocative behaviour and protect their virginal reputations, as the hagiographical heroines and their authors did.<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately, failure to uphold this behaviour compromised the honour of all members of the family and could lead to the fall of the family's reputation.<sup>83</sup> The love-spell victims compromised their behaviour by falling subject to the erotic spells of their male admirers. Thus, given this social script it is hardly surprising that Jerome so overtly lays the shame and blame on the female victim by way of Hilarion's rebuke of the girl and her own weakness and vulnerability to the daimonic assault. Indeed, in these accounts, and thus perhaps in fourth-century society, it is ultimately the female victims of love spells who are assigned the precarious roles that threaten family and male honour through their gendered responsibility to adhere to social expectations of appropriate and reputable behaviour.

Finally, a proposition is introduced, already alluded to, concerning a further motivation for the holy men's (or their hagiographers') involvement in these issues of unrequited and unsanctioned love. It has been argued on p. 93 that the portrayal of Aphrahat's involvement in love practices could be seen as a means of presenting the restoration of the conjugal unit. Here it is proposed that Macedonius and Hilarion sought not to restore but to *preserve* the integrity of the family unit and the sanctity of sanctioned marriage. Thus the erotic spells are thwarted and the girls are restored to their family unit. If this view is considered, then it can be said that Macedonius saved the accused youth from a charge being laid against him by the judge, because such action would be deemed unnecessary once the family's honour had been reinstated by the daimon's revelations and the family unit preserved (as the female was saved from an unsanctioned alliance).

### Conclusion

Given the clear parallels between the hagiographical accounts presented in this chapter and the extant evidence of erotic spells, tablets and papyri, and other literary forms from the Graeco-Roman world, the hagiographical accounts have been seen to represent identifiable scenarios, practices and

concerns of the cultures and societies in which they were set. Thus the accounts, as well as the extant Aramaic sherd from Palestine, allowed for the supposition that there was some utilisation of supernatural love rituals in both Syria and Palestine in the fourth century.

Through the discussion of these accounts it has been argued that social concerns for family unity, marriage, honour and shame are notions that can be seen as significant motivators in the scenarios of the supernatural love practices. These concerns, intertwined with social conceptions of sexuality and gender, created situations of frustrated desire and fevered passion, instigated by the powerful and destructive force of  $\xi\rho\omega\varsigma$ , the eradication of which required serious supernatural assistance. Furthermore, given the nuances of the narratives in taking into consideration all those aspects of life, family and society with which the audience contended, it can be argued that in these hagiographical accounts the promotion of the ascetics' sensibilities to the concerns of their society provided an important discourse in which their hagiographers could best portray their relevance and prowess. As a consequence they provide a unique view into the possible social contexts of, and hence motivations for and reactions to, the  $\xi\rho\omega\varsigma$  rituals of fourth-century Syria and Palestine.

## THE APOTROPAIC

*Protecting good fortune*

May the angel, who has rescued me from all harm, bless them! May my name and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac live on through these boys! May they have many children and many descendants!

(Genesis 48:16)

This often recommended Jewish prophylactic against the evil eye introduces us to the apotropaic realm of late antiquity.<sup>1</sup> Apotropaic devices of all forms, shapes and sizes sought to influence supernatural forces so as to protect people, animals and property from the attacks of evil influences. There were various methods of protection which ranged from personal amulets worn or carried on the body to inscriptions and decorations on private and public buildings.

Both the Syrian and the Palestinian evidence demonstrates that these regions' fourth-century residents also sought to protect themselves from the malevolent through a variety of means. These endeavours will be discussed shortly. Before embarking on this discussion, however, the most prominent and pervasive threat in the Graeco-Roman world, the evil eye, will be introduced. Usually called *baskania* or *phthonos*, this belief prescribed that misfortune could result from envy.<sup>2</sup> Thus those aspects of life which could induce envy were the most vulnerable, such as success, fame, fortune, beauty, pregnancy and youth.<sup>3</sup> These were susceptible to the envy of humans or daimones, an envy which would result in an attack of misfortune. Heliodorus provides one perspective on how such an attack could occur, in his novel *Aethiopica*:

whenever anyone looks with envy upon beautiful objects, the ambient air becomes charged with a malignant quality, and that person's breath, laden with bitterness, blows hard upon the person near him. This breath, made up of the finest particles, penetrates to the very bones and marrow, and engenders in many cases the disease of

envy, which has received the appropriate name of the influence of the evil eye.<sup>4</sup>

That envy posed some threat to individuals is a notion evident amongst intellectuals throughout late antiquity.<sup>5</sup> Consider for instance the fourth-century bishop Basil of Caesarea who also reflects on this phenomenon and its perceived effect:

some think that envious persons bring bad luck merely by a glance, so that healthy persons in the full flower and vigour of their prime are made to pine away under their spell, suddenly losing all their plumpness which dwindles and wastes away under the gaze of the envious, as if washed away by a destructive flood.<sup>6</sup>

His contemporary John Chrysostom does not deny the power of envy, though he is reluctant to associate people's eyes with the power of envious harm.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of its perceived method of attack, however, belief in the evil eye was widespread and, as will be seen, it also pervaded Palestinian and Syrian thinking.

Thus it is this notion of the evil eye that is central to much of the evidence discussed below. As a slight deviation from previous chapters, an intermediate section will follow which will mention the protective practices usually believed, or assumed by scholars, to have existed in late antique Syria and Palestine, but for which no fourth-century evidence has been uncovered in the course of this study. This slight deviation is presented on account of the popular argument for the homogeneity of apotropaic practices,<sup>8</sup> which suggests that other activities, apart from the extant evidence presented in this chapter, may have existed in these regions in the fourth century. Having examined the extant evidence, and also speculated on other possible methods, the discussion will then turn to consider the motivations for protective supernatural practices. It will be proposed in the course of this analysis that the utilisation of apotropaic protection was intrinsically linked to a cultural perception and estimation of good fortune, and an appreciation that this 'blessing' was the most vulnerable to supernatural attack. Furthermore, it will be suggested that fortune was coveted and highly prized due to the notion of limited good, and that it was this underlying belief system and its relation to envy that led to the prevalent need for protection against malevolent supernatural harbingers of misfortune.

## Syria

Libanius provides us with a glimpse at the consequences of certain behaviour and resultant envy. Consider for instance his words of condolence to a friend who had suffered a misfortune. The rhetor writes: 'By rights, your whole

household should be safe, with no shaft of Envy, either small or great, to attack you: the humanity you employed towards your subjects, the gods should employ towards you.’<sup>9</sup> Thus it is apparent from Libanius’ comments that the perceived behaviour of Salustius was such that it could not attract envy, and therefore should not have attracted misfortune. In contrast Libanius feels that the praise given to three boys would put them at risk from the gaze of the evil eye.<sup>10</sup> Praise, it seems, invoked the attention of the malevolent force. Thus for Libanius envy (*φθονος*) and the behaviour which incited it did pose a threat to individuals. That he was aware of these factors with regard to his own behaviour is apparent from several references made in his orations in relation to the attitude of others to him or his work. Consider for instance the examples discussed in Chapter 5 when accusations were levelled against him by those whom he considered envious. Consider alternatively his assertion in another oration of his own humble behaviour, which could not attract the attention or scorn of others – arguably including envy.<sup>11</sup>

Libanius’ references to envy largely concern behaviour and its appropriate modification so as not to attract the attention of the evil eye and, thereby, misfortune. Yet, behaviour was not the sole option available to people in Syria hoping to protect themselves from the misfortune of envy; various devices were available to serve as deterrents. One instance is a fourth-century amulet from a tomb in Beirut. The lamella, a narrow strip of silver encased in a bronze tubular capsule, has its protective inscription written across the width of the silver.<sup>12</sup> The text opens with an adjuration that seeks to protect Alexandra ‘bore from every demon and from every compulsion of demons, and from demons and sorceries and binding-spells’.<sup>13</sup> It then continues to call upon a series of angels, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,<sup>14</sup> in order to

protect Alexandra whom Zoê bore from demons and sorceries and dizziness and from all passion and from all frenzy. I adjure you by . . . that all male <demons?> and frightening demons and all bindings-spells flee from Alexandra whom Zoê bore, to beneath the founts and the Abyss of *Mareôth*, lest you harm or defile her, or use magic drugs on her, either by a kiss, or from an embrace, or a greeting; either with food or drink; either in bed or intercourse; either by the (evil) eye or a piece of clothing; as she prays, either on the street or abroad; or while river-bathing or a bath. Holy and mighty and powerful names, protect Alexandra from every daimon, male and female, and from every disturbance of demons of the night and of the day.<sup>15</sup>

The text of this amulet provides significant insight into the wide spectrum of protection and power that an amulet could offer. In this case Alexandra

was to be protected from daimones of day and night, male or female, and so on. Furthermore, she was to be defended from any number of methods by which harm could be inflicted, such as daimones, *καταδέσμοι*, *φάρμακα*, food, an embrace, and the eye (*ὄφθλαμός* – most probably the evil eye).<sup>16</sup> This was indeed an all-encompassing apotropaic amulet.

Yet, although this amulet seems to aim to protect Alexandra from many things, there is a notable concern with protecting her sexual honour. Note, for instance, that the amulet is to protect her from passion (*πάθους*), frenzy (*μανία*), *καταδέσμοι*, defilement, and *φάρμακα*. These all seem to relate very strongly to sexual passion and more particularly the supernatural methods which relate to them, such as those which we have already come across in the previous chapter. In his presentation of this amulet, Kotansky notes that it is not clear how ‘personalised’ the charm really is in the sections which relate to Alexandra’s activities, or the procedures which threaten to malign her sexually, as the text in these instances seems to follow patterned formulas.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless it is worth considering this content a little further in order to gauge better the concerns and reasons for the inclusion of such passages and, given their formulaic nature, the concerns of the wider community also.

These passionate threats reflect the danger of uncontrollable and undesirable *ἔρωσ* posed by outsiders. For instance, for Alexandra to be assailed by a binding spell (*καταδέσμος*) could render her struck by a passion for an individual undesirable to her or her family. Here the love spells discussed in Chapter 6 are directly relevant as they, it was argued, were a means for suitors to influence passions outside of familial sanction and control. Hence there could be some impetus to protect Alexandra from the undesirable behaviours associated with *ἔρωσ* spells and with the objectionable love match which they could force.

In addition, the *καταδέσμοι* and *φαρμάκα*, as the amulet itself says, could ‘harm or defile her’. This they could do through a greeting, an embrace, a kiss, or even intercourse. If the social context of this tablet is considered, the position of the chaste or faithful female which set the standard role model is here epitomised in the negative behaviours from which Alexandra is to be protected. Such physical interaction, and especially the intercourse, which given the context is arguably implied, would tarnish the reputation and social standing of any family for it would be perceived as socially deviant behaviour – that is, conduct outside the bounds of socially accepted female behaviour. For a woman to be defiled would not just affect her honour but also that of her family. Hence this amulet can be seen to seek to protect Alexandra from social dishonour or shame.

This leads on to an interesting query regarding who might have commissioned the amulet and its inscription. The answer can only be a matter of speculation as the evidence does not allow clarity on this point; nevertheless it is worth noting that the aims of the amulet may reflect the concerns of its

commissioner. It may have been Alexandra herself, a relative, or even a husband who sought out this formula for the amulet. All parties could have been equally concerned with maintaining Alexandra's honour and keeping her undefiled and unharmed.

One final point to be made about this amulet relates to the apparent vulnerability of the target. It seems Alexandra is vulnerable to the threat of daimones, spells, drugs and the evil eye (*ὄφθαλμός*). Furthermore she is exposed when sleeping, eating, drinking, when looked at by others, and whenever she is outdoors, praying, bathing, travelling, or simply in the street. While the threat of eating and drinking is clear, as drugs can be administered in food and drink, the other activities seem less obvious at first glance. However, if we consider the public setting for many of these activities, the relevance of including them becomes more apparent. Public activities expose her to the envious looks of people, and to the lustful looks of men. Thus Alexandra is vulnerable to the machinations and feelings of others, including men. Interestingly this very vulnerability also highlights the paradoxical role of the female as being socially perceived as susceptible in public places to the scrutiny and opinions of her community, yet at the same time perceived as possessing a strength of beauty, fortune, and/or behaviour that could bring about the envy and/or lust of others.<sup>18</sup>

The next relevant amulet seeks to protect a man named Thomas. This amulet is a fourth- or fifth-century Syrian silver phylactery, consisting of a tubular case worn as a pendant, inside of which was rolled an inscribed sheet of metal. The Greek inscription on the sheet begins with an invocation to thirty-six supernatural figures hailed as 'holy, mighty and powerful'.<sup>19</sup> The forces are asked

to preserve and protect from all witchcraft and sorcery, from curse tablets, from those who died an untimely death, from those who died violently and from every evil thing, the body, the soul and every limb of the body Thomas, whom Maxima bore, from this day forth through his entire time to come.<sup>20</sup>

As with the Alexandra amulet, this phylactery seeks to protect Thomas from human machinations involving the supernatural, keeping him safe from sorcery and 'witchcraft', curse tablets, and the spirits of the untimely and/or violently dead.<sup>21</sup> This amulet, along with Alexandra's, shows a definite awareness of the supernatural activities of other people. Indeed, Heintz argues that 'Phylacteries such as Thomas' forced magicians engaged in cursing operations to take countermeasures; they would include special clauses in their curse tablets urging the demon to break through the amuletic shield surrounding his target'.<sup>22</sup> Hence what is seen in both examples is the need in fourth-century Syria to be protected from the harm caused by others. That others could be deleterious has been seen in the curse tablets and

malevolent supernatural measures used against both Babylas and Libanius discussed in Chapter 5.

There is no apparent concern about possible ‘defilement’ in the amulet for Thomas. That a male might not be concerned about being attacked by a love spell reflects the trend of most *ἔρωσ* curse tablets, instigated as they are by males against females. However, perhaps the lack of concern also reflects the social perceptions of gendered sexuality, according to which female virtue is expected, but (except in ascetic circles) less emphasis or vigilance is placed on male activity.

In addition to this extant material evidence, John Chrysostom makes reference to the use of amulets in the fourth century. For instance, the preacher speaks about people in Antioch ‘who use charms and amulets, and encircle their heads and feet with copper coins of Alexander of Macedon’.<sup>23</sup> These Alexander medallions are known to have been used in the Graeco-Roman world as charms of good fortune and protection.<sup>24</sup> For Chrysostom, however, the wearing of these amulets is not a praiseworthy action. Indeed, he criticises people for placing hope in an image of a former Greek king.

Chrysostom also makes other more general references to people’s use of amulets. In the same homily he berates his congregation thus:

Do you not only always have amulets with you, but incantations bringing drunken and half-witted old women into your house, and are you not ashamed, and do you not blush, after so great philosophy, to be terrified at such things?<sup>25</sup>

Clearly John observed that people were usually wearing amulets and carrying them on, and even all over, their persons, for this was not to be the only occasion on which he dismissed the use of amulets.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, it appears from Canon 36 of the Council of Laodicea that the leaders of the wider Church community, such as John Chrysostom, were also keen to reduce the use of amulets.<sup>27</sup> What is striking about John’s retort, however, is his disbelief that amulet users are unashamed to fear such things now that they have heard the Christian message. At first there may be an inclination to think that John is dismissing the fear of the harmful spirits repelled by these practices. Yet it becomes clear that his concern lies not with people’s fear of daimones but with the persistence of that fear despite the protection of the Christian God. Thus he urges them to say: ‘I leave your ranks, Satan, and your pomp, and your service, and I join the ranks of Christ. And never go forth without this word.’<sup>28</sup> For John these words

shall be a staff to you, this your armour, this an impregnable fortress, and accompany this word with the sign of the cross on your forehead. For thus not only a man who meets you, but even the

devil himself, will be unable to hurt you at all, when he sees you everywhere appearing with these weapons.<sup>29</sup>

John encourages the same action to be used for children to protect them from the evil eye and other dangers.<sup>30</sup> As a representative of the Christian Church he is promoting a stronger kind of protection, involving allegiance to the Christian God, the signing of the cross on the body, and the wearing of the cross as an amulet.<sup>31</sup>

Protection through the signing of the cross on the forehead would presumably not have involved the marking of the face in a method leaving any visible trace. Rather the signing would have required only the gesticulation of the holy symbol over the brow, much as is the custom amongst various Christian followers today. Therefore thanks to John Chrysostom we have a record of an easy and affordable apotropaic practice which appealed for the protection of God with a simple symbolic act (and for which archaeology can offer us no physical trace).

It is clear that Chrysostom hopes to promote the use of the Christian symbol of the cross as the ultimate defence against the supernatural dangers that threaten people. He believes that his God is the only true means to combat evils. Wilken raises an interesting point in relation to John's promotion of the cross in the context of his homilies on the Judaisers. Wilken argues that for John Judaism posed a threat because it may have seemed more powerful to his congregation than Christianity and would thus have been able to swing people's allegiance. John's primary goal, in his view, was therefore to win back Judaisers to the Christian rites and to provide them with the power of the 'sign of the cross' which could ward off daimones.<sup>32</sup> Wilken's point is a valid reminder of the need to consider the competitive supernatural context within which the Christian cross was operating. The mixed religious tones of many amulets and the various means which people used to protect themselves demonstrate that there was little hesitation amongst Syrians in utilising whichever methods would be thought most effective. This they did regardless of the religious affiliation of the individual and the religious or traditional source of the method.

In the protection of babies or children, in particular, a number of traditional or local practices were used in Syria. Amulets and bells were hung around babies for luck,<sup>33</sup> and inscriptions (*γραμματεία*) put on their heads immediately after birth.<sup>34</sup> Children also had red ribbon tied around them.<sup>35</sup> In addition, women and nurses marked children's faces with mud while bathing them in order to avert the evil eye, fascination and envy (recall here that bathing was also an activity which made Alexandra vulnerable to daimonic harm), and ash and salt also held apotropaic powers.<sup>36</sup> For John Chrysostom the concern lay in this action compromising the sealing which was provided by the priest at the child's baptism.<sup>37</sup> This complaint

suggests that though some people may have been following the encouragement of Chrysostom and were adopting Christian symbols and rituals as a form of protection, they were merely adding this to those methods that were already in use.

A method by which people also incorporated apotropaic power into their lives was through ligatures (*legaturae*), which were texts, such as gospel texts, written on paper and kept in a sack worn around the neck. Chrysostom was also against these:

Do you not see how women and little children suspend Gospels from their necks as a powerful amulet, and carry them about in all places wherever they go. Thus write the commands of the Gospel and its laws upon your mind. Here there is no need of gold or property, or of buying a book; but of the will only, and the affections of the soul awakened, and the Gospel will be your surer guardian, carrying it as you will then do, not outside, but treasured up within; yes, in the soul's secret chambers.<sup>38</sup>

The power of the gospel is not denied here, merely the form in which it is used. As with the sign of the cross, John Chrysostom promotes an apotropaic power which is differentiating itself from traditional and popular methods; that is, he places it in intangible objects. He assigns power to a gesture (in the case of the cross) and to memory and learning in the case of gospel texts. By dismissing tangible forms of protection, John Chrysostom is asking people to shift their understanding and perception of how the daimonic could be communicated with, controlled and repelled. Kalleres's argument regarding the exorcistic and apotropaic nature of the ritual language taught in baptismal training also supports this argument. In accordance with this proposal the arming of Christians with ritualised language provided them with an effective form of protection from the daimonic (as well as a method for expelling it; see Chapter 9).<sup>39</sup>

Another form of Christian protection, apparently sanctioned, was also available to Syrians through the holy person. Even while alive the holy man's word, as Brown argues, 'was supposed to replace the prophylactic spell to which anyone could have access; his blessing made amulets unnecessary'.<sup>40</sup> Theodoret provides a personal account, commenting on how the holy man James provided him with considerable protection. He tells how an old cloak of James's which lay under his head acted as a strong defence for him.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, James provided him with such powerful protection that he writes: 'They tried to make war invisibly by using magic spells and having recourse to the cooperation of evil daimons.' One night a daimon came to him and asked him why he fought Marcion and with a threat told him to end the war, adding: 'Know well that I would long ago have pierced

you through, if I had not seen the choir of the martyrs with James protecting you.’<sup>42</sup>

This saintly power could extend to protect an entire community,<sup>43</sup> in life and even in death. It is not surprising then, given the power it represented, to read of the frenzy that could surround the acquisition of a holy relic.<sup>44</sup> Theodoret records how at Abraham’s death people had to be deterred through violence.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, relics and the buildings that housed them offered a tangible, sanctioned means of protecting people against evil – a measure even accepted by John Chrysostom.<sup>46</sup>

Concerns for protection from malevolent forces also extended to the defence of property. For instance, various symbols served prophylactic roles on mosaics in private and public buildings in order to protect those residing within them. These images found on fourth-century Syrian mosaics included sandals, lions and peacocks.<sup>47</sup> In addition to these images, patterns of knots are also attributed an apotropaic quality,<sup>48</sup> such as the Solomon knot which can be found in the centre of a fourth-century figural mosaic from Apamea.<sup>49</sup>

Door lintels also protected homes from malevolent spirits entering them.<sup>50</sup> Prentice, in his study of ‘magical formulae on door lintels’, writes that the name of God and symbols and phrases containing the name of God or Christ were potent charms against evil in the East, and that these ‘were carved or scratched or painted everywhere, even on the interior walls of stables, wine-presses, and shops’, the most common location being the lintel or some part of the frame of a door or a window.<sup>51</sup> The situation of these inscriptions was determined because, ‘as is well known, evil spirits, however ethereal, do not penetrate solid walls, but, like the rest of us, enter by the door or perhaps through the window’.<sup>52</sup> One inscription: ‘In the year 706 (= 394 AD). I am set for the peace of those that dwell here’,<sup>53</sup> has been found on a fourth-century broken lintel from ‘Odjeh. Prentice identifies it as a formula intended to avert evil and has argued that ‘the main purpose of both inscriptions and symbols was either to bring good luck or to avert evil’.<sup>54</sup> Downey also acknowledges the apotropaic purpose of the text and declares that this inscription demonstrates that ‘in spite of Christian teaching, the belief in the evil eye had not wholly disappeared’.<sup>55</sup> The question of whether contemporary Christian teaching even sought to dispel ideas on the evil eye is certainly not as apparent as Downey seems to believe,<sup>56</sup> nor is the apotropaic message in this inscription more lucid than in others which Downey dismisses. Thus the interpretation of such evidence is open to debate. On the contrary, given the social understanding of the supernatural and the malevolent threat of the evil eye, it seems reasonable to accept that inscriptions on doors, such as potent symbols and biblical passages, acted through their embedded meanings of supernatural potency to defend a property and its inhabitants from misfortune.

Objects used within the household could also hold apotropaic significance in fourth-century Syria. One instance is a silver mirror dated to the third–fourth century. This mirror has a handle soldered onto its back in the shape of a knot of Hercules.<sup>57</sup> This knot, like those found on mosaics, could have apotropaic powers.<sup>58</sup> That protective artefacts formed part of the household is also suggested by the material evidence from an early fourth-century family vault in Amman, which includes amongst its household equipment a phylactery tube, bronze bells and two gold plaques in the shape of the evil eye. The presence of the artefacts also suggests the acceptance of apotropaic devices as ordinary, everyday articles.<sup>59</sup>

Fundamental to the existence of much of the Syrian population were crops, livestock,<sup>60</sup> and businesses,<sup>61</sup> valuable assets that were vulnerable to malevolent attack from the evil eye or malevolent spells. One of the curses directed against Babyllas the greengrocer, discussed in Chapter 5, is a case in point. Here it was evident that the caster of the curse hoped to harm Babyllas’ livestock. Thus part of Babyllas’ livelihood was threatened by the machinations of another individual(s). In the face of this Babyllas would have required some form of apotropaic method to shield himself from such an attack. He might not have known of this particular curse used against him, but it is likely that he would have been aware that misfortune could approach, and would have taken appropriate action, possibly by such methods as already described above.<sup>62</sup> Relevant also is Theodoret’s account of Aphrahat discussed in Chapter 5. In that instance it is reported that the ascetic Aphrahat protected a farmer’s crop from an attack of locusts, a threat of potentially significant misfortune. The defensive measure required the farmer to line his borders with water that had been blessed by the holy man. This then acted as an impenetrable force protecting the man’s crop.

### Palestine

A fourth-century amulet introduces us to apotropaic activities in Palestine. This example from Caesareum reads:

(circum delineationem) *ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά*  
 (In ipsa armilla) *ΕΙΣ Ε[ΕΘΣ---]*<sup>63</sup>

‘One god the one who conquers evils’ is certainly a monotheistic declaration, which suggests a Jewish or Christian origin. However, this actually tells us very little about the possessor of the amulet, except that this one God, whether Christian or Jewish, was considered an effective force in conquering *τὰ κακά*. That these evils included the evil eye is suggested by the illustration that accompanies the inscription. The scene depicts a man on a horse who is spearing a low-lying enemy,<sup>64</sup> a popular image for averting the evil eye.<sup>65</sup> Thus the amulet was intended to protect the wearer from all forms of evil

without any of the specifics, such as the wearer's name, appearing to be included in the inscription. The amulet probably exemplifies a form commonly used, as any individual would have been able to purchase such a charm ready made.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to this tangible example, Cyril of Jerusalem, much like John Chrysostom, takes time to denounce the use of amulets and encourage the use of Christian power, and in so doing affirms their use. Cyril is not merely concerned with the use of phylacteries though, and extends his condemnation to a wide range of supernatural activities. He advises his congregation not to follow such practices as omens, divination, or to use amulets, or charms written on leaves, *μαγείας*, or *κακοτεχνίας*, as such things are services of the devil.<sup>67</sup> Cyril, in his reference to amulets and charms, seems to be associating the use of a phylactery with sorceries (*μαγείαις*) and other evil arts (*κακοτεχνίαις*). While amulets and charms were used for many other purposes apart from protection, as already seen in the previous chapters, another comment by Cyril does suggest that apotropaic devices were also included in his list of taboos, for he says that it is 'Jesus Christ who is the charm able to scare evil spirits';<sup>68</sup> he provides the seal for the soul at which daimones tremble.<sup>69</sup> Thus the fourth-century bishop is discouraging traditional practices and promoting the adoption of Christian supernatural power, although the apotropaic method is a little ambiguous.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless it seems that Cyril, like John Chrysostom, is advocating the dismissal of traditional, tangible forms of protection. This is an idea also promoted by Jerome in his commentary on Matthew, in which he demonstrates a particularly negative view of phylacteries and *legaturae*.<sup>71</sup>

Apart from corporeal devices and individual defences, as in Syria, property in Palestine also exhibited protective measures. For instance Palestinian buildings, particularly Jewish and Christian religious buildings, could be protected by mosaics. Though many of these mosaics have a distinctively religious design, there are several fourth-century examples, either in a single panel or accompanied by other illustrations, of figures or symbols with apparent apotropaic purposes, such as sandals, peacocks, lions and different forms of knots.<sup>72</sup> Two examples are the floor of a cave at Beth Sahur which includes a Solomon's knot,<sup>73</sup> and an entrance mosaic to a monastery at Tell Basul depicting peacocks.<sup>74</sup> Another mosaic at this monastery has a clearly apotropaic purpose shown in the biblical inscriptions included in its design.<sup>75</sup> In a medallion within a square in the centre of a room Ps. 121:8 is presented: 'The Lord will guard your coming in and going out, henceforth and forever',<sup>76</sup> and on the threshold of the room the extant section of an inscription stems from Ps. 118:20, reading: 'This is the gate of the Lord which the righteous shall enter'.<sup>77</sup> These inscriptions bring to mind the biblical passages seen as apotropaic when inscribed on door lintels in Syria, presented on p. 109, and relate to the *Mezuza* discussed on pp. 113–14. That these texts served an apotropaic function is probable, considering both

their prominent positioning – the one residing on the threshold, the other in the centre of the room – and their manifest messages of protection. That is, the one inscription asserts that all who read it will be protected in that space by God (and even upon leaving it), and the other ensures that no malevolent forces (that is, the unrighteous) shall even cross the threshold into the room.<sup>78</sup>

Protection also extended to the security of individual households, which could even be defended by the pious resident virginal daughter of a Christian. Indeed the piety and chastity of the virgin was honoured to such a degree in many regions, including Jerusalem, that households allegedly began to encourage their daughters to follow this path.<sup>79</sup>

It also seems likely that Palestinians, like their contemporary Syrian neighbours, felt the need to protect their animals or livestock. This is argued on the basis of Jerome's hagiographical account of Hilarion, who exorcised animals.<sup>80</sup> The ascetic emphasised that animals, along with humans, were also subject to daimonic attack as they were prized and needed by people. Indeed, it was their value to people that made them vulnerable to an assault. Thus it can be supposed that when taking into consideration that such daimonic threats to livestock existed, people would have taken some measures to protect their animals and incomes from such malevolence.

### **Ambiguous evidence for a broader practice**

Although specific fourth-century Syrian and Palestinian examples have been presented in this chapter, apotropaic practices are generally believed to have been generic in style and form and widely spread throughout the Graeco-Roman world. Thus, for example, an homogeneity is identified in the iconography of evil eye protective devices, particularly in the regions of Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, across the Eastern empire there appear to have been a few popular types of amulet designs or inscriptions used for this purpose, such as the seal of Solomon,<sup>82</sup> the much-suffering eye,<sup>83</sup> the rider saint,<sup>84</sup> the Alexander medallions, formulaic phrases,<sup>85</sup> and representations of certain animals.<sup>86</sup> While reference has been made in the discussion on p. 106 to the Alexander medallions, as well as to the depiction of certain animals, the prevalence of the other types in the Graeco-Roman world, and their absence from the extant evidence already presented, does warrant further consideration. It is possible that these styles were not evident in either Syria or Palestine in the fourth century and that arguments for homogeneity should be treated with caution. However, it seems more likely that limited extant evidence could be skewing the picture. This assertion is supported by the existence of two amulets, discussed in the following paragraphs, which are both broadly dated and loosely assigned provenances incorporating both the regions of Syria and Palestine and the fourth century. That is, they are both dated between the fourth and seventh centuries and

assigned a provenance of Syria or Palestine, with neither of the regions isolated. These amulets, furthermore, display many of the popular iconographic traits just mentioned.

The first is a bronze, pear-shaped amulet, both sides of which are inscribed. The design on the obverse face, drawing on the popular theme of Solomon, shows a rider spearing a now unidentifiable figure that, given depictions on comparable amulets, was most likely a recumbent human figure or a lion. Above this image ΝΙΚΩΝ is inscribed. The reverse of the amulet is reminiscent of the image of the ‘much-suffering eye’. It shows the evil eye being attacked by a trident from above, and by a dagger or spear from either side. The indistinct forms of various harmful animals are attacking the eye from below (and could include any of the most familiar animals found on similar images, such as the lion, ibis, snake, scorpion, dog or leopard). The words ‘Jehovah (ΙΑΩ), Sabaoth, Michael, help!’ are inscribed above the illustration of the suffering eye.<sup>87</sup>

The design on the obverse of the second bronze amulet is again similar to the seal of Solomon. It shows a rider holding a cross-headed spear with which he strikes a prostrate enemy (indicated by a few indistinct strokes). The reverse of the amulet bears the inscription Ο ΚΑΤΥΚ (for Ο ΚΑΤΟΙΚΩΝ), the first words of Ps. 91, a common apotropaic formula.<sup>88</sup> Thus both amulets utilise images and formulae to repel misfortune from their wearers and, more particularly, the evil eye.

While these images and formulaic inscriptions appeared on amulets, they were also utilised on domestic textiles in many parts of the Graeco-Roman world including Syria, as John Chrysostom alludes to the practice.<sup>89</sup> Clothing, such as amulets, provided individuals with protection through the inclusion of words, symbolic motifs, or illustrations, most frequently placed in inconspicuous or concealed locations.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to the apotropaic types just discussed, contemporary Talmudic prescriptions may also have been influential on the Jewish populations of both Syria and Palestine. In contrast to Christian teachings and texts, the Jewish *Shabbat* acknowledged amulets and drew a distinction between the acceptable use of amulets for curative purposes and the unacceptable use of those which had a prophylactic function or were aimed at the prevention of disease and/or misfortune.<sup>91</sup> Whether the Jewish community abided by this prescription, though, is impossible to determine. Yet given that texts on amulets and bowls were often inscribed in Aramaic, it seems likely that a proportion, at least, might have been utilised by Jews.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, the *Talmud* also prescribes that Jewish phylacteries, such as the cloth holding a leather box containing portions of Jewish Law, be tied around the arms and/or forehead.<sup>93</sup> There is, however, no evidence to suggest that Talmudic phylacteries were used to turn away envy or ill-fortune.

The *Talmud* also prescribes the *Mezuza*, the sign prescribed for the doorpost of a house. This involved two portions of script written on vellum which

was rolled up and put in a cylindrical tube of lead or tin. The word *Shaddai* (and sometimes the names of angels) was written on the outside of the roll, which was then nailed to a door-post.<sup>94</sup> The *Mezuza* was intended to remind all who entered the house that God was watching them:

Whoever has the phylacteries bound to his head and arm, and the fringes thrown over his garments, and the *Mezuza* fixed on the door-post, is safe from sin: for these are excellent memorials, and the angels secure him from sin; as it is written ‘The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them’ (Ps. 34.).<sup>95</sup>

It can be argued that the *Mezuza* could also have provided a house with supernatural protection, especially if the parallels between these and the Syrian biblical lintel inscriptions are considered. Furthermore, the assertion that no Jewish equivalents to the Samaritan epigraphy on lintels have been found outside Palmyra suggests that the Talmudic *Mezuza* may have been considered generally apotropaic, as no inscriptions were thus required on Jewish houses.<sup>96</sup>

### The price of good fortune

Having examined the evidence for Syria and Palestine in the fourth century, the discussion will now consider the social context which influenced the use of apotropaic practices in both regions.

The evidence already presented included amulets and phylacteries that protected their wearers against the evil eye, general evils (*τὰ κακὰ*) and people’s curses. Also evident were other methods that people utilised, such as the marking of children’s foreheads with mud, or making the sign of the Christian cross, or household inscriptions and mosaics. The evidence for both Syria and Palestine was largely similar, diverging mainly through an added focus on curses and spells in the amulets of Alexandra and Thomas that have survived from Syria. Although the evident concern for protection against human-orchestrated curses in Syria might seem to be a reflection of a response to a more supernaturally aggressive society in this region, the evidence for Palestinian cursing presented in various chapters in this book does not support such speculation. The material presented, therefore, while specific in mentioning curses as targets in the case of two of the amulets, is more general in nature in the case of the remaining fourth-century evidence. Hence it can be argued that the evidence reflects both the specific threat of curses and the more general, though equally serious, threat of evil daimones, particularly in the form of the evil eye.

To dismiss the prevalence of apotropaic devices as a characteristic of an ‘intensely superstitious society’, as has been done in the past, is to miss the

point of these methods and beliefs in their social context. The Graeco-Roman world was one in which the supernatural played a regular role and apotropaic devices were a means of guarding against unwanted spirits or daimones, much as heavy doors and secured windows protected households from unwanted intruders. In line with this way of thinking, some possible reasons for the need for such supernatural security will be proposed here. Although the interpretation to be offered is in no way intended to be a conclusive or definitive method by which to view the apotropaic phenomenon, it does offer one means for understanding it. Three cultural realities that have already been identified several times throughout the course of the investigation come into play here; namely, vulnerability and envy, as well as the concept inextricably linked to both of them – the notion of limited good.

Let us begin with vulnerability, a fundamental element, it can be argued, of all apotropaic protection. It provided a sense that one is at any time at the mercy of the elements, particularly the element of misfortune in whatever manner it might come. This is amply represented in the evidence, which reveals the sense of vulnerability of all members of society regardless of gender, age or wealth. For instance, the numerous methods used to protect children from evil forces have already been mentioned. These included the wearing of ribbons and bells, the signing of the cross, as well as the placing of mud on their faces. That children were considered susceptible to supernatural attack is perhaps best reflected in their physical and social position. Physically they are weak and, in the case of infants, they are completely dependent on others. Socially they have a somewhat different role, for they represent not just new and young life but also hope – hope for the family, its happiness, its livelihood, its longevity (especially in an age of high child-mortality rates), not to mention the honour associated with having and rearing children. These characteristics place the child in a position of certain esteem, and it will be argued that it is precisely the social esteem associated with children that makes them so vulnerable to misfortune. We have not, for example, come across an express reference to the protection of the elderly, a similarly physically weak and dependent group.

The association of gender with protection has already been discussed. The first tablet described in this chapter concerned Alexandra, and carefully sought to guard her against all the dangers of the supernatural, of human or non-human instigation. Females were believed to be physically vulnerable, as was seen in Chapter 6 in the accounts of the frenzy and mania of the victims of *ἔρωσ* spells, and also socially vulnerable, especially in matters of sexuality, a point particularly targeted in Alexandra's phylactery. Maintaining a woman's chastity, especially her virginity, was an important aspect of Graeco-Roman cultural expectations of behaviour.<sup>97</sup> For instance, John Chrysostom praises as a martyr a young woman who commits the usually unacceptable act of suicide rather than placing her virginity at risk.<sup>98</sup> The esteem that was associated with chastity would have made it vulnerable

(a point which if not clear now will become so over the next few pages). In addition, the perceived weakness of women, along with their perceived 'passive' natures (as opposed to the aggressive male), left them somewhat compromised by their very natures.<sup>99</sup>

Consider also the importance of marriage in late antique society. The value of this contract for the family, and the required good behaviour of the female in attaining a suitable and desirable match, ultimately made the woman vulnerable. That is, she was physically vulnerable through the threat of male aggressors, as demonstrated, for example, in the phenomenon of bridal thefts in this period.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, she and her family were also susceptible to the shame associated with such deviant behaviour, should she be compromised, regardless of her status as a victim (as was seen in Chapter 6, the innocent female could still be saddled with both blame and shame in matters relating to social sexuality).

The apotropaic methods that have been illustrated here, as well as Thomas's amulet, show that men too were considered vulnerable. Thomas's concern was that he not be touched by the curses and spells that might be made against him. His vulnerability lay not in his sexual, but in his physical and social susceptibility. In a competitive society, career or livelihood and honour were always exposed to the machinations and plots of others. Relevant examples here are Libanius', or even John Chrysostom's, countless woes regarding relentless attacks against their professional and social positions, and the curses made against charioteers in the hippodrome.<sup>101</sup> Success was a highly valued social commodity, and as such, as will become clear, that made it and the men who claimed it in any area of life, vulnerable.

Thus it can be argued that men, women and children were not just physically vulnerable but also that they were socially vulnerable – susceptible, that is, to the views, perceptions and actions of others in their social worlds. Furthermore, it would seem that when something was valued by society – such as youth, virginity and success – that is precisely when it became vulnerable to attack. Hence social vulnerability implied susceptibility to supernatural harm.

What is linked to this vulnerability in so many cases is that the valued asset is threatened by envy. Keeping in mind the conclusions on the vulnerability of the valued, let us look at an early twentieth-century passage from 'Das Unheimlich' by Freud. He wrote:

One of the most uncanny and most universal forms of superstition is the fear of the evil eye. Apparently, man always knew the source of that fear. Whoever possesses something precious yet frail, fears the envy of others. He projects onto them the envy he himself would feel in their place. Such sentiments are betrayed by glances, even if we suppress their verbal expression.<sup>102</sup>

Though this is a comment from the twentieth century, there are distinct similarities between the mindset portrayed here and that which is seen represented in the fourth-century evidence.<sup>103</sup> We have already seen that the material suggests that what is valued is vulnerable. This is actually reiterated in a homily by John Chrysostom when, in using a metaphor involving the hazards of possessing treasure, he mentions that wealth that is visible is exposed to the eyes of the envious.<sup>104</sup> But he is clearer on what he means in his commentary on Galatians:

And when you hear of jealousy in this place, and in the Gospel, of an evil eye, which means the same, you must not suppose that the glance of the eye has any natural power to injure those who look upon it. For the eye, that is, the organ itself, cannot be evil; but Christ in that place means jealousy by the term.<sup>105</sup>

Hence we can see from John Chrysostom the fourth-century Syrian association of envy with the evil eye and the belief that it is not the human eye that is the danger but the jealousy it manifests. It follows, then, that those things that could invoke jealousy, such as wealth, are vulnerable to harm.<sup>106</sup>

We have seen then that people when in possession of something socially valued, tangible or intangible, were vulnerable, and that that which threatened them would often be envy. Here it is proposed that their susceptibility and the fear of envy can be related to the notion of limited good – which has already been mentioned in other chapters – the belief that all goods are limited, both material and non-material (for example, food and honour), and that as such these goods are all finite. Thus, as there is only a particular amount of anything available, when one person gains it is at the expense of another.<sup>107</sup> This idea of limited good, it is proposed, can be connected with the social concepts of vulnerability and envy, and ultimately be seen as a catalyst for intensifying the threat of attack on people or property. That is, a person with sufficient or abundant health and/or wealth would have felt threatened by those who had little of either.<sup>108</sup>

We now expand this concept a little. It has been seen that that which is valued is vulnerable. It is often vulnerable to envy. This can be seen as a response to the idea that all goods (even the intangible such as honour and health) are limited in their distribution. It follows that if everything is finite, the possession of it would be highly prized. Accordingly, deprivation of the same subjects the possessor to greater envy, as it is understood by others (those deprived) that they cannot all have the same amount of that blessing. That is, when one person has something of value, for example health, honour, success and children, he/she has it at the expense of another, who will in some way feel envy towards him/her.

Because envy can manifest itself in daimonic misfortune it has the ability to destroy what is already limited and thus so valuable. Consider, for instance, Basil of Caesarea's comment on envy:

persons who suffer from this malady of envy are supposed to be even more dangerous than poisonous animals, since these inject their venom by piercing their victim then gradually, putrefaction spreads over the infected area, . . . this I do say: the devils, who are enemies of all that is good, use for their own ends such free acts as they find congenial to their wishes. In this way, they make even the eyes of the envious persons serviceable to their own purposes.<sup>109</sup>

The threat of the evil eye (*βασκανία*, *ὀφθαλμός*) and envy (*φθόνος*) appears in all the evidence presented to have a supernatural, daimonic dimension, and Basil's comment, while dismissing popular beliefs as 'old wives' tales', clearly also designates the human emotion of envy as a means for daimonic interference in people's lives. Thus it is not portrayed as a deliberate action so much as an action of which the daimonic entities take advantage – a negative human reaction becomes daimonised and harmful. It is not surprising then that people required all manner of techniques for protecting themselves from this harm, as such a belief, involving limited good, vulnerability and envy, would necessitate the supernatural defence of all that could be coveted.

In addition to delineating the need for apotropaic tools of protection, the belief in the malevolence of envy and the ideas of vulnerability and limited good that influence it may also have ultimately affected people's behaviour. It is a fact that the evil eye has often been identified in societies within which a strict social hierarchy dominates, and is most feared by those who should be equal but are not.<sup>110</sup> Pocock, for example, argues that in the case of the Patidar, a society governed by hierarchical principles in which status is given by birth, the superiority of another is not regarded a deprivation, nor a subject of envy, as it is unattainable. However, amongst social equals a rising above the norm does stimulate envy. Thus when people within the same caste accumulate wealth, *najjar*, the evil eye, defines the way that the wealth may be enjoyed, and that is with 'modesty'. People who accumulate wealth have to be seen to be modest by those in the same social class, as well as generous according to their means.<sup>111</sup> Hence the evil eye belief, and the notion of limited good, can be seen as regulating in some manner social behaviour in some communities.

In considering the notion that belief in the evil eye could act as a means for regulating behaviour and social interaction,<sup>112</sup> Libanius' references to behaviour incurring the attention of envy can be recalled. In the case of the rhetor, it is clear that his conduct, or that of others, could be seen to contribute to the receipt of envy. Indeed he implies in the assertion of his own

moderate behaviour that he himself did not warrant negative attention, thereby at least publicly affirming that he was not in receipt of more good fortune (as success or praise) than his peers.<sup>113</sup> However, what about the lack of inhibition in displaying wealth, an apparent feature of the antique world?<sup>114</sup> Here no behaviour modification is immediately apparent. Nevertheless what is evident is the protection of homes (a key manifestation of wealth) with inscriptions, mosaics and various potent objects within (as, for example, the mirror presented on p. 110). Likewise, though garments or jewellery could be flashy, clothing could include apotropaic symbols in their design, and numerous apotropaic devices could also be worn at any one time.<sup>115</sup> Thus wealth was indeed put on display, but many measures were possibly taken against the envy it might stimulate – a different kind of behaviour modification.

So far much of this discussion has focused on envy and the evil eye, as many of the phylacteries are predominantly aimed at this threat. There was, however, another threat revealed in the evidence – the threat that a person's action posed. It can be argued that the concepts that have been discussed can also be applied to these threats. Thus when Thomas is threatened by curses of men, these can reasonably be seen as being motivated by envy of his success in business or in any aspect of his life, given the competitive nature of the society. In other words, if people believed all factors of life finite, then it is no surprise that they might adopt actions to injure others or to protect themselves from that harm. In the case of Alexandra, the harm caused by other people rested in the love spell. A love spell directed against her would pose two risks, physical and social – firstly, the unwanted physical and mental disturbance caused by its instigator; secondly, the shame that these actions would bring to Alexandra and her family. The frenzy, the passion, and the unsanctioned love match would all affect the social perception of the honour allotted Alexandra and her family.<sup>116</sup> Thus even the section of the amulet related to supernatural attacks instigated by humans was concerned with protecting physical and social vulnerability – a vulnerability enhanced by the social importance of chastity and honour, and by the idea that, given their limited supply, these were not attributes that could be easily replaced.

### Conclusion

It is written in the corpus of curse tablets edited by Gager that 'the protective function of amulets can thus be seen to embody a counterstrategy of individual action, undergirded by feelings of self-confidence, optimism, and the ability to formulate and achieve goals'.<sup>117</sup> The evidence and discussion presented in this chapter propose a different interpretative emphasis in considering protective devices by suggesting that their existence and use can best be understood in the light of the social constructs of limited good and envy –

systems of understanding, as it was argued, that promote an awareness of the vulnerability of individuals, their possessions and actions. Such a way of thinking meant that people had to be alert to all possible threats from exposure to harm and that they had to protect themselves, their households, animals and community by whatever means possible and from very real and ever-present dangers.

## ILLNESS AND HEALING

*Threats and retaliation in a discourse of power*

This chapter turns to the role of the supernatural in the healing practices of the fourth century. Although professional medical practitioners were available to treat people's ailments, in both Syria and Palestine people also sought supernatural assistance to overcome, and even to incite, the malevolent forces culpable for inflicting illness. The extant evidence for both regions shows that a variety of methods were utilised in healing, or harming, including such familiar items as amulets and curse tablets. From these artefacts, as well as the homiletic comments of John Chrysostom and hagiographical accounts relating to both provinces, it will be argued in the course of the discussion that the notion of supernaturally caused illness is a fundamental element underlying practices involving sickness. Furthermore, it is this notion that, contrary to popular scholarly consensus, situates supernatural healing methods not as the final remedial resort but as a common alternative option to that provided by contemporary medical practitioners. Finally, it will be proposed that the practice of healing consequently provided a powerful forum for the promotion of effective supernatural prowess, and subsequently its religious or supernal affiliation.

**Syria**

The examination of the fourth-century Syrian evidence begins with two examples of healing amulets. These two specimens form part of a corpus of healing amulets from various regions and periods of the Graeco-Roman world. Many of these contained Christian, Jewish, Graeco-Roman and indigenous religious elements, in isolation or combination, and generally formed a part of the overall healing ritual.<sup>1</sup> The two examples discussed next seek to heal their bearers of epilepsy, headache, and ophthalmia, and demonstrate Jewish and Christian characteristics.

The first amulet bears an inscription indicating that relief was sought for both epilepsy and headache, ailments suffered by an individual probably named Ampelion. The text of the amulet calls upon various powers, including Iao, Adonia and the archangels to 'drive away all harm and all epilepsy

and all [head?]ache of Ampe[elion] whom Orê[---] bore,' immediately and for the rest of her life.<sup>2</sup>

The text's Jewish character and its appeal to Iao, Adonai, and the arch-angels is not uncommon, nor are the ailments it seeks to alleviate.<sup>3</sup> The language of the text – that is, the use of ἀπολαύνειν – also suggests, as Kotansky argues, that the epilepsy and headaches are already established ailments suffered by Ampelion. Thus the amulet, and one can assume the ritual that accompanied it, sought to provide an immediate and long-lasting remedy by expelling illnesses that inhabited the body. However, in addition to these maladies, the κύριοι ἀρχάγγελοι θεοὶ καὶ θῖοι χαρακτῆρες are also directed to drive away πᾶν κακὸν. Such concern for πᾶν κακὸν is reminiscent of the apotropaic devices discussed in the previous chapter. However, it can be argued, that in this case πᾶν κακὸν is seen to inhabit the body and to be associated with the epilepsy and headache, and that thus it is also necessary for this evil to be driven out of the body it is seen to affect.

The other Syrian amulet, a gold lamella, comes from a tomb near Tyre and is dated from the third to fifth centuries. The inscription prays to the Christian trinity and Iao to 'turn aside the afflicting ophthalmia and no longer permit any onset of ophthalmia to occur'.<sup>4</sup> This amulet, identified as Christian, seeks to rid the holder of ophthalmia, a condition involving the inflammation of the eye.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the previous example the ophthalmia is not to be driven out, but turned aside.<sup>6</sup> This, then, appears to be a temporary affliction. The language used suggests that the affliction is not seen to inhabit the body as in the previous example, because the illness need only be turned aside, not driven out – the ophthalmia afflicts, but does not reside. Despite the ailment's transient nature, this amulet also seeks to protect the wearer from ophthalmia in the future. Such a direction suggests that the amulet may have been worn beyond the period required to heal the complaint.<sup>7</sup>

These two examples are not, however, the only sources of information on the use of amulets in Syria. Libanius, for example, mentions the use of charms, possibly similar to that used by Ampelion, in the case of his brother's sudden blindness, in order to receive some assistance through them.<sup>8</sup>

John Chrysostom's inclusion of amulet use in his homilies also provides some insight, both into those who provided these ritual objects and into the contemporary Church's attitude towards their use. In one sermon, for instance, the preacher refers to the practice of using charms, some with amulets and other things, to remedy severe sickness, an act which he considers idolatrous. Therefore it is the rejection of this behaviour that he sees as praiseworthy. For Chrysostom the 'crown of martyrdom' would be brought upon those who opted to reject the amulets and charms and to bear the sufferings of illness instead.<sup>9</sup> It is not surprising then that he glowingly praises a lady who did indeed refuse to use amulets when her child fell ill. The lady, we are told, was so determined in her resolve that despite

the advice of others she thought it better for her child to die rather than be debased by such action.<sup>10</sup> The mother's behaviour and Chrysostom's reference to martyrdom, an act that necessarily requires death, both betray in their apparent brave stance a belief in the efficacy of healing utilising the supernatural. For if such methods were ineffective as well as idolatrous, there would be no life-or-death ramifications involved in not using them. What a relief, then, that John was able to offer people an alternative technique: the word of God and the sign of the cross on the forehead. These are for John the ultimate weapons,<sup>11</sup> and thus he tells his congregations: 'Are you one of the faithful? sign the Cross; say that "this is my only weapon; this my remedy; and I know no other"'.<sup>12</sup>

Chrysostom was not alone in his condemnation of the use of amulets.<sup>13</sup> A strong indicator that others in the Christian community (at least amongst those holding positions of authority in the Church) held similar views is suggested in one of the canons of the Synod of Laodicea, which states:

They who are of the priesthood, or of the clergy, shall not be magicians (*magos*), enchanters (*incantores*), mathematicians, or astrologers; nor shall they make what are called amulets, which are chains for their own souls. And those who wear such, we command to be cast out of the church.<sup>14</sup>

It is not possible to ascertain whether a particular type of amulet (with regard to purpose) was meant in this instruction, but, given its ambiguous or broad use, it seems sensible to include healing amulets amongst its intentions. It is interesting that this canon is concerned not only with the production of amulets by members of the clergy but also with their use of them. This concern and the consequent prohibition suggest that both forms of behaviour were actually occurring within the Church at that time. Furthermore, in this legislation the Church associates the use and manufacture of amulets with magicians, enchanters, mathematicians and astrologers, professions condoned neither by ecclesiastical nor secular authorities.<sup>15</sup> Thus the Church was aligning amulets, their use and production, with behaviour delineated as deviant – that is, unacceptable and diverging from the norm. Indeed, this behaviour was deemed so inexcusable that the wearing of an amulet by a member of the clergy would lead to his expulsion. Given this condition, it is not surprising that their manufacture would also be prohibited. The Canon is also not lucid on whether priests, or members of the clergy, were producers of amulets for their own use or that of others, although describing the objects as 'chains for their own souls' could be interpreted to mean they were manufacturing the amulets for themselves. Thus it is possible that the manufacture of the amulets may have been a service provided to the wider Christian, even non-Christian, community. If this were indeed the case, by prohibiting this source of supply the Church may have

sought to control, in some way, the customary use of amulets within the broader community.

Having made this latter point, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that such influence on community practice may indeed have been marginal as the Christian clergy were only one set amongst many that potentially contributed to healing services involving the supernatural. Other individuals also provided a medley of therapeutic methods, including Jewish healers, female practitioners, and the *μάγντις*.

The first of these, the Jewish healers, actually caused some concern for John Chrysostom, who complains of Christians running to Jews to be healed by 'charms, incantations and amulets'.<sup>16</sup> These people, he claims, would use potions to heal, and would also go to people's homes with their remedial potions.<sup>17</sup> Chrysostom, an opponent of this non-Christian assistance, in a manner reminiscent of his attitude towards healing amulets, pronounced that it was better to remain ill than to be cured by Jewish healers, practitioners whom he classified amongst other dubious individuals who used herbs or supernatural methods.<sup>18</sup> Despite John's opinions, it is apparent from his complaints that Jewish healers in Antioch proved an attractive healing option for members of the Christian community and, it would be thought, also for the broader community. Indeed, it is because of their popularity that John Chrysostom perceives them to be a threat.<sup>19</sup> That Chrysostom's intimations regarding their attraction reflect reality and do not amount to a rhetorical exaggeration is suggested by legislation that indicates that rabbis in Antioch did have a reputation for being able to effect remarkable cures.<sup>20</sup>

It is possible to ascertain a few details regarding at least some of the healing methods utilised by the Jewish practitioners.<sup>21</sup> For instance, John Chrysostom refers to them using amulets, charms, incantations and potions. The idea that amulets were used for healing by these practitioners is strengthened by evidence suggesting their use amongst the Jewish community in as much as the *Sabbath* acknowledges and condones the use of amulets for curative purposes.<sup>22</sup> Extant amulets also reveal Jewish characteristics, such as the example already presented.<sup>23</sup> However, as has been mentioned previously, the appellations of an amulet do not necessarily reflect the religious beliefs or affiliations of the user. They do, though, reflect a belief in the efficacy of the supernal entities invoked on them. Therefore it can be said that extant amulets also imply a perception of efficacious Jewish divinities (including the archangels). In addition to the use of amulets, criticism in the *Palestinian Talmud* is levelled at the practice of whispering charms over wounds, intimating that such behaviour may also have been widespread.<sup>24</sup> Certainly the use of amulets and incantations were common aspects of healing ritual used throughout the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>25</sup> Thus the Jewish healers were at least utilising some methods that were familiar and popular with the wider community; that is, amulets and incantations.

However, it was not their methods that necessarily distinguished them from their counterparts; it was the perceived potency of the methods that would have informed their reputation and popularity.

Providing a similar service to that of the Jewish practitioners were female healers, labelled by John Chrysostom as ‘drunken and half-witted old women’.<sup>26</sup> These women apparently attended to people in their homes and healed the ill with incantations and charms.<sup>27</sup> That their services were generally utilised in the community, and even acknowledged by both contemporary medical and secular authorities, is also suggested by other fourth-century evidence.<sup>28</sup> However, having said that such healing methods were accepted – that is, amulets and incantations as well as female involvement – it seems that the latter was not so readily condoned for a married woman. The *Codex Theodosianus*, for instance, records that assuming the role of *medicamentaria* provided sufficient grounds for a man to divorce his wife,<sup>29</sup> an offence thereby comparable to criminal activity and homicide.

From this evidence it is possible to ascertain that women could and did provide supernatural healing in Syria and that their methods included charms and incantations. For John Chrysostom, however, concern lay not simply with the existence of these practitioners and their activities, both unsanctioned by the Church, but with their apparent affront in claiming Christian affiliation in their work. He complains to his congregation:

For when we deliver these exhortations, and lead them away, thinking that they defend themselves, they say, that the woman is a Christian who makes these incantations, and utters nothing else than the name of God. On this account I especially hate and turn away from her, because she makes use of the name of God, with a view to ribaldry.<sup>30</sup>

It is the female healer’s association, or her clientele’s association of her, with Christianity that offends him. John’s lament allows for two propositions. It is possible, for instance, that people were claiming that these healers invoked the Christian God in order to placate the bishop (even though, given his reaction, this intention was clearly unsuccessful). Alternatively, it is also conceivable that the female practitioner could have incorporated the Christian deity into her repertoire because she herself was a Christian, or because there was evidence of an increasing social perception of God’s efficacious power (and hence she was making her product more attractive to consumers). If the latter were the case, it does suggest some degree of flexibility in the characteristics of fourth-century healing practices.

In addition to these practitioners, the *μάγντις* also provided healing services to fourth-century Syrians. Libanius, for instance, appealed to a *μάγντις* regarding the chronic migraine from which he suffered.<sup>31</sup> The rhetor’s comments regarding one of these incidents are interesting. In this case, he records

that the *μάντις* had forbidden him to open his veins for bleeding, and that this was fortunate, for the *ιατρός* had told him that such an action would have been the end of him. Indeed, once Libanius had had the dream that seemed to portend *φάρμακα δὲ καὶ μαγγανεύματα καὶ πόλεμον ἀπὸ γοήτων ἀνδρῶν*, his doctors even told him to seek a cure elsewhere as their profession could not provide a remedy for such maladies (including his gout).<sup>32</sup> In this account, then, it can be seen not only that the esteemed rhetor consulted a *μάντις* but that the latter's advice was also supported by medical practitioners. Thus it is clear that people could seek healing assistance from both supernatural and medical practitioners, and that both, at least in the case of the *μάντις*, could provide advice regarding physical therapy. That is, the *μάντις* did not simply offer Libanius a supernatural remedy (of which no mention is actually made) but gave direction regarding his physical treatment (not to let blood).

There was another healing option available to fourth-century Syrians, which included a variety of methods that were particularly Christian. The promotion of some of these has already been seen above in John Chrysostom's responses to the use of amulets by his Christian congregation, and included the making of the sign of the cross and the use of the 'word' of God.<sup>33</sup> Other methods, however, also formed part of the contemporary Christian repertoire, including the use of holy oil, the laying on of hands, as well as the potent intervention of the holy man.<sup>34</sup>

Interestingly, despite his apparent aversion to the use of lotions and potions, John Chrysostom was not against the use of blessed oil as a healing ointment. Indeed, he reports on an instance when oil from the Church had successfully healed an individual.<sup>35</sup> His account is not isolated, for blessed oil also proved remedial in contemporary hagiographical accounts. For instance, Palladius recounts the story of Benjamin and the healing abilities of oil blessed by him. He writes of Benjamin that:

at the age of eighty years having reached the perfection of asceticism [he] was counted worthy of the gift of healing, so that every one on whom he laid his hands or to whom he gave oil after blessing it was cured of every ailment.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, in this account Palladius introduces another healing technique utilised by Benjamin – the laying on of hands. Apart from these reports, John Chrysostom also tells of a priest who cured the emperor of a fever through the laying on of hands and prayer, and he did so when all other arts had not worked for the ruler.<sup>37</sup>

The holy man Benjamin is only one example of a relatively large group of ascetics who were credited with miraculous healing powers in fourth-century Syria.<sup>38</sup> The hagiographical accounts of healing are in fact too numerous, and often too similar, to warrant individual and detailed discussion here.

Therefore only examples and exceptions to this potent and promoted form of Christian behaviour will be presented (and related accounts will be cited).

Peter the Galatian, an ascetic who spent much of his life in Antioch, receives considerable attention from Theodoret, having been of particular service to the latter's mother on several occasions. The hagiographer writes that his mother first visited Peter on the advice of some friends who told her that the ascetic had performed a miracle on a powerful man of the East, healing, through prayer and the sign of the cross, the same ailment of which she complained. Theodoret, taking pains to emphasise the humility of the holy man, writes that Peter was initially reluctant to cure the woman's eye complaint and only agreed after continued emotional appeals. He told the woman that God healed believers and he would heal her, not because of himself but because of her faith, further saying:

‘so if you have faith pure and unmixed and free of all doubt, then, bidding farewell to doctors and medicines, accept this medicine given by God.’ Saying this, he placed his hand on her eye and forming the sign of the saving cross drove out the disease.<sup>39</sup>

Thus Peter was able to heal an eye complaint (an ailment perhaps similar to the ophthalmia targeted by the amulet described on p. 122) through laying his hand on the mother's eye and making the sign of the cross, having healed a similar condition previously through the sign of the cross and prayer.

Prayer, as utilised by Peter, also proved effective for other ascetics.<sup>40</sup> One such example is Julian, who had the power to expel daimons and heal all types of diseases through prayer alone.<sup>41</sup> A further example is Maësymas who cured a young child by placing it at the foot of an altar and entreating ‘the Physician of souls and bodies’, after which the child became healthy.<sup>42</sup>

Already mentioned on p. 123 was John Chrysostom's insistence on the power of the ‘word’ of God. In hagiographical accounts the words of a holy man could also provide relief to a sufferer. According to Theodoret, his mother was saved from dying of a violent fever by Peter the Galatian who, through saying to her ‘Peace be with you, child’, in greeting, brought about an immediate change in her condition.<sup>43</sup> Thallasius was also able to cure by blessing through a small window of his cell and using the name of Christ, in addition to utilising the sign of the cross, prayer, and the invocation of God.<sup>44</sup>

Thus through various techniques of blessing, prayer and other words, and gesture, the Christian holy men became significant healers in fourth-century Syria.<sup>45</sup> What is more, with these techniques they were able to cure eye complaints and fevers (ailments targeted in the amulets discussed on pp. 121–2), and all manner of diseases. Other afflictions that could be remedied, or for which the holy men could provide assistance, included conditions related

to fertility and childbirth, problems for which healing correlations can be found in extant Aramaic amulets.<sup>46</sup> A couple of examples can be found in the accounts of Romanus and Macedonius. The humble Romanus, for instance, ‘often drove out serious diseases, and to many sterile women he gave the gift of children’.<sup>47</sup> It is also recorded that Macedonius promised to ask God for a single son for Theodoret’s mother, and the child was conceived three years later. Furthermore, during her pregnancy Macedonius also saved Theodoret’s mother from a miscarriage. He achieved this by making her repeat her promise that she would give her son to God and by drinking the water given to her by the holy man.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the curing of ailments, pain relief and prevention were also available to supplicants. Theodoret, for example, records that Peter the Galatian, instead of healing someone of cancer, provided pain relief to the sufferer.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Julian is recorded as having protected people through preventative techniques.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the holy men were also credited with some extraordinary feats for which amuletic parallels may be difficult to find. For example, Julian was able to make a lame man walk,<sup>51</sup> and even more extraordinarily James brought a dead child back to life.<sup>52</sup> In the latter instance Theodoret writes of a family living in the suburbs whose children had all died prematurely. As a consequence, on the birth of their next child the father went to James begging to obtain a long life for his child and promising to dedicate it to God should it live. The child died four years later while the father was absent, yet upon the latter’s return he decided that he should keep his promise and give his child to the man of God. ‘The man of God, placing the child before him and kneeling down, lay prostrate as he entreated the Master of life and death. In the late afternoon the child made utterance and called its father.’<sup>53</sup>

Having thus outlined the role of the ascetic as a powerful healer of people’s numerous and varied ailments, there is one additional aspect of their healing prowess that needs to be discussed – the healing of animals. Theodoret, for instance, reports that Aphrahat was called upon to cure one of the emperor’s horses,<sup>54</sup> while camels, asses and mules also benefited from Thalelaeus’ healing abilities. Considering the importance of livestock, this must have provided a great service to the local community, a point supported by the resultant religious conversion of the community.<sup>55</sup>

It has been pointed out on p. 124 that the Jewish healers in particular were well known and often visited for their healing expertise. The Christian holy men also experienced a considerable degree of popularity. Indeed their actions brought them wide acclaim and a great demand for their abilities. The fame of Maron, for instance, an ascetic living in the region of Cyrrhus, is reported to have circulated everywhere and attracted people from all over.<sup>56</sup> Symeon the Elder was also sought out by petitioners once his healing abilities were known. Theodoret records:

This event not only filled the local inhabitants with awe, but also made the whole city hasten there – I mean Antioch, for to this city the place is subject – as one person begged to be freed from demonic fury, another for an end to fever, another for a cure to some other trouble.<sup>57</sup>

Both the fame and force of these healers also spread beyond life.<sup>58</sup> Consider, for example, Palladius' popularity after death. This holy man performed miracles after his death and Theodoret writes: 'even today his tomb pours forth cures of every kind – the witnesses are those who through faith draw them forth in abundance there'.<sup>59</sup> In this posthumous ability to perform miracles can be seen a transference of the piety and power of the ascetic to his corporeal remains and to the structure that contains them. Such posthumous powers were also present at the tombs of other holy figures, both ascetic and martyr. In the latter case, the powers that arose from death through faithfulness demonstrated, it can be argued, an extension of the long-standing Graeco-Roman belief in the supernatural powers of those who suffered a violent and untimely death. Examples of such potent curative areas include the healing tomb of Zebinas;<sup>60</sup> the tomb of Ammonius, which was 'said to cure all sufferers from shivery fever';<sup>61</sup> the healing spring at the place of the martyrs Eugenius and Macarius;<sup>62</sup> the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian at Cyrrhus; and the relics of the martyr Julian buried near Antioch.<sup>63</sup>

That tombs and relics were popular and desirable is also attested in the accounts of numerous sources that tell of the competition that ensued after the death of an ascetic in order to secure the deceased's body, as in, for example, Theodoret's account of Maron:

A bitter war over his body arose between his neighbors. One of the adjacent villages that was well-populated came out in mass, drove off the others and seized this thrice desired treasure; building a great shrine, they reap benefit therefore even to this day, honoring this victor with a public festival. We ourselves reap his blessing even at a distance; for sufficient for us instead of his tomb is his memory.<sup>64</sup>

While the benefit reaped undoubtedly refers to the supernatural assistance provided to the appellants, it may also refer to the commercial benefits received by the community through the influx of pilgrims known to visit such sites.<sup>65</sup>

Shrines deemed especially beneficial for those seeking healing often supported 'incubation' in order to effect the required remedy. Incubation involved suppliants sleeping at the shrine and receiving a dream that would heal them or direct them in finding a cure by providing pharmacological or

some form of therapeutic advice.<sup>66</sup> A popular site for this kind of activity near Antioch was the shrine of the Maccabees at the Cave of Matrona.<sup>67</sup>

Thus in fourth-century Syria there were various options for an individual seeking to be healed with the assistance of supernatural power. Healing could be provided by the *μάγντις*, the female healer, or the specifically Jewish or Christian healers and relics. These individuals could offer services that called upon one or numerous divinities and daimones in a variety of different ways in order to remedy the afflicted. It appears that an assortment of illnesses were treated by healers and their techniques, ranging from simple headaches through to fevers, epilepsy and sterility. That a fourth-century Syrian would necessarily turn to the healer most clearly affiliated with the suppliant's religious beliefs is clearly not the case. The remonstrations of John Chrysostom and the conversion accounts of the hagiographies demonstrate that people sought out those whom they believed would be the most efficacious. Hence supernatural healing methods could offer individuals both assistance and hope in matters minor and major, affecting not only individual health but also family units (such as in the case of sterility), and thereby playing an important role in fourth-century well-being.

### Palestine

The extant Palestinian evidence provides several parallels with the Syrian practices previously discussed, in terms of both the amulets and the narrative interests of the hagiographers. The investigation begins with an examination of a third–fourth century copper amulet from Kh Muslih aimed at extinguishing a fever suffered by a certain Cassius. The inscription is in Greek and Hebrew and is largely composed of Jewish liturgical language. It seeks health and salvation for:

the whole body of Cassius whom Metradotion [‘given-by-the-womb’] bore:

‘And let there be’ cessation from every pain, and rest.

‘And let there be’ (that) the fever extinguishes itself from him, [both] the great and the slight (fever).<sup>68</sup>

Kotansky comments that the writer of this therapeutic ‘prayer’ was possibly borrowing directly from recommendations found in contemporary medical diagnosis, and that the language may have simply originated in formal prayers to be spoken over the sick.<sup>69</sup> The amulet seeks to stop the pain from which Cassius is suffering – more specifically, fever. Kotansky’s proposal that, given the use of *ἀνάπαυσις*, the amulet addresses a fever that has already flared up and is raging and hence needs to be extinguished, not warded off, seems valid.

The second extant artefact is a lead tablet found near Hebron, south of Jerusalem.<sup>70</sup> The tablet, dated between the third and fifth centuries of the common era, includes an inscription and *charaktères* represented by figures drawn on four lines above the text. The inscription invokes the *charaktères* to inflict suffering, injury, fever, headaches and death on Eusebios (whom Megalê bore).<sup>71</sup> This tablet, unlike the previous examples in this chapter, seeks to inflict and not assuage or alleviate fever. In this case Eusebios is meant to be disabled by the fever, even to die as a result. Why Eusebios deserves this curse is not indicated, although as has been seen in several instances previously discussed, curse tablets usually sought to inflict great misfortune on their targets. None, however, have so clearly demanded illness and death. Indeed, it appears that the caster wanted Eusebios to suffer as well as die, and if LiDonnici's arguments regarding the shame associated with males suffering from fever are taken into account, then Eusebios would definitely be suffering both physically and socially from his ailment.<sup>72</sup> Though no consolation to Eusebios, it is unlikely that he was a solitary victim of such an illness curse. Of relevance here is an account from a later period that demonstrates how curses were acknowledged as plausible causes of illness. Cyril of Skythopolis relates the story of Euthemius:

'I am Euthemius, summoned here in faith. There is no need to be afraid. Show me where your pain is.' When he pointed to his stomach, the apparition (the saint) straightened out his fingers, cut open the spot as if with a sword and withdrew from his stomach a tin strip which had certain *charaktères* on it and placed it on the table in front of him. He then wiped clean the spot with his hand and closed the incision.<sup>73</sup>

The discussion now turns from the physical Palestinian evidence to the written accounts of the fourth century. Sozomen tells of a spot just beyond Nicopolis where Christ is said to have washed his feet in a fountain. The latter, Sozomen declares, consequently possessed the ability to remove all forms of disease from both people and animals.<sup>74</sup> In this scenario an area had been assigned religious significance. It was not just the place, however, but the water that came from the fountain, blessed by Christ himself, that provided the remedial assistance. A noteworthy point in Sozomen's account, however, does not relate purely to the healing properties of the fountain's water but also to the inclusion of animals in the account. That is, the author notes that animals were also healed by the water. The incorporation of this detail serves to inform the reader not only of the site's power but also of its broad benefit. Animals, particularly rural livestock, as has already been mentioned, were an important aspect of antique life. Therefore the opportunity to have beasts cured of ailments would have provided significant assistance to the community.

The remaining Palestinian material relates, once again, to Jerome's hagiographical subject, Hilarion. His account is interesting, for the repertoire of the holy man's healing abilities and ailments virtually mirrors many of those recorded in Theodoret's work. Such similarities highlight the need to approach the hagiographical narrative with care. Nevertheless, the inclusion of such themes in the texts does suggest that contemporary audiences were associating, or being encouraged to associate, these types of abilities and powers with healers. Furthermore, that these figures were truly seen to possess healing powers, whether or not they were exactly those recorded, is demonstrated by the popularity of such figures in the period.<sup>75</sup> Thus these accounts must be read for the messages they sought to convey to their audiences, both in the form of the ailments presented and in the manner in which they were remedied.

Jerome's first account of Hilarion's healing abilities concerns a woman who was despised by her husband because after years of marriage she had had no child.<sup>76</sup> Although he initially shunned the woman's advances, the ascetic eventually asked the woman the reason for her approach and appeal to him. When he understood the reason for her appeal, 'he raised his eyes to heaven and bade her have faith, then wept over her as she departed. Within a year he saw her with a son.'<sup>77</sup> This is an interesting account for a number of reasons. The idea of female infertility is raised, an issue already touched upon. In this account, however, we are told that the woman was, as a consequence of her perceived barrenness, despised by her husband. The importance of reproduction in the antique world is well documented, and this account demonstrates not only the significance of child-bearing but also the ramifications of the perceived failure in achieving this. In this case the woman was despised by her husband; she carries the burden of shame for the couple's infertility. In this account the holy man is moved by the woman's plight. It would appear that he is well aware of the perception of a childless woman by others (such as the husband) and the social importance of having children. It is this plight that moves him to act.

It is also interesting that Jerome, like his counterpart Theodoret, records that the child that results from Hilarion's treatment is male. Considering the importance of male offspring in antiquity, it seems reasonable to assert that the hagiographers sought to impress upon their audience the extraordinary abilities of the ascetics, not just in their prowess in enabling fertility in the first place but also in that the final outcome of their treatment was the most prized offspring of all, a son.

A final point in regard to this account is Hilarion's method of curing the infertility – weeping and raising his eyes to Heaven. The holy man's turning to Heaven can be seen to represent a direct appeal to the heavens, or God, through the raised face and possible silent prayer (invocation) that accompanied it. The weeping, on the other hand, may have served to tell the audience any number of things. Perhaps it simply represented the extreme pity that the

holy man felt for the woman. Or the tears may have represented blessed water. However, the hagiographer may also have been drawing on Gospel accounts of Jesus and his weeping for the death of Lazarus, thereby presenting a parallel in this account of the ascetic.<sup>78</sup>

In another description of Hilarion's healing prowess, the supplicant is again a woman. This time, however, she is already a mother who seeks a remedy for her sons. Jerome writes that the woman, Aristnete, was well known, especially amongst Christians, and was married to a future praetorian prefect. As she and her family were returning from a visit to Antony, in Egypt, they were forced to stop in Gaza because her three children were ill, 'all alike seized by a semi-tertian ague and despaired of by the physicians'.<sup>79</sup> When the mother found out that Hilarion was in the 'neighbouring wilderness' she immediately set out to find the holy man with only her handmaids and eunuchs; forgetting her status, 'she only remembered she was a mother'.<sup>80</sup> Aristnete besought Hilarion, telling him that should he assist the Lord's name would be glorified in the city of gentiles, and the Lord's servants would enter Gaza 'and the idol Marnas shall fall to the ground'.<sup>81</sup> The holy man initially refused her entreaties, saying that he never left his cell nor entered the city, but Aristnete threw herself to the ground crying out repeatedly: 'Hilarion, servant of Christ, give me back my children: Antony kept them safe in Egypt, do you save them in Syria.'<sup>82</sup> Everyone wept, including Hilarion, and the woman did not leave until he agreed to assist. The ascetic went to Gaza after sunset, where he made the sign of the cross, and called upon Jesus, over the bed and limbs of each child. The children's fevers broke almost immediately.<sup>83</sup> News of the matter even spread abroad and people flocked to Hilarion from Syria and Egypt, and Jerome writes that many converted to Christianity, some adopting the monastic life.<sup>84</sup>

There are a number of points worth considering about this report. Firstly, Jerome's suppliant is not only a woman, she is an important woman. Not only is this stated at the beginning of the account but it is also emphasised in the commentary when the extent of Aristnete's accompanying retinue is recorded. Jerome also implies that this collection of escorts would still have been considered inappropriate. Indeed, in taking the limited retinue and hurrying to the holy man so expediently the concerned mother was not acting honourably, but we are assured by Jerome that this was all right as she was acting as a good mother. Therefore, while her female honour was imminently threatened through her behaviour, it was saved through her exceptional actions as a parent. This reflection can be related to another point worthy of consideration and one that is paralleled in Theodoret – that is, the need for women to plead for the holy man's assistance. This inclusion in the narrative probably serves to highlight the humility of the holy figure, who shuns the advances of women as part of the ascetic abstention from sexual conduct.<sup>85</sup> However, it may also reflect the social idea that a

woman of good family was not meant to be entreating a strange man, an idea supported by Jerome's stress on Aristnete's behaviour.

Another point of interest with regard to this account is the idea that healing the woman's sons would promote Christianity in Gaza and overcome the idol of Marnas. This suggests an awareness by the supplicant of the influence healing ability could have on people's religious allegiance (especially when promoted by individuals with power and sway). This idea is exemplified at the end of the account when, upon healing the boys, the news of Hilarion's success spread widely and attracted people from afar, many subsequently converting to Christianity.

Hilarion again weeps in this account, although clearly through emotion rather than for healing (suggesting that his weeping mentioned on pp. 132–3 also expressed his emotions). The holy man's remedy is here provided through making the sign of the cross above the ailing boys and their limbs, while also invoking Jesus. This therapy is strikingly similar to that propounded by John Chrysostom as effective for all Christians (and not only those individuals deemed worthy of receiving divine gifts and abilities from God, such as ascetics<sup>86</sup>). This simple method, one apparently available to all believers, cured ill youths of whom physicians had despaired. Thus Hilarion is portrayed as healing those whom secular medicine could not assist. This could suggest that healing through the supernatural was in this case indeed a last resort. However, it does provide the author with a very effective narrative tool, strengthening the position of the holy man as the ultimate healer through simply portraying him as able to heal that which others, with respected abilities, could not.

In a brief report, Jerome tells of another instance in which Hilarion proved beneficial. The account relates to a man named Majomites who was paralysed while quarrying building stones near the monastery. The disabled man was carried to Hilarion, and following his visit 'immediately returned to his work in perfect health'.<sup>87</sup>

There is not much detail to be gleaned from this account, although a few aspects can be briefly considered. Firstly, Hilarion is portrayed as able to heal the paralysed. This demonstrates extraordinary ability, for which parallels can also be found in the Gospel texts and Theodoret's hagiography, as previously discussed. Secondly, this account highlights the immediacy of the holy man's treatment. That is, not only was the injured Majomites treated promptly but his cure took effect straight away. Indeed, the patient did not even require a period of recuperation! Such a portrayal could have conferred upon its audience a sense not only of the immediate nature of the holy healing but also of the extreme relevance of this Christian remedy to everyday life, for through Hilarion this working man was able to return to his work unhindered. The holy man and his abilities were thus relevant and extremely beneficial to the working person for whom any lengthy period of treatment and recovery would have been detrimental.

Jerome's final account of Hilarion's abilities highlights the popularity of the holy man and healer. The hagiographer writes that at 63 Hilarion was the head of a large monastery and crowds of people would constantly bring the ill and possessed there, such that 'the whole circuit of the wilderness was full of all sorts of people'.<sup>88</sup> Hilarion, however, lamented both his popularity and that people in Palestine, and the adjoining province, thought him important.<sup>89</sup> He eventually fled through travel, but fame never eluded him. Upon his death, though, his relics, like those of his mentor Antony, were hidden, enabling the monk finally to attain some peace.<sup>90</sup> This report certainly highlights the degree to which abilities requiring the supernatural, including healing, were valued and sought. Furthermore, the need to hide Hilarion's remains demonstrates that these abilities were considered ceaseless, effective even beyond death. The required posthumous concealment also illustrates the degree of demand for supernaturally endowed artefacts in late antiquity.<sup>91</sup> Finally, it can be argued that even though healing is presented as a divine gift closely intertwined with religious commitment, it is not this holiness that is sought by petitioners but the manifestation of this piety in applicable, effective and beneficial gifts.

### Motivations and a discourse of power

The material presented in this chapter has offered some insight into both the methods and the individuals that people in the fourth century sought after for assistance in healing, or even causing illness, in both Syria and Palestine. There is considerable similarity in the evidence from both regions, although more information on healers is available for Syria, and Palestine boasts the single sickness-curse of the two. Such discrepancies may reflect divergences between the two areas; however, given other parallels, it seems more likely that they stem from the limited amount of evidence available. Given the minimal distinction between the methods and intentions of the two regions, then, they will be considered conjointly in much of the discussion that follows. This discussion will fall into two main areas considered to be the most relevant in relation to the material and the aims of the study. Thus the motivations of those seeking healing assistance involving the supernatural will be discussed, followed by an examination of the assertion of Christian power in the traditional discourse of supernatural healing.

In the fourth century there were various healing options open to people residing in Syria and Palestine. For instance, physicians were readily available in urban centres, and they were entreated to attend all manner of ailments. Indeed, in the agora of Antioch one could even observe an operation taking place.<sup>92</sup> Hospitals were also developing in this period, heavily supported by contemporary Christian bishops, and these provided assistance for all strata of society, including those sufferers of serious and debilitating illnesses such as leprosy and elephantiasis.<sup>93</sup> Given the accessibility of these

forms of healing, people's continued appeal to methods involving the preternatural may seem a little puzzling. It is thus proposed here that an association of the supernatural with illness underlies the continuing and even burgeoning industry of supernatural healing in the fourth century.

It is a general assertion of modern scholarship that supernatural assistance for healing was sought as a last resort.<sup>94</sup> Such an argument even appears to be supported in several hagiographical accounts in which it is emphasised that the holy figure was only consulted after physicians were unable to assist in providing a remedy for the particular ailment.<sup>95</sup> Yet, as already suggested, surely such a statement in a hagiographical text has something to do with the text's intention of highlighting the superiority of Christian supernatural healing over and above other popular methods. In other words, by emphasising the inabilities of doctors, the author highlighted the exceptional ability of the holy man. Having said this, however, the discussion that follows will lead to the suggestion that in pointing out the ineffectiveness of doctors the hagiographer is not so much competing as transferring the illness out of the arena of the physical and into the realm of the supernatural, in which forum the holy man could be appropriately depicted as ascendant. Thus, supported by the argument that follows regarding the supernatural cause of illness, it is proposed in the following pages that a realignment of our thinking about supernatural healing methods is necessary in order to appreciate their role in fourth-century society. They were not the last resort, but an acknowledged and acceptable alternative to the more secular, medicinal methods of the physicians.

In support of this argument it is first worth acknowledging that neither in the written evidence of the hagiographical accounts nor Libanius can there be seen an element of doubt relating to methods utilising the supernatural for healing. Yet dubiety must surely be requisite for a *last resort*. Nor is there any apparent social association of supernatural healing methods with deviancy. John Chrysostom would appear to provide an exception to this assertion, until it is acknowledged that his remonstrations concern the 'brand' of the service and not the validity of the service itself. Thus there is no manifest social stigma attached *per se* to seeking assistance from such healers, or for utilising healing methods appealing to the supernatural.

A further support for the argument of supernatural healing as an alternative rather than aberrant service is the notion that illness was the result of daimonic assault. Only two decades ago Murdock in his study of illness theories argued that spirit aggression theories of illness were virtually universal, and that the association of supernatural causes with sickness outweighed that of natural causes in the belief systems of people throughout the world.<sup>96</sup> That such a belief was also evident in fourth-century Syria and Palestine is also likely. Consider, for instance, the association of general misfortune, including illness, with the daimonic as demonstrated through the prevalent use of apotropaic methods to protect against the malevolent impact of

daimones.<sup>97</sup> The specific association of the daimonic with illness is also identifiable in the curse tablet presented earlier in this chapter (see p. 131), a *defixio* through which the *charaktêres* invoked could instil serious illness in the spell's victim. In addition, hagiographical narrative supports this notion. An example is an account reported by Theodoret in which a woman falls ill with gluttony and her ailment is considered by some to be the result of a daimonic attack.<sup>98</sup> Finally, as already noted, Libanius' sicknesses of migraine and gout were also associated by the rhetor, his society, and his doctors with supernatural causes that the latter practitioners were unable to remedy.

When considering the idea that illness results from daimonic assault, the evidence available does suggest a degree of homogeneity across the Graeco-Roman world. Thus, for instance, Naveh and Shaked in their study of late antique Aramaic spells and formulae argue that in the supernatural treatment of illness the source of the disorder is typically recognised as the intervention of evil spirits, either as a general phenomenon or as specific evil agents responsible for particular problems.<sup>99</sup> These spirits that caused disease or a particular ailment were not always easy to distinguish. Yet references to spirits being present in a body would serve to explain the presence of disease, as well as the machinations of other people to harm an individual.<sup>100</sup> These scholars of late antique supernatural practices are not alone in their view. Kotansky, for example, makes a similar argument in reference to the contemporary Greek Magical Papyri.<sup>101</sup> He writes:

The spells given in the magical papyri and those preserved on the extant amulets often do not differentiate between the specific ailment afflicting the patient and the daemonic influence held responsible for the disease. Descriptions of bodily ailments do occur, but they are usually made with special references as well to the malignant, preternatural influence behind the disease's manifestation.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, the daimonic could be seen as intricately linked to the cause of illness. It was not necessarily the case that medical practitioners shared such views regarding this association. However, when they did, they may not have sought to treat the ailment, as was the case with Libanius' doctors who declared their inability to deal with the maladies, given their supernatural cause. These physicians were expressing a notion also reflected in broader evidence for medical and supernatural healing in late antiquity. For instance, medical texts recorded instructions that aimed at being physically efficacious. Their directions did not incorporate intentions to control or subdue the malevolent supernatural entities that may have caused an ailment.<sup>103</sup> This being the case, the argument for preternatural healers as alternative healers is further strengthened, for supernaturally caused illness could apparently only be treated supernaturally.

Thus it is possible to comprehend the complementary existence both of practitioners of physical medicine and of those healers who utilised supernatural forces.<sup>104</sup> In the fourth century it was understood that illness could be caused by malevolent supernatural forces. When such ailments were recognised, the treatment of a medical practitioner was not necessarily suitable and thus an individual required the resources of those offering supernaturally potent services. Within this framework of belief in preternatural prevalence and efficacy, the supernatural healer offered a viable and effective alternative to the medical healer. Considering that this context also set the backdrop for hagiographical accounts, the assertion of medical ineffectiveness can be seen to have served as a tool for the association of an ailment with the supernatural, and enabled the transference of the affliction into the framework of the narrative – divine power and the holy man. Hence, taking these arguments into consideration, it is here proposed that in order to understand antique beliefs and practices it is necessary to realign thinking which views supernatural and non-supernatural methodologies as inherently opposed.

Having thus considered why people sought supernatural methods for healing their afflictions, it is also necessary to consider why people might have sought conversely to inflict illness upon others through the invocation of daimonic powers. Unfortunately the extant example of such a curse, presented above, provides little detail as to the motivations of its caster. However, it is possible that many of those motivations already discussed in previous chapters may have provided provocation. In Libanius' sphere, for instance, the association of both his illnesses and the sufferings of his rivals with malicious supernatural methods can be linked with ideas of honour, shame and envy, coupled with the provocations of the variable and competitive social world of fourth-century Syria.<sup>105</sup> As has been mentioned on p. 131, inflicting fever on Eusebios, as well as death, probably expressed a desire for him to suffer both physically and socially. Thus in addition to the discomfort and pain of the fever, Eusebios may also have been subject to social shame and the loss of reputation due to the nature of the ailment,<sup>106</sup> and the caster's motivation may therefore also have involved the shaming of his target.

The final section of this chapter is dictated by the heavy Christian bias of the evidence, including the sermons of Chrysostom and the hagiographies. The extant fourth-century evidence overwhelmingly indicates the formation of a Christian form of supernatural healing that not only differentiated itself from traditional and popular forms but also undermined the latter and diverted healing into a Christian realm. In this way the Church both made clear to its fourth-century audience the supreme power of the Christian God and increased its own following through the impression of this power.

John Chrysostom provides an example of a Christian figure who directly remonstrates with his congregation for appealing to non-Christian healers to remedy their ills. In the case of the female practitioner, his concern lies

both in people's appeals to a non-Christian source and in the fact that an unsanctioned source was allegedly aligning herself with Christian power. He initially subverts the credibility of the female practitioner by labelling her as the 'drunken old woman', neither a flattering nor inspiring title for a healer. He furthermore condemns the absorption of Christian features into her ritual and her alleged claim to being a Christian (though she is possibly not). For Chrysostom the affront would have involved the tainting of Christianity by way of both the unbelieving healer and the mix of Christian ritual and symbolism with the non-Christian.

In response, John Chrysostom asserts the power of Christian belief, symbolism and ritual. The word of Christ and the sign of the Cross will serve as weapons and represent a mighty power. He promotes the power of the Christian God, accessible through the methods he condones, and steers away from traditional techniques, which included the use of amulets (a form also condemned by the wider church in the canon of the Synod of Laodicea discussed on pp. 123–4).

In the case of Chrysostom's criticisms of those venturing to Jewish healers, his perception of a rival is evident. As has been discussed, John saw these practitioners as a threat, as they were in effect competing for the attentions of his flock. His concerns lay both with the supernatural nature of the power and its potency and with the capricious allegiance of his congregation who sought to utilise those powers that they perceived to be the most beneficial.<sup>107</sup> In attracting the attention of Christians through healing prowess, the Jewish healer could also influence the religious allegiance of those supplicants. Indeed, the healing powers of a practitioner and his or her supernatural source was a significant influence on people's religious beliefs, as is suggested by the mass conversions attested to in hagiographical accounts.<sup>108</sup> Hence, the effective Jewish healer could potentially sway petitioners away from Christianity towards Judaism.<sup>109</sup> It is thus not surprising that Chrysostom is concerned, nor that he seeks to promote a stronger healing force in both the Christian ritual and deity.

Contemporary Christian hagiographical accounts also provided a forum for the distinction and promotion of a supreme healing power – Christianity and the Christian God. The holy men described in the Syrian and Palestinian hagiographies are portrayed as socially aberrant individuals pursuing severe ascetic lifestyles and observing extreme religious piety. These significantly distinguishing features allowed them to perform often remarkable acts such as divinely guided healing. The holy men consequently boasted a huge repertoire of healing abilities, proving extremely useful for anything from fevers through to paralysis. Such capabilities provided not just effective services but also benefits that were notably salient in their social relevance. For instance, the ability to provide a son for an infertile couple, or the treatment of livestock that were essential to rural communities.

In presenting and advancing the holy men and the supreme power that supported their activities, the hagiographers emphasised their role as the ultimate sources of healing by illustrating the ascetic's effectiveness, as well as his reputation, the status of his clientele, and his pre-eminence over contemporary alternatives. Hence they report that not only were these ascetics popular locally but that their abilities were also sought by people from often quite distant regions. In addition, it is also made apparent that important, respectable and influential people would seek out the holy men's assistance, assuring the audience of the quality of the ascetic's clientele.

As well as presenting the ascendancy of the Christian ascetics, hagiographers also stress that the result of the various remedies provided was not only the health of the body but also the health of the soul. That is, healing often culminated in a change in religious belief – a conversion. In effect healing is presented as a tool for the promotion and tangible display of the Christian God. An awareness of this is also seen in John Chrysostom's comments, as is evidenced earlier in the chapter. In the case of the hagiographical narrative, however, the author not only presents his audience with impressive examples of Christian prowess but also plants the suggestion that conversion is the expected reaction to the display of such power. The author is thus not necessarily attempting purely to maintain and bolster the Christian allegiance of his audience, such as John Chrysostom sought to do, but also to encourage religious conversion.

Finally, it is also worth noting that the relics of holy figures and martyrs, and the sites that housed them, also served to distinguish Christian healing power and promote its potency. These remains demonstrated the eternal strength of Christian authority. This efficacy, as with the salvation offered by the religion, was not diminished by mortal death, but could continue to serve and benefit in an effective and accessible form.

Thus various Christian sources can be seen to have asserted Christian sovereignty in the arena of supernatural healing. To do so they appear to have denigrated their opponents, casting aspersions on their powers, and condemned the use of traditional supernatural methods, such as amulets. This enabled them not only to assert their own authority but also to diminish the power-base of their opponents. In addition Christian authorities actively promoted alternative, efficacious methods of curing, such as the word of Christ, the sign of the cross and the high-profile holy man. By following this path Christianity positioned itself as a supreme force in the socially important discourse of healing,<sup>110</sup> and consequently encouraged the conversion, as well as the firm allegiance, of those living in Syria and Palestine.

### Conclusion

The various forms of evidence that have been presented in this chapter suggest that healing utilising the supernatural was a factor of both Palestinian

and Syrian society in the fourth century. Assorted methods, such as amulets, incantations, and supplications to holy men, were utilised as efficacious remedies for illness, while a curse tablet could be seen as an effective measure for inflicting it. It has been argued that the use and popularity of these measures was intrinsically linked to a social belief in the association of the malevolent daimonic with illness, and that recourse to supernatural healing is to be seen as an alternative to physical medicine rather than as a last resort. Furthermore, given the significance that prowess in subduing the malevolent supernatural held in both communities, it is proposed that the hagiographical emphasis on the ineffectiveness of physical medicine facilitates the transference of healing from the physical realm to the non-physical. Within this realm, it is proposed that Christianity was able to assert itself within the arena of healing power as a potent and ascendant force, with the holy man playing a particularly potent role.

## POSSESSION AND EXPULSION

### *Experiencing and dispelling the daimonic*

That you may move away and be expelled and keep far from Klara . . .  
that you may have no longer from now on power over her. May you  
(i.e. the spirit) be bound and kept away from her . . .<sup>1</sup>

This inscription extract encapsulates the essence of this chapter – the daimonic possession of individuals and the curing rite of daimonic expulsion. In this scenario the notion of malevolent affliction, exemplified numerous times previously in this book, is intensified as the daimonic takes possession of, and thereby resides within, the corporeal and cerebral faculties of its victim. This malignant and disturbing trespass consequently necessitated potent and effective supernal expulsion.

It is worth while noting that this concept of possession and the resultant need for expulsion, commonly referred to as exorcism, is believed to have had Semitic origins and, in the New Testament period at least, the idea was specifically local to the Syro-Palestinian world.<sup>2</sup> Kotansky points out that such an idea was initially foreign to Greek concepts of the daimonic. Greek formulae thus tended to evoke the daimonic while Jewish types exorcised: ‘the Semitic *πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον* is an entity to be expelled from the sufferer (the demon-possessed); the Greek *δαίμων* is a genie awakened from the dead to render service’.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter investigates the activities and rituals relating to supernatural possession and expulsion. The material which deals with exorcism is overwhelmingly Christian and is contained predominantly in the extant hagiographies. Nevertheless, despite this source bias, it is still possible to gain insight into the phenomenon in both Syria and Palestine. The investigation begins with a look at the extant evidence for the regions and then continues with a discussion of possession and expulsion, speculating on its place within the world-view of the fourth century. It is thus proposed that within the framework of supernatural belief, daimonic possession and expulsion provide a significant forum for the exploitation of vulnerability and the manifestation of potency in a dramatic contest of submission and control.

## Syria

Theodoret provides insight into Syrian daimonic expulsion in his now familiar hagiography. The first two accounts concern the holy man Marcianus. In the first instance, Theodoret tells of a Syrian military commander from a noble family in Beroea who had a daughter. This girl had for some time ‘been delirious and raving, troubled by an evil demon’.<sup>4</sup> Thus the father sought assistance from the holy man, Marcianus. He had an oil flask placed in front of Marcianus’ hut, and there it was blessed by the ascetic. When the instruction was given to return the flask, a four-day journey away, the daimon:

cried out at the power of the one who was driving him out. Marcianus was effecting in Beroea the work of judges, using as it were executioners against the demon, driving out the miscreant and freeing the girl of his activity.<sup>5</sup>

Marcianus also proved beneficial when another parent sought a cure for her daughter. Theodoret writes that a woman of wealth and status came from Antioch seeking help for her daughter ‘who was beset by a demon’. She had come to seek out Marcianus because she had had a dream that directed her to him in the monastery. Marcianus was persuaded to come and see the woman, and when she saw him and recognised his face ‘the evil demon cried out and departed from the girl’.<sup>6</sup>

Both of these scenarios show parents of high status and wealth (a fact Theodoret seems to emphasise) seeking assistance from the holy man for their daughters of an unknown age. Whether there is anything to be read into Theodoret’s assertion of the wealth and status of the subjects of his account is uncertain. Such note of social standing is often made by Theodoret in his other hagiographical tales and so may be nothing more than part of his literary technique. However, by stressing social standing perhaps he also sought to give greater legitimacy to the holy person’s practice, and add further interest for, or impress, his audience.

While each possessed girl was troubled by a daimon and one had for a long time ‘been delirious and raving’, the symptoms which afflict the girls are not described in any detail. We know only that Theodoret claims that their parents thought them possessed. Anxious parents are also mentioned by John Chrysostom, who comments on them seeking out the holy people in the mountains and harassing them to free their sons of the daimonic mania that beset them.<sup>7</sup> The mania from which John Chrysostom’s and Theodoret’s victims suffered is an ailment, the form of which is difficult to determine. However, given the hagiographer’s use of terms, including ‘raving’ and ‘frenzy’, as well as making reference to insanity,<sup>8</sup> it would appear that he may be referring to some form of mental illness, and, more

definitely, forms of behaviour perceived to be aberrant (such as raving). Indeed, these afflictions are so severe that both Theodoret and John Chrysostom can only attribute them to daimonic possession. This suggests that the demonstrated behaviour of the victim is in some way significantly deviating from the individual's regular manner. However, the daimonic association may also imply that the exhibited behaviour is diverging from the 'human norm' in that it can only be attributed to the immediate, residing influence of the non-human, the daimonic.

Curing these daimonic possessions did not require any involved and intricate ritual. Instead, both exorcisms needed only the assent and will of the holy man himself. The oil was not even used to anoint the first victim. Merely the command to hand over the flask of blessed oil was enough to evict the daimon, which was at that point a considerable distance away. The second victim was likewise cured from a distance and without any ritual. Here, though, the role of the dream was significant. In this instance the mother is led by a dream-vision<sup>9</sup> to the monk, and it is when she recognises the face of Marcianus, upon his appearance, that the daimon departs from her daughter. In this way the dream provides a trigger for the exorcism. In giving the dream such a pivotal role in the process of expelling the daimon, it can be argued that the narrator is drawing upon the antecedence of traditional Graeco-Roman divinatory and healing practice. Indeed, as a medium for supernatural communication dreams were both revelatory and therapeutic in late antiquity. In Theodoret's account the image of the holy man is presented to the woman and, it would seem, some form of direction for finding him.<sup>10</sup> Thus the hagiographer is utilising contemporary understanding of supernatural dreams, their form and their function, to promote the efficacy of the Christian God and the holy man.

In the other accounts that refer to daimonic expulsion it is the power of prayer, holy water, the name of the saviour, and the sign of the cross that Palladius<sup>11</sup> and Theodoret record as having been effective. For instance, Peter the Galatian was approached by a 'raving maniac, full of the action of the evil daimon', and this maniacal individual was 'cleansed' and freed from his 'diabolical frenzy' through prayer.<sup>12</sup>

Consider also Macedonius' treatment using prayer and blessed water. In this instance, the holy man is recorded as having through praying and the blessing of the water given to a wealthy woman, cured her of her 'insanity'. Furthermore, the author writes that the husband who had supplicated the holy man to assist his wife actually acted against the advice of doctors, who had said that she was suffering from an illness of the brain and prescribed their own 'ineffectual remedies'.<sup>13</sup> That this woman was treated for an 'insanity', which doctors considered an illness of the brain, does suggest some association of mental illness with possession, for symptoms seen as related to the brain by doctors were also viewed as symptoms of daimonic possession.

Theodoret's reference to doctors, and their inefficacy, is not limited to this account of Macedonius. On several occasions the author, in a manner reminiscent of similar assertions discussed in Chapter 8, seeks to promote the ascendant role of the holy figure in supernatural healing, and in doing so presents the inefficacy of practitioners of physical medicine. An example is the case of the ascetic Maron:

One could see fevers quenched by the dew of his blessing, shivering quieted, demons put to flight, and varied diseases of every kind cured by a single remedy; the progeny of physicians apply to each disease the appropriate remedy, but the prayer of the saint is a common antidote for every distress.<sup>14</sup>

Theodoret, notably, does not dismiss the abilities of doctors here. He acknowledges that they can offer appropriate remedies for various ailments. However, he asserts the holy man's superiority by saying that the latter is able to treat all of these problems with one potent method – prayer. That the remedies of physicians could have been seen as an alternative to the supernatural approach has been argued previously, and, given this quote, the same argument can aptly be applied to the sphere of expulsion also. Even when, as in the former account, Theodoret records that physicians were ineffectual in contrast to the abilities of the holy man, the notion of the acknowledged coexistence of the two healing forms remains. In this case the husband appealed to Macedonius after consulting the physicians. It could be said that his act was that of a 'last resort'; however, given the supernatural association with illness, the concept of daimonic possession, and the intentions of the author to present the 'ultimate' healer or exorcist, then this sequence of consultation is not altogether surprising.

Another point to be raised in relation to Theodoret's accounts of daimonic expulsion concerns several instances in which an analogy is made between this process and the secular legal system. For example, in the first narrative mentioned (see p. 143), Marcianus is given the role of judge and executioner by: 'effecting in Beroea the work of judges, using as it were executioners against the demon' and causing the daimon to be driven out and the girl to be freed of it. The same analogy is drawn in a report on Peter (the Galatian), in which Theodoret writes that his mother brought her cook to the holy man to be exorcised. The latter, having prayed, then

ordered the demon to tell the cause of his power over one of God's creatures, like some murderer or burglar standing before the judge's seat and ordered to say what he had done; so he proceeded through everything, compelled by fear to tell the truth, contrary to his wont.<sup>15</sup>

In accord with Peter's demand, the daimon confesses that he sought to know the way that the monks exorcise, and he promises to depart at the ascetic's command.

In another instance, Peter again uses prayer and his interrogative style of exorcism to address a daimon that had possessed a 'rustic' and to command it to flee on behalf of Christ, at which the victim is subsequently freed of his 'frenzy' (λύττη).<sup>16</sup>

In these situations, the holy men are portrayed as potent figures capable not only of expelling possessing daimones, but also of controlling them (they can demand information from them, for example). Furthermore, in their role as adjudicators the ascetics are presented in positions of public responsibility, enabled to assert the rule of propriety over deviance. Finally, this judicial framework also provides interesting parallels with antique Jewish and Christian liturgical exorcisms that, it has been argued, were believed to be efficacious because of a litigious conceptualisation of the cosmos. Within such a conceptual context, Jewish exorcism, in particular, saw God as the ultimate witness and judge of a daimon that had crossed the boundary set by the deity by harassing or possessing a person.<sup>17</sup> If this notion is applied to Theodoret's accounts, the holy man as God's representative can be seen to be taking on the role of divine adjudicator.

A final, brief note on the hagiographical accounts concerns the popularity of the ascetics capable of expelling daimones from the possessed. For instance, Theodoret records that Symeon the Elder's healing and exorcisms both 'filled the local inhabitants with awe' and caused all of Antioch to hasten to him.<sup>18</sup> Thus, as was the case with healing, daimonic-expulsion abilities could impact on an ascetic's reputation and appeal amongst the wider community.

Above all, Theodoret's narrative sought, and managed, to demonstrate the power of the Christian holy man and divinity over daimones who, though powerful enough to take over humans, provided very little opposition for the Christian ascetic. Furthermore, this potency was enacted through a variety of methods, consistent only in their appellation, and attribution, to the Christian deity.

Extant evidence also confirms that relics and martyria were popular and effective venues for executing exorcisms. For instance, John Chrysostom expounds on the force of the martyria of St Babylas and St Julian near Antioch.<sup>19</sup> On the martyrrium of Julian he states:

What's more I won't just guarantee this from what happened a long time ago, but also from what still happens even now. I mean that, if you grab someone who's demon-possessed and exhibiting manic behaviour and take them in to that holy tomb where the martyr's remains lie, without a doubt you'll see them jumping back and fleeing. For they instantly leap right out of the front doors as if about

to set foot on hot coals, and they don't dare to look directly at the coffin itself.<sup>20</sup>

The audience is told that the daimon is blinded, and subsequently expelled from its victim, by the emission of an invisible flash of light from the martyr's tomb.<sup>21</sup> In this case the possessing daimon is affected by proximity to the holy relic, and expelled by the deceased martyr in a manner invisible to a human observer, yet powerfully anti-daimonic and effective.

The final set of evidence relating to daimonic expulsion in fourth-century Syria involves the exorcistic rites performed as part of baptismal training. There is the instance of an extant amulet with text based on, and itself possibly even used in, the pre-baptismal exorcisms of catechumens before their admission into the catechumenate.<sup>22</sup> The amulet from third or fourth-century Antiochia Caesarea (Pisidia) records a simple exorcistic formula deriving from a Christian liturgical (baptismal) context. It tells evil spirits to leave Basilius, by 'the right hand of God', 'the blood of Christ', 'angels' and the 'Church'.<sup>23</sup>

That candidates would utilise exorcistic methods in their baptismal training is not unusual; indeed John Chrysostom incorporated a daily exorcism ritual in his candidate's preparation regime. However, in the case of Chrysostom,<sup>24</sup> his baptismal-training candidates were sent 'to the words of the exorcists',<sup>25</sup> and equipped with words to terrify, and cause to flee, even the fiercest and most cruel daimones.<sup>26</sup> They were not equipped with charms, nor even allowed to use them. On the exorcistic ritual, Chrysostom states:

You must understand why, after daily instruction, we send you to the words of the exorcists. For the rite does not take place without aim or purpose; you are going to receive the King of heaven to dwell within you. This is why, after we have admonished you, those appointed to this task take you and, as if they were preparing a house for a royal visit, they cleanse your mind by those awesome words, putting to flight every device of the wicked one and making it worthy of the royal presence. For even if the daimon be fierce and cruel, after these terrifying words and invocation of the common Master of all things, he must withdraw with all speed.<sup>27</sup>

This exorcism forms a daily part of a baptismal candidate's training and preparation. According to the words of Chrysostom, it effectively serves to cleanse the candidate's mind of the daimonic in preparation for the acceptance of God at baptism. Thus this daily process of daimonic expulsion makes the candidate ready with the resources – words (albeit terrifying ones) – to battle and expel influential daimones. As Kalleres argues, baptismal candidates were provided with the 'oral weaponry' with which to partake in spiritual warfare between Christ and Satan.<sup>28</sup>

### Palestine

The main source for daimonic expulsions in fourth-century Palestine is Jerome's 'Life of St Hilarion', which provides several noteworthy accounts of the popular Hilarion's triumphs over the daimonic.<sup>29</sup> For instance, Jerome records that the holy man exorcised countless numbers amongst the Saracens, and, what is more, that he did this despite the non-Christian religious affiliations of the nation.<sup>30</sup>

The reference to the Saracens is brief, so our discussion really begins with Jerome's presentation of Marsitas' possession. The author tells us that this powerful youth had become possessed by a daimon. As a consequence of the daimonic intrusion the strong youth became a violent and threatening person who injured many others, even biting off ears and noses, and breaking people's feet and legs. As a possessed person he was a terrifying threat, not just to himself but also to those around him. Indeed Jerome tells us how all people, including monks, feared him. Hilarion, however, showed no fear and, when the youth was brought to him bound in chains, he ordered that the victim be freed of the irons. Then he commanded Marsitas to bow his head and come to him. The pacified victim of possession obeyed him and went to the ascetic, and though unable to look him in the face, proceeded to lick the holy man's feet. Jerome writes: 'At last the daimon which had possessed the young man being tortured by the saint's adjurations came forth on the seventh day.'<sup>31</sup>

This account is noticeably different from Theodoret's Syrian reports, although there are manifest similarities in the exemplification of the power and effectiveness of the holy man. For instance, the image of the daimon-possessed victim is not only more vivid but also more frightening. Marsitas was not only affected by the daimonic intrusion, he was affecting others through his consequent violent behaviour, such that he had to be chained in order to protect people from him. This is almost a bestial image, which is effectively opposed by the description of the victim's submissiveness when in the presence of Hilarion. Thus, Jerome portrays a victim of possession whose behaviour is not only dramatically altered as a result of the daimonic intrusion but also has a detrimental impact on his community. This makes Hilarion's display of courage all the more noteworthy and the victim's passivity an impressive presentation of the holy man's control over the daimonic possessor. Yet despite Hilarion's evident authority over the daimon and its victim, the torture and expulsion of the intruder is not successful until seven days of adjuration have passed. This, however, does not bring Hilarion's potency into question. On the contrary, given the daimon's subservience to the holy man (demonstrated by Marsitas licking his feet) this week-long process merely serves to illustrate the strength of the daimon, and ultimately the superior force of the holy man able to expel it.

That violent behaviour could ensue from possession is also evident in another account in which the victim of possession was also bound in chains. In this case Jerome writes about a leading and wealthy man in the community whose ‘eyes portended raging madness’ and who was possessed by a ‘legion of daimones’.<sup>32</sup> Once again the ascetic does not fear the possessed, and apparently dangerous, man, showing no fear when the latter threateningly grabs and lifts him. Instead he grabbed the man’s hair and drew him around until he stood on his feet with his own, his arms outstretched, continuously crying out: ‘To torment with you! You crowd of demons, to torment!’ The possessed man shouted out and bent back his head until it touched the ground, and Hilarion said ‘Lord Jesus, release this wretched man, release this captive. Yours it is to conquer many, no less than one.’<sup>33</sup> Then Jerome recounts that different voices were heard from the man’s lips, and he was cured.<sup>34</sup>

There are a number of noteworthy features about this incident. For instance, the victim of possession, Orion, was again a man and, what is more, a man of status and power. He was also an individual whose madness (*furor*) was manifested in behaviour that required that he be bound in chains: ‘Hands, neck, sides, feet were laden with iron, and his glaring eyes portended an access of raging madness’,<sup>35</sup> a menacing image intensified by the report of the monks’ fears when the possession victim grabbed Hilarion. Thus again there is the representation of daimonic possession being especially shown in violent, anti-social behaviour.

Also of particular interest is the hagiographer’s report that Orion was possessed by numerous daimones. That multi-daimonic possession could occur is unparalleled in any of the evidence presented in this chapter, unless the daily baptismal ritual can be seen to represent a similar notion. Nevertheless, that a ‘legion of daimones’ was possessing the man is reaffirmed by Jerome when he writes of the different voices and confused shouts of a multitude that emanated from Orion as the daimones were expelled by Hilarion. That the holy man was able to drive out this multitude of daimones also serves to accentuate his abilities and the potency of his God.

The latter point in regard to Hilarion’s potency and the ascendancy of his God is further emphasised by the stance that the ascetic appears to adopt through the procedure. That is, Hilarion stood on Orion’s feet (presumably so that the latter could not run) with his arms outstretched. This presents a physical image representative of the cross. If this interpretation is correct, it must be noted that such a portrayal could have served to evoke in the audience, through a recognition of the religious significance of the image, an association with the source of the exorcistic power, the Christian God.

Thus in this account, Hilarion’s potency, his stature, and his commands to the daimones and prayer to Jesus, all serve to release Orion from his multi-daimonic affliction.

In another instance, Jerome records how Hilarion's reputation spread across the empire, such that an officer of the Emperor Constantius from the Western provinces came to seek his help. This man had obtained a post-warrant and letters to the legate of Palestine, and had come to Gaza with a large retinue and great pomp. He had sought out Hilarion because he had been pursued by a daimon from his infancy that forced him to howl and gnash his teeth at night.<sup>36</sup>

We are told that when the man was questioned by Hilarion, in Syriac, he 'sprang up on tiptoe, so as scarcely to touch the ground with his feet' and with a roar replied in perfect Syriac, though he knew only French and Latin. Hilarion also questioned him in Greek, and in both languages he 'confessed by what means he had entered into him'. The daimon also gave as an excuse:

many occasions on which spells had been laid upon him, and how he was bound to yield to magic arts, 'I care not', said the saint, 'how you came to enter, but I command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to come out.'<sup>37</sup>

This account provides a wealth of interesting information, for instance, the idea that the emperor was fully aware of his officer's affliction, and also supported his trip. Indeed, while the purpose of his travels was not known to the wider community, his journey was in no way discrete as he was accompanied by a large retinue and great pomp. Jerome even writes that the community around Hilarion became very concerned when the officer and his entourage arrived seeking out the holy man and, unaware of his purpose, immediately rallied to show their support for Hilarion (this had not always been the case). This portrayal of a figure with a public profile and private affliction also extended to the execution of the daimon expulsion, which in contrast to the previous example was not witnessed by a crowd.

The possession and expulsion are also very interesting. This man suffers from his daimon at night and howls, groans and gnashes his teeth – his symptoms of possession are dog-like, they are bestial. Thus the manifestation of this man's possession, while perhaps not physically threatening to others (for we are not told that he is deleterious), is still portrayed as irregular, perhaps even frightening, and certainly not human, behaviour.

Also noteworthy is that this long-term affliction had, according to the intruding daimon, been brought about by *magicae artes*. Thus the reader is led to believe that a spell or curse cast on the officer as an infant produced this lengthy possession. Considering the duration and effectiveness of the possession, there is certainly an inference of strength in this supernatural machination. Such an evident association between daimonic possession and supernatural practices, such as curses, has not been made in any of the

cases considered above.<sup>38</sup> This is not to say, however, that such an association would not have been made by Jerome or his contemporary audience, who were drawing upon similar social knowledge and supernatural awareness. All that can be said here, though, is that Jerome's account illustrates that daimonic possession could be understood to be the product of a human utilising a supernatural agency. Furthermore, the inclusion of this detail, and therefore Hilarion's confrontation of this spell-bound daimon, serves to place the Christian holy man as an ascendant force in the contemporary sphere of supernatural power and manipulation.

A further significant aspect of this account is the role of language in the execution of the expulsion. That is, Jerome makes special reference to the fact that while the victim of the possession spoke only French and Latin, his daimonic possessor was able to communicate in both pure Syriac and Greek. This suggests that supernatural entities were not perceived to be bound by cultural and geographical borders. The inclusion of this detail served to highlight the truly pervasive influence of the daimonic, and consequently the holy man's international relevance in being able to control it. It is possible that this language reference was also some subtle allusion to the language of curses, and to the possible provincial or religious background of the caster. Given, however, the eclectic linguistic and religious nature of many extant inscriptions, this does not seem likely. Nevertheless it is worth noting that this linguistic aspect of the account and its role in the expulsion of the daimon may suggest some degree of social understanding of ritual language in exorcism, upon which Jerome was drawing.<sup>39</sup>

The final reference by Jerome to daimonic possession and expulsion concerns the affliction of an animal. That this act was included in Hilarion's hagiographical repertoire relates to a belief that animals were vulnerable to daimonic attack because of their value to people. Jerome writes about an enormous Bactrian camel that was brought to Hilarion 'amid the shouts of thirty men or more who held him tight with stout ropes'. The camel had already injured many people; Jerome describes it as having bloodshot eyes, a foaming mouth, a swollen and rolling tongue, and a loud hideous roar. Hilarion ordered that the camel be released. He then walked up to it and, with his hand outstretched, said to the camel in Syriac: 'You do not alarm me, devil, huge though your present body is. Whether in a fox or a camel you are just the same.' The animal, though 'raging and looking as if he would devour Hilarion', moved towards the holy man and fell down before him placing its head on the ground as a completely tame animal.<sup>40</sup>

The madness of this camel is pronounced. It is a violent and dangerous animal that had injured people and could apparently only be restrained by ropes held by thirty men. As in the human incidents, Hilarion does not fear the mad raging creature as others do, and declares this to the daimon that possesses it. His brave manner and the immediately submissive behaviour of the camel, reminiscent of earlier accounts, effectively asserts his authority

and strength over the daimon that is promptly released from the animal. This restoration of the animal, through the effective expulsion of the daimon, would have proved beneficial both to its owners, in restoring part of their livelihood, and to the community, by eliminating the threat of a dangerous animal.

Lastly, the pilgrim Egeria in her letters to the nuns back in the Latin West tells of a Palestinian custom in which those preparing for baptism during the season of the Lenten fast go to be exorcised by the clergy first thing in the morning, directly after the morning dismissal in the Anastasis.<sup>41</sup> This practice is also discussed by Cyril of Jerusalem who, like John Chrysostom in Syria, included a daily exorcistic rite in the training of baptismal candidates; indeed, for Cyril a soul could not be purified without exorcism.<sup>42</sup> Cyril tells his baptismal candidates: ‘You will receive arms that cause terror to daimons; and if you do not cast your arms away, but keep the seal upon your soul, the daimon will not approach; he will cower away in fear; for by the Spirit of God daimons are cast out.’<sup>43</sup> Thus the Palestinian baptismal candidate also received the ‘weaponry’ by which daimons would be driven away (and repelled – weapons that are therefore exorcistic and apotropaic), and the soul cleansed of, and protected from, the daimonic.

### Possession and expulsion

It is here proposed that the supernatural drama of squatters and evictors, daimonic possession and expulsion, is ultimately a display of social control in two strands: firstly, the desire to control and explain unacceptable conditions (of affliction) or perceived deviant or irregular behaviour; secondly, the desire to restore that behaviour or condition to an understood norm. These points will be explained further in the discussion following, which will consider possession and expulsion separately in an attempt to understand and position this phenomenon within its social context.

#### *Possession*

The discussion begins with a consideration of possession in both Syria and Palestine. The evidence from both regions portrays a conception of possession clearly linked with the daimonic invasion of an individual’s being, both physically and mentally (for example in violent, raving, and manic behaviour). Although writing about late twentieth-century Sinhalese beliefs and practices, Kapferer’s statement of invading demons seems to suit the fourth-century setting also:

Thus the characterization of demon personality and action presents them as the extreme, disordering potential of nature incarnate, gaining power in culture through their domination of it. They present in

their being and action all-consuming anger, lust and greed, and as polluting and uncivilized creatures subvert the cultural order, disrupting and subordinating it to the ordered disorder of the demonic.<sup>44</sup>

The sense of disorder which Kapferer expresses is most evident in the manner in which daimonic possession manifests itself. The Syrian examples were limited in their description of afflictions; for example, we were told by Theodoret and John Chrysostom of raving, delirious behaviour and mania. Jerome's Palestinian account, on the other hand, included the ability for a victim of possession, or more precisely the invading daimon, to speak fluently in numerous languages (though the holy man was not outdone in this either), as well as the somewhat more vivid images of violently mad people who were decidedly frightening to those around them.

It is noteworthy that no identifiable 'type' of individual appears most disposed to this daimonic affliction. That is, the hagiographical accounts present a wide variety of victims of possession. The Syrian reports, for instance, concern children, wives, the household cook and a 'rustic', while the Palestinian material, in contrast, deals specifically with males. This may reflect the social reality of possession in the two regions; that is, a variety of victims in Syria and only men in Palestine. However, this is difficult to determine, particularly without more substantial material evidence from each region to lend support to such an assertion.<sup>45</sup> A common feature amongst many of the sufferers was, however, a degree of wealth and social status, with the cook, presumably the 'rustic', and Marsitas being notable exceptions. However, although noted in several other hagiographical instances recounted above, this attribute is clearly not exclusive to victims of daimonic possession and expulsion. Another notable feature relates to portrayals of behaviour. Thus while the male victims, particularly in Jerome's account, displayed aggressive or bestial behaviour, Theodoret's women and children were simply recorded as raving, being insane or in a frenzy, and the behavioural imagery of uncontrolled violence is absent. Having said this, however, any possible association of behavioural forms with gender in this case is more likely to reflect the narrative styles of the hagiographers, rather than gender-related manifestations of daimonic possession. That is, in portraying all the daimonically possessed victims subdued by Hilarion as strong and threatening males, Jerome presented to his audience an especially potent holy man.

Being thus able to determine, to varying degrees, the nature of possession, the form of its manifestation, and the variety of its victims, it is left to ascertain the reason for its infliction. Jerome, as an example, provides some idea in his report of the commanding officer from the Western empire whose daimon was expelled by Hilarion. In this account he records that *magicae artes* instigated the daimonic possession, and hence it was the work of an individual or individuals who sought to harm the man as an infant. Yet

even though the method for instilling the daimonic occupation is revealed, the motivation for inflicting this on an individual, let alone an infant, is not asserted. The discussion therefore turns to consider the inclusion of daimonic possession in the supernatural discourse of fourth-century Syria and Palestine. Here it will be suggested that social perception of illness and deviant behaviour, the need to assert religious differentiation, as well as the social perception of vulnerability, can all be considered as influential factors in the occurrence of daimonic possession in the fourth century.

The deliberation begins with a contemplation of the social perception of illness, and its role in the identification of the daimonically possessed. The conception of illness, or an overt affliction such as fever, in the Graeco-Roman world was not necessarily positive, as evidenced, for instance, in the fourth-century Syrian practice of exiling the seriously ill, such as sufferers from 'elephantiasis' (leprosy) and cancer, and occasionally also epileptics, from the city.<sup>46</sup> Also pointing to a less than positive conception of illness is LiDonnici's argument regarding the social shame associated with men suffering fever, because of the association of this illness with desire. Thus the manifestation of the fever was perceived to demonstrate the sufferer's shameful inability to control his own desire.<sup>47</sup>

In the instances discussed, the victims' afflictions manifested themselves – raving, frenzies and manias – to the degree that some individuals even had to be physically restrained. Considering community reaction to illnesses such as epilepsy and fever, it can be argued that afflictions exposing elements of frenzy and mania would not have been viewed positively by society. Certainly most of the individuals in Jerome's accounts were a real threat to their community (even the distressed camel posed a similar danger). If the threat that these people posed is considered, as well as the fact that individuals suffering from various ailments could be physically or socially (in the case of fever, for example) exiled from communities, is it not therefore possible that people (and even animals) who were struck by such complaints faced communal exile in some form? If this notion is accepted, then it can be reasoned further that afflictions manifesting themselves in behaviour that would have threatened the sufferers with social alienation could be attributed to daimonic influences – in particular, possession.

This assertion of a social impetus behind the attribution of daimonic influence to affliction is better explained if we consider Janowitz's argument for the negative late antique concept of the body and its social association with evil forces. Janowitz writes:

With the rise of the utopian worldview, the human body gained prominence as the battleground for conflicts between human and supernatural forces. Evil forces were so closely intertwined with life on earth the war had to be fought one body at a time.<sup>48</sup>

Janowitz argues that a fight against evil is at the core of exorcistic practice. If we accept Janowitz's notion of the body as the arena in which evil is seen to manifest itself in the late antique world, then it is not surprising that serious ailments displaying themselves in behaviour that threatens people would be explained as daimonic. Furthermore, if this negative association with the body existed, then arguably the negative association of the complaint with the sufferer was reduced if that affliction could be blamed on daimonic forces. Perhaps this is why in the case of the Western officer who came to Hilarion, his possession was said to have affected him as an innocent infant, and more importantly was blamed on *artes magicae*. This could completely exonerate the officer from association with the affliction, but further it would make him a completely separate entity from the evil that inhabited his body. Basically this ensured that he could in no way be perceived badly for his unusual behaviour, and his character could not be associated with the daimonic. Thus his leadership abilities could not be called into question by his behaviour (or, one would think, the respect he demanded affected), for his 'possession' spared him any association with it.

A further reason for the association of daimonic possession with behaviour could be related to issues of deviant forms of activity. That is, we are not always told of the symptoms of the victims in the hagiographical accounts. As far as we know, the assertion of someone's possession status could simply depend on those who were around the victim, such as family, friends and the community. Interestingly, several of the accounts involved parents seeking assistance for their children or a husband seeking a cure for his wife. These victims are all in less powerful roles or, in anthropological terms, in positions of ambiguous status. Various modern anthropological studies have observed that women and those of subservient, ambiguous, or low social status are overwhelmingly more vulnerable to daimonic possession, and that their condition is often understood as symbolic of wider problems affecting others as well as themselves.<sup>49</sup>

Now, if this argument is extended to consider Golomb's point that daimonic possession is a socially sanctioned cathartic outlet, especially in the context of the public nature of possession and exorcism,<sup>50</sup> then perhaps daimonic intrusion in the fourth century can also be seen as an expression of dissatisfaction or frustration. Golomb's study in Thailand discussed, for example, the correlation of possession with marital insecurity. An example is the scenario of a wife who, aware of and frustrated by a husband's favour of another woman, would become possessed, and her frustration and insecurity would then be addressed through the process of possession and exorcism.<sup>51</sup> There is no clear evidence to support this idea in the fourth century. Nevertheless the notion is worth considering, as we do see in the Syrian evidence at least the daimonic invasion of those for whom possession could be a cathartic outlet, such as children possibly seeking the attention of parents, and wives the attention of their husbands.

One more point along this line is the possibility that it was the behaviour of the victims that was perceived as deviant and hence had to be labelled as such by the family and community. Consider, for example, the possibility that the children, both daughters and sons, being cured by holy men of their ‘manias’ of which we know very little, were in fact displaying behavioural forms considered socially deviant within the family or community setting (much as some rebellious teenage behaviour is considered to be today). If the supposition is made that the frenzied, raging and manic behaviour of alleged victims of daimonic possession is perceived by the family and community to be deviant (that is, to be in violation of appropriate conduct within their social system), then these individuals would also be labelled as such.<sup>52</sup> Neyrey argues that deviance ‘refers to those behaviors and conditions judged to jeopardize the interests and social standing of persons who negatively label the behavior or condition’.<sup>53</sup> If this is applied to the case of the children’s possessions, then their frenzied and manic behaviours could be considered deviant by the family, and thus possibly by the community also, and this deviance would jeopardise the interests and reputations of the victims and their families. Given the wealthy status which is often noted in these instances, issues of honour and reputation may have been especially significant.<sup>54</sup> Thus in order to avoid the loss of honour and accumulation of shame, the existent supernatural discourse allowed for the attribution of the affliction to the daimonic, which would consequently reduce the accountability of the victim and any associated social perceptions of the victim and his or her family.

From these concepts, assertions of daimonic possession could be seen to work as a method for maintaining group cohesion by designating inappropriate behaviour as deviant and associating it with the daimonic (in which case the interrogative nature of many possessions would assist in making the victim blameless in his or her affliction).<sup>55</sup> As Leeper writes: ‘An accusation, then, can serve both to label certain actions and behaviors as unacceptable to the point of societal abomination, and, in so doing, point to and sanction the opposite behaviors as socially normative and desirable.’<sup>56</sup>

Another social issue is the association of daimones with religious deviance, allowing for the assertion of religious differentiation and pre-eminence – for example, the Christian association of the non-Christian with the daimonic. This was seen in the allusion to the non-Christian associations of the Saracens and the countless exorcisms that Hilarion had performed amongst them. In Christian thought daimones were associated with non-Christian beliefs, therefore even state activities that involved traditional Graeco-Roman practices were seen as daimonic.<sup>57</sup> By aligning such behaviour with the daimonic, Christianity was redrawing its internal boundaries and clearly differentiating itself from unsanctioned behaviour and belief.<sup>58</sup> This is exemplified in the daily exorcistic ritual that formed part of baptismal training. Positioning these activities, particularly in Syria, within a framework of

oaths and obligation, Kalleres asserts that daimones were deemed to be in possession of all individuals until their supernatural contracts were cancelled through baptism.<sup>59</sup> Thus, in the context of pre-baptismal training, the Church was clearly aligning the non-Christian past of their candidates with the daimonic, and effectively declaring them possessed until such time as they could be declared cleansed and thus acceptable to the Christian group.

The final point is a brief reference to the concept of vulnerability. That men, women and children were considered physically and socially vulnerable and hence susceptible to supernatural attack has already been discussed in Chapter 7. This concept can also be applied to the victims of daimonic possession. These individuals may have been in socially vulnerable positions, such as those already discussed. However, the account that best exemplifies the idea of social vulnerability does not involve a human, but a camel. Indeed, in the report in which Hilarion exorcised the Bactrian camel Jerome makes it clear that the holy man expelled daimones from animals because they belonged to people, and thus their suffering affected the latter. An animal was therefore vulnerable to daimonic attack, including possession, because it held a position of value in society. Likewise the daimonic invasion of livestock and valuable animals, such as camels, made the community vulnerable, both through the physical threat of a dangerous animal (such as the possessed camel) and through the impact on livelihood that the loss of the animal could have.

In the case of daimonic possession the vulnerability that is most evident is corporeal and cerebral. The result of this daimonic occupation was an affliction that most apparently manifested itself in overt behaviours of frenzy, mania and violence; behaviours which, it has been suggested above, may have been deemed as socially deviant. Considering the cultural perceptions and consequences of such manners, as well as the prevalent understanding of the pervasive influence of the supernatural, daimonic possession must have been perceived of as a clear display of human vulnerability. Such an awareness was arguably heightened in Jerome's portrayal of physically and powerfully strong men falling prey to daimonic invasions: if these men were vulnerable, it made all people vulnerable.

### *Expulsion*

The discussion now moves on to consider daimonic expulsion in Syria and Palestine. The evidence demonstrates that daimonic expulsion in the fourth century involved the release of a individual from the possession of a daimon or daimones by driving the latter force out of its place of occupation. Consequently daimonic expulsion was a discourse of power and control.

Reflecting the overwhelmingly Christian and hagiographical nature of the extant evidence, this power was predominantly displayed through the potent agency of the Christian holy man. The latter's form of expulsion varies, but

generally involves the supplication of God or Christ, prayer, blessed ointment (such as oil), and adjurations to the daimonic, and in one instance a dream. In the case of the daily exorcism rituals prepared for baptismal candidates, the power of daimonic expulsion was contained in words.

The display of supernatural prowess was in a few instances enhanced by the inclusion of physical confrontation in the narrative. In these instances, particularly involving Hilarion, the ascetic's courage is strongly contrasted with the fears of others around him, intensifying the potency of the figure. Such presentations of supernatural prowess overcoming the physical and daimonic conform to the image presented by Peter Brown, who asserts that exorcism in the late-Roman world was an operetta based on the theme of violence and authority.<sup>60</sup>

The discourse of power and control is particularly exemplified in those accounts in which daimonic expulsion is portrayed as a metaphorical, or supernatural, law court. In these instances the treatment of the daimon, in address, examination, judgment and sentencing, strongly reinforces the ascendant role of the ascetic as both judge and executioner.

Regardless of the manner of the exorcism, all hagiographical expulsions were displays of power and control, performed by individuals imbued with a great amount of supernal strength. These ascetics, acting as agents of Christian divine power, provided a service highly regarded in its fourth-century context (bear in mind the recorded popularity of exorcistic ascetics), which ultimately served to highlight and promote the supreme power of their supernal force, the Christian God.

From examining the form of expulsion, discussion now moves to a consideration of the role of daimonic expulsion in fourth-century Syrian and Palestinian society. First and foremost exorcism combated the power and intrusion of daimonic forces. People who were possessed by a daimon that was affecting their well-being and conduct could be cured by the authority and power of a daimon-expeller who could alleviate the individual's affliction and suffering. However, in addition to this more apparent service, daimonic expulsion can also be seen to have addressed other social issues, particularly those related to possession as has been discussed – namely, the perception of affliction, social deviancy, religious alignment and vulnerability.

The first issue to be discussed here is expulsion and its relation to the perception of illness. It was argued earlier that in considering the social perception of illness in the Graeco-Roman world, afflictions such as frenzy, raving and mania, consequences of daimonic possession, may have been negatively perceived by fourth-century society. This proved especially so when the afflictions manifested themselves in behaviour that may have posed a threat to the individual and the community. The display of possession could furthermore potentially lead to physical or social alienation. This being the case, expulsion of the possessing daimon would provide considerable relief

to the victim of the occupation. Firstly, it would alleviate the raving, frenzy and mania; secondly, it would address the social consequences of the affliction, such as the negative perceptions and possible social alienation, by eliminating the source of the problems and reinstating a physically and socially healthy individual.

Also proposed earlier was the association of daimonic possession and deviant behaviour. It was suggested that the frenzied, raging and manic behaviour of alleged victims of daimonic possession could have been perceived as deviant behaviour, and thus the victims of the occupation as themselves deviant. Furthermore, this association of deviance would have significant social ramifications for the individual and his or her family (through reputation and honour). If this argument is accepted, then the expulsion of the possessing daimon was a means of correcting the unacceptable conduct and removing the victim from the marginal position of social deviant. In addition, the restoration of socially accepted behaviour in the former possession victim would reaffirm not only the family unit's social standing within the community but also confirm and thus further delineate that social system's boundaries of acceptable, as opposed to deviant, behaviour.

It can further be argued that the expulsion of a possessing daimon also served to rectify concepts of social and physical vulnerability. That is, in the use of human agency to expel the supernatural and restore normality to an individual who had proved vulnerable to the daimonic invasion, there was an assertion that humanity, though exposed to the supernatural, was ultimately not subservient to it as a result of that susceptibility.

Thus, by eliminating the daimonic, the exorcism restored the physical and social status quo to the individual, his or her family, and the community. However, in the process of defeating daimonic force, expulsion not only affected social behaviour in restoring people and their situations back to their expected or perceived norms, it also symbolised society's ultimate ability to control the pervasive supernatural.

Finally, daimonic expulsion played a definitive role in the assertion of religious differentiation and deviance. This is seen in Jerome's account of the Saracens and in the training of the Syrian and Palestinian catechumenes. While possession highlighted the daimonic association of non-Christian individuals, exorcism served as the cleansing tool that would allow for religious transformation and conversion.<sup>61</sup> Thus Cyril, in his inclusion of expulsion rituals in pre-baptismal training, sought to cleanse the candidates' minds and prepare them for a spiritual warfare with those not conforming to the same sanctioned beliefs.<sup>62</sup> In a similar vein Kalleres has proposed that the daily rituals sanctioned by John Chrysostom, when viewed within a contextual framework of oaths and obligations (*ἐξορκίζειν, δρκίζειν*),<sup>63</sup> served to announce to the devil the revocation of the candidate's contract with him (something automatically held by all non-Christians) and the preparation

of a new allegiance with Christ. As the latter was sealed at baptism, the daily exorcistic ritual thus served to renegotiate new territorial boundaries with the devil, gradually minimising, and finally denying, his access to the baptismal candidate's body and soul.<sup>64</sup>

### Conclusion

It is here proposed that within the framework of fourth-century supernatural belief daimonic possession and expulsion provided a forum for the display of supernatural and human power and control. Daimonic power was demonstrated in the possession of, and influence on, the human victim, which also highlighted human vulnerability. Human potency was thus demonstrated through its control of the supernatural, and its ability to expel daimonic forces, ultimately inverting human subservience to the daimonic. It was proposed in the course of the discussion that in the phenomenon of daimonic possession there can be identified the cultural conceptions of affliction, vulnerability and behaviour (acceptable and deviant), and that in the exercise of daimonic expulsion can be seen not only as a statement of power but also one of social control exemplified through the reassertion of social norms and expectations.

## CONCLUSION

*Ambitions, desires, fears and insecurities*

This study has provided a glimpse into the supernatural beliefs and related practices evident in the late antique world. The intention of the investigation was to focus on one niche of Graeco-Roman history in order better to understand something of the social world of antiquity. Thus the work has sought to investigate supernatural practices within their social context, with consideration for the constructs of belief and behaviour that frame that context.

A focus on two neighbouring regions allowed for some degree of reflection on correlations or differences in practice and belief. No significant differences were apparent in the utilisation of practices in the two regions. This was particularly of note in the hagiographical accounts. As has been frequently highlighted, the narrative style and intentions of the hagiographer could have played a determining factor in such correlations. However, the authors do reveal in their texts a knowledge of contemporary practices evident outside the regions, which suggests that they were drawing upon activities familiar to contemporary social understanding. Thus no distinguishable disparities are apparent between the two regions. Given the many cultural similarities of, and influences on, the two provinces, this is perhaps not surprising. Yet, were more fourth-century examples available it is possible that these correspondences may not have been so marked. Nevertheless, it can be said that in respect of the research presented here, there was no discernible evidence to repudiate scholarly assertions that a degree of homogeneity in supernatural belief and practice existed across the Mediterranean Graeco-Roman world, especially in relation to the provinces of Syria and Palestine.

A prominent aspect of this investigation has been the analysis of the extant evidence utilising a variety of social concepts in order to gain insight into the social constructs and understandings that produced and fostered practices involving the supernatural. These interpretations have not been offered as conclusive means for comprehending the antique evidence in its social constructs. However, they have been suggested as possible and reasonable ways for viewing the fourth-century information in order better to understand the interrelationship between the belief system of the supernatural

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and the lives of fourth-century Syrians and Palestinians. The concepts that have been proposed most frequently included limited good, envy, as well as honour and shame, antique notions that have been increasingly identified in studies of Graeco-Roman society. By associating these ideas with the intentions and social contexts of the practices discussed, it has been demonstrated that these activities are not related to deviant understandings of the world (and therefore aberrations from it), but rather that they are social concepts which could be seen as pervading all Syrian and Palestinian thought.

Perhaps the most overwhelming aspect of the social world of late antiquity, as reflected in the evidence, is that the supernatural – and all related daimones, angels and divinities – formed an integral part of the late antique world-view. The existence, and prevalence, of preternatural beings were acknowledged by secular laws, historiographers, hagiographers and Church Fathers, as well as those who read the works of these individuals and those who made use of the various available supernatural devices. It is, then, not so surprising that the realm of the supernatural was seen to interrelate with the human, and that the latter would seek assistance or protection from that realm.

However, when the extreme, or relatively aggressive, measures people would utilise are considered, then it is apparent that it was not simply an incorporation of the supernatural that involved the latter in the terrestrial realm but the concepts and context that framed social reality. This intricate intertwining of the supernatural with the tangible world is seen to be especially highlighted through the interaction of social concepts – such as envy, limited good and the source of illness – with the supernatural. This interrelationship allowed for the supernatural to act as an applicable method for the manipulation of the social system, exemplified, for instance, in the ability to assuage envy, gain the inappropriate or inaccessible, or affect behaviour. Furthermore, this interaction of social constructs with the supernatural explains why concepts such as limited good, envy and social vulnerability can be seen as influential in so many aspects of the activities discussed. It likewise demonstrates why social views and values such as honour and shame (including sexual) – related so closely to vulnerability, envy and limited good – are also prevalent in the supernatural discourse of the fourth century.

A final point refers to the traditional method of defining magic and aligning it with either the religious or irreligious. To have applied such a distinction in this study would have meant neglecting the prevalent world-view identified herein; namely, that the tangible and supernatural worlds were intricately connected, and would have imposed delineations not readily apparent within that world-view. The application of such a division would have risked the misrepresentation of the material, both anachronistically and ethnocentrically, and the alignment of behaviours with this dualistic interpretation rather than with the social constructs that do frame them.

## CONCLUSION

Indeed, where religion (particularly Christianity) was seen to be involved with the practices discussed, the authorities did not dismiss the beliefs associated with these activities (for they operated within the framework of the same world-view); they merely prescribed the adoption of new methodologies in order to differentiate their supernal associations and potency from those of traditional and alternative practices and religious groups.

In conclusion, this study has provided an interpretative examination of one aspect of Graeco-Roman social history – namely, activities involving the supernatural in Palestine and Syria in the fourth century. The material covered, though diverse, has highlighted the role that the supernatural could play in people's daily lives, and the intricate association of the preternatural with the social environment that accommodated it.

*ἀλλὰ ἐπὶ νίκην, χάριν, δόξαν, δύναμιν, τῷ φοροῦντι σου τὴν δόξαν,  
ἤδη ἤδη, ταξὺ ταξὺ, ἀμήν.<sup>1</sup>*

# NOTES

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1 For a history of scholarship on ancient magic see F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. F. Philip, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 8–12; also D.E. Aune, ‘Magic in Early Christianity’, *ANRW* II.23.2, 1980, pp. 1507–9.
- 2 Preisendanz, *PGM*. For a brief discussion of scholarship on the papyri prior to, and contemporary with, Preisendanz see H.D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. Including the Demotic Spells*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. xli–xliv. Also n. 1 above.
- 3 See Graf, *Magic*, pp. 10–12, and Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, xliii–xliv.
- 4 E.B. Tylor, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press (abridged edition) 1964; J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1954.
- 5 For example A.D. Vakaloudi, ‘Demonic–Mantic Practices – the Implication of the Theurgists and Their Power of Submission in the Early Byzantine Empire’, *Byzantinoslavica* 60, 1999, pp. 87–113.
- 6 For instance, C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991; J.G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992; Graf, *Magic*; Jordan, *SGD*; Kotansky, *GMA*; G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi. Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985; M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (eds), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1995; Naveh and Shaked, *AMB*; P. Schäfer and S. Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza I* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum, 42), Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1994; see also W.M. Brashear, ‘Out of the Closet: Recent Corpora of Magical Texts’, *Classical Philology* 91.4, 1996, pp. 372–83.
- 7 As the consistent and frequent use of the term ‘supernatural’ can lead to a repetitive narrative, ‘preternatural’ will be used interchangeably with ‘supernatural’, and the meaning of ‘preternatural’ taken to be that which equates it with ‘supernatural’.

## 2 THE STATUS QUAESTIONIS

- 1 G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi. Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, p. 3.

- 2 D.E. Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', *ANRW* II.23.2, 1980, pp. 1507–23, provides an excellent discussion on this topic. Many works are cited in the discussion that follows, however; see also R.K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, 54), Chicago, Ill.: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993, pp. 1–13. For examples of, and discussion of, magic defined according to religion see Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, pp. 4–5; H. Maguire, 'Magic and the Christian Image', in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 1995, p. 51; F.C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1984, p. 8; also B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1948, pp. 67–70. For a reaction to Malinowski's treatment see H. Geertz, 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, I', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6.1, 1975, pp. 78, 82; and M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, p. 59.
- 3 J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1954; and E.B. Tylor, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press (abridged edition), 1964. See discussion on p. 21.
- 4 Remnants of these attitudes can still be seen in more recent work, such as A.D. Vakaloudi, 'Demonic-Mantic Practices – the Implication of the Theurgists and Their Power of Submission in the Early Byzantine Empire', *Byzantinoslavica* 60, 1999, pp. 87–113. Also pejorative is the attitude that 'magic' is in some way irrational, see for example Thee, *Julius Africanus*, pp. 8–9.
- 5 É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J.W. Swain, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1915, p. 23.
- 6 Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 361.
- 7 Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, pp. 43–7.
- 8 E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 205–20.
- 9 See Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*.
- 10 Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', p. 1515.
- 11 A. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1996, pp. 6–7.
- 12 For an interesting recent approach to this topic see S.R. Asirvatham, C.O. Pache and J. Watrous (eds), *Between Magic and Religion. Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001.
- 13 C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- 14 Faraone and Obbink, *Magika Hiera*, pp. vi–vii.
- 15 C.A. Faraone, 'The Agonistic Context of early Greek Binding Spells', in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 20.
- 16 H.S. Versnel, 'Beyond Cursing: the Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers', in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 92.
- 17 A.F. Segal, 'Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition', in R. Van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren (eds), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain, 91),

- Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981, pp. 350–51. On magic and religion see also Geertz, ‘An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, I’; K. Thomas, ‘An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, II’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6.1, 1975, pp. 94–7; H.S. Versnel ‘Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic–Religion’, *Numen* 38, 1991, pp. 177–97; and the discussion in C.R. Phillips III, ‘The Sociology of Religious Knowledge in the Roman Empire’, *ANRW*, II.16.3, 1986, pp. 2711–32.
- 18 J.G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 24–5.
  - 19 F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. F. Philip, London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 18. Also on the notion of observing the contemporary social definition assigned to magic see C.R. Phillips III, ‘Magic and Politics in the Fourth Century: Parameters and Groupings’, *Studia Patristica* 18.1, 1985, p. 67.
  - 20 Heintz approaches the difficulties associated with the use of a restrictive, single definition by also adopting a second anthropological definition. See F.G.P. Heintz, ‘Agonistic Magic in the Late Antique Circus’, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1999, pp. 6–8.
  - 21 Versnel, ‘Reflections on the Relationship Magic–Religion’, p. 181.
  - 22 On the influence of an author’s own valuations and ideals see also F. Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion. An Introduction*, Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, p. 8.
  - 23 Bowie, *Anthropology of Religion*, p. 5.
  - 24 See also Larner’s discussion on relativism and the idea that beliefs, values and practices of any given society are the product of that society and should be seen in relation to the structure and needs of that society, and thus all beliefs are ‘equally true, rational, and valuable’ (C. Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*, A. Macfarlane [ed.], Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984, pp. 98–9).
  - 25 R. Gordon, ‘Reporting the Marvellous: Private Divination in the Greek Magical Papyri’, in P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (eds), *Envisioning Magic. A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997, pp. 83–8.
  - 26 For example, Greenwood’s study of modern witchcraft and magic saw her becoming involved with the practices which she studied, an impossible methodology for the student of history. See S. Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld. An Anthropology*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000.
  - 27 Bowie, *Anthropology of Religion*, p. 10.
  - 28 In order to avoid modern preconceptions the term *daimon(es)* will be utilised as a transliteration of the Greek *δαίμων*. This term is increasingly being utilised in studies in the field. See for instance N. Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 27; and for a discussion on the history of the term see J.Z. Smith ‘Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity’, *ANRW* 16.1.2, 1978, 425–39.
  - 29 For example J.E. Lowe, *Magic in Greek and Latin Literature*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1929; K. Seligmann, *The History of Magic*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1948. In terms of a broad chronological and regional study: Graf, *Magic*; M.W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
  - 30 See, particularly, A.A. Barb, ‘The Survival of the Magic Arts’, in A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth*

- Century, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, pp. 100–25; and C. Bonner, ‘Witchcraft in the Lecture Room of Libanius’, *Transactions of the American Philological Society* 63, 1932, pp. 34–44.
- 31 On historical chronology as an anachronistic and virtually irrelevant criterion for the study of antique societies see F.H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment. A Socio-Historical Investigation*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994, pp. 34–6.
- 32 For example, J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, London: Duckworth, 1989.
- 33 For example, P. Brown, ‘Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages’, in M. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1970, pp. 17–45; and J.O. Ward, ‘Witchcraft and Sorcery in the Later Roman Empire and the Early Middle Ages’, *Prudentia* 12.2, 1980, pp. 93–108. See also Barb, ‘Survival of the Magic Arts’; R. von Haehling, ‘Ammianus Marcellinus und der Prozess von Skythopolis’, *JbAC* 21, 1978, pp. 74–101; Bonner, ‘Witchcraft in the Lecture Room’; also Phillips’s commentary in ‘Magic and Politics’.
- 34 For example, Luck, *Arcana Mundi*; and Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*; Aune, ‘Magic in Early Christianity’, p. 1508; Gordon, ‘Reporting the Marvellous’. In contrast, for reservations about the papyri as valid evidence for all ancient ‘magic’, see Graf, *Magic*, p. 3 n. 1.
- 35 See ‘Introduction’ in H.D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. Including the Demotic Spells*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. xlv–xlvii.
- 36 Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*.
- 37 C.A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- 38 For example, J.F. Bourghouts (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Magical Text*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978; D. Frankfurter, ‘Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category “Magician”’, in P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (eds), *Envisioning Magic. A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997, pp. 115–35; Ritner, *Mechanics of Egyptian Magical Practice*.
- 39 As do many of the collective studies of magical papyri, curse tablets and amulets, such as Preisendanz, *PGM*; Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*; Gager, *Curse Tablets*; Meyer and Smith, *ACM*; W.M. Brashear, ‘The Greek Magical Papyri: an Introduction and Survey. Annotated Bibliography (1928–94)’, *ANRW* II.18.5, 1995, pp. 3380–684; and Kotansky, *GMA*.
- 40 On the papyri see: Preisendanz, *PGM*; the English translation edited by Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*; and Brashear, ‘The Greek Magical Papyri’. For Aramaic and Hebrew see particularly *SHR*; *The Sword of Moses. An Ancient Book of Magic*, ed. and trans. M. Gaster, New York: Samuel Weiser Inc., 1970; P. Schäfer and S. Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza I* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum, 42), Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1994; and P. Schäfer and S. Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza II*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Siebeck, 1997.
- 41 Amulets too have received considerable attention, beginning with C. Bonner’s precedential work (*Studies in Magical Amulets. Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950). More recent studies are those of Daniel and Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum (SM)*; Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets (GMA)*, and Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls (AMB)*;

- as well as *MSF*). See also S. Michel, *Bunte Steine – Dunkler Bilder*, München: Verlag Biering & Brinkmann, 2001.
- 42 Magical bowls have received the attention of Naveh and Shaked, who have carried out a significant study on the bowls of Palestine and Sumeria (*AMB, MSF*). The use and function of these artefacts is still largely disputed; only their use in appealing to the supernatural is assured (see the discussion in C.D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1975, pp. 4–14).
- 43 The study of extant curse tablets from the Greek and Roman worlds has also flourished. See Audollent, *DT*; R. Wünsch (ed.), *Inscriptiones Atticae Aetatis Romanae* (Inscriptiones Graecae, Vol. 3 Pt. 3), Berolini: Georgium Reimerum, 1897; Gager, *Curse Tablets*; Jordan, *SGD*; and D.R. Jordan, 'New Greek Curse Tablets (1985–2000)', *GRBS* 41, 2000, pp. 5–46.
- 44 For example, Gager, *Curse Tablets*.
- 45 Such a multi-practice study has been undertaken by Luck in his work *Arcana Mundi*, which covers a number of practices of the Greek and Roman worlds (including miracles, daemonology, divination, astrology and alchemy). Yet Luck only provides a sample of evidence and his focus is particularly linked to the 'magic–religion' issue, as is his selection of practices.
- 46 Material which is ambiguous in date or provenance, or does not fit within the study's broader framework, is not included in the investigation. This includes divination, as well as the *SHR* and various amulets and bowls.

As divination may have informed action, it did not actively seek to affect the outcome of any activity and therefore does not fall within the study's framework and will not be included in the body of the study. However, there are a few areas of divination in the fourth century which are often connected with so-called 'magical' practices either by contemporaries or classical scholarship, or which can be associated with other supernatural practices. These include astrology, oneiromancy and theurgy. For discussions on astrology see Chapter 5. For reading on any of these three forms of divination, some references to consider include T. Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994; A.B. Kolenkow, 'Relationships between Miracle and Prophecy in the Greco-Roman World and Early Christianity,' *ANRW* II.23.2, 1980, p. 1476; J.H. Charlesworth, 'Jewish Astrology in the Talmud, Psuedepigrapha, The Dead Sea Scrolls, and Early Palestinian Synagogues', *Harvard Theological Review* 70.3/4, 1977, pp. 185–93; G. Calofonos, 'Dream Interpretation: A Byzantinist Superstition?', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 9, 1984/5, pp. 215–20; P.C. Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994; J.S. Hanson, 'Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity,' *ANRW* II.23.2, 1980, pp. 1395–427; P. Athanassiadi, 'Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus,' *Journal of Roman Studies* 83, 1993, pp. 115–30; R.M. Berchman (ed.), *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination, Dreams, and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity*, Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1998; S. Eitrem, 'Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual,' in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 175–87; E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951; S. Iles Johnston, 'Rising to the Occasion: Theurgic Ascent in its Cultural Milieu,' in P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (eds), *Envisioning Magic. A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997, pp. 165–94; H. Lewy,

*Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the later Roman Empire*, Le Claire: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'archéologie Orientale, 1956; and G. Shaw, 'Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite,' *J ECS* 7.4, 1999, pp. 573–99.

Likewise the *Sepher Ha-Razim* (*SHR*), which has been closely associated with both Syria and Palestine in the late third, early fourth century, has an uncertain provenance (the extant text comes from Egypt) and is therefore excluded from the corpus of the study. (For discussion on provenance see R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, p. 86; *SHR*, pp. 8, 10–11; Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 106.) Various examples from the *Sepher Ha-Razim*, demonstrate that this contemporary text deals with similar concerns to those discussed in the study, including prescriptions for healing, passion and love, justice, apotropaic defence and protection, and races and games.

There are various amulets and bowls from late antiquity and the Eastern empire which may also reflect, to an indiscernible degree, practices of fourth-century Syria and Palestine which are not included in the study. For examples, see Isbell, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls*; Schiffman and Swartz, *HAI*T; nos. 3, 9, 12–15 in Naveh and Shaked, *AMB*; nos. 18, 23, 25–30 in Naveh and Shaked, *MSF*; Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza. I*; Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza II*; and W.H. Rossell, *A Handbook of Aramaic Magical Texts*, G.D. Young and E.B. Smick (eds), New Jersey: Department of Semitics of Shelton College, 1953.

- 47 There is some miscellaneous material which cannot easily be classified into these or other categories, but which is from fourth-century Syria and/or Palestine. See nos. 47, 49, 50, 55 in Kotansky, *GMA*; no. 95, Jordan, 'New Greek Curse Tablets,' p. 25; and *SEG* 29.1615. For hagiographical accounts that are vague or not easily classified, see, for example, Theodoret, *HR*, 24–25.7, 26.17, 21.2; Jerome, 'The Life of St Hilarion', *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 6. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/Npnf2-06-05.htm>>, 32; *PL* 23.47 26–29; and Sozomen, *HE*, 5.10, 4.16.13. For unpublished tablets of possible relevance, see Jordan, *SGD*, 192, 193; no. 114 in Jordan 'New Greek Curse Tablets', p. 29; no. 108 in Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 204–5.
- 48 Sozomen, *HE*.
- 49 The homilies of John Chrysostom in particular, as well as Cyril of Jerusalem.
- 50 Theodoret, *HR*; and Jerome, 'Hilarion'.
- 51 *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*.
- 52 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. and trans. Rolfe (Loeb Classical Texts), 3 vols, 1935–9; Zosimus, *New History*, Books I–VI, trans. R.T. Ridley (Byzantina Australiensia 2), Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982; and Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, Vols I and II, ed. and trans. A.F. Norman (Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- 53 *CT*.
- 54 Including the Palestinian Talmud (J. Barclay, *The Talmud*, London: John Murray, 1878).
- 55 Bonner, 'Witchcraft in the Lecture Room'.
- 56 Bonner, 'Witchcraft in the Lecture Room', p. 34.
- 57 Bonner, 'Witchcraft in the Lecture Room', p. 37.
- 58 Bonner, 'Witchcraft in the Lecture Room', p. 44.
- 59 Barb, 'Survival of Magic Arts', p. 105.

- 60 Frazer, *Golden Bough*; and Tylor, *the Early History of Mankind*.
- 61 Barb, 'Survival of Magic Arts', p. 104.
- 62 Barb, 'Survival of Magic Arts', p. 102.
- 63 Barb, 'Survival of Magic Arts'.
- 64 Although much of Brown's evidence for the accusations stems firmly from the fourth century through the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus.
- 65 Brown, 'Sorcery'.
- 66 For a detailed critique of Brown's use of an anthropological framework, see Ward, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery'.
- 67 Brown, 'Sorcery', p. 17.
- 68 Brown, 'Sorcery', p. 20.
- 69 Brown, 'Sorcery', p. 23.
- 70 Brown, 'Sorcery', p. 24.
- 71 Brown, 'Sorcery', p. 29.
- 72 Brown, 'Sorcery', p. 28.
- 73 Brown, 'Sorcery', pp. 32–3.
- 74 Brown, 'Sorcery', p. 20. Within this assertion is the inference that a decline in sorcery coincided with the supposed decline in accusations. However, literary and material evidence suggests that various practices in addition to those reported in Libanius and Ammianus survived throughout the period.
- 75 Brown, 'Sorcery', p. 18.
- 76 H. Funke, 'Majestäts und Magieprozesse bei Ammianus Marcellinus', *JbAC* 10, 1967, pp. 145–75; von Haehling, 'Ammianus Marcellinus'; J.-B. Clerc, *Homines magici étude sur la sorcellerie et la magie dans la société impériale*, Berne and New York: Peter Lang, 1995; and also K. Hay, 'Sorcery Trials in the Fourth century AD: Magic or Manipulation?', *Scriptorium* 2.1, 1997, pp. 40–50.
- 77 See particularly, Funke, 'Majestäts und Magieprozesse', p. 175.
- 78 See von Haehling, 'Ammianus Marcellinus', pp. 100–1.
- 79 Clerc, *Homines magici*.
- 80 Phillips, 'Magic and Politics'.
- 81 For example, Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity'; N. Brox, 'Magie und Aberglaube an den Anfängen Christentums', *Trier theologische Zeitschrift* 83, 1974, pp. 157–80; N. Brox, 'Der Einfache Glaube und die Theologie', *Kairos* 14.3, 1972, pp. 161–87; Thee, *Julius Africanus*; also J. Engemann, 'Zur Verbreitung magischer Übelabwehr in der nichthristlichen und christlichen Spätantike', *JbAC* 18, 1975, pp. 22–48.
- 82 Brox ('Magie und Aberglaube', p. 157) opens his discussion: 'Mit der vergleichenden Religionswissenschaft werden Magie und Aberglaube hier nicht als primitive oder archaische Formen von Religion verstanden, aus denen sublimale, "reine" Religion sich entwickelt, sondern als ständig drohende Dekadenz und als überall anwesende Perversion von Religion und auch von christlichen Glauben.'
- 83 Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity'.
- 84 B. Wyss, 'Johannes Chrysostomus und der Aberglaube', *Heimat u. Humanität. Festschrift für K. Menli zum 60 Geburtstag*, Basel: G. Krebs, 1951, pp. 262–74; G. Marasco, 'Pagani e Cristiani di Fronte alle Arti Magiche nel IV Secolo D.C.: Il caso di Atanasio', *Quarterni Catanesi di Cultura Classica e Medievale* 3, 1991, pp. 111–34; M.W. Dickie, 'The Fathers of the Church and the Evil Eye', in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995, pp. 9–34; D. Kalleres, 'Exorcising the Devil to Silence Christ's Enemies: Ritualized Speech Practices in Late

- Antique Christianity', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, Providence, R.I., 2002; and D. Kalleres, 'John Chrysostom and the Apotropaic Power of Baptism: Cursing the Devil to Create a Christian', in *In Heaven as it is on Earth: Imagined Realms and Earthly Realities* (forthcoming).
- 85 Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', pp. 1515–16.
- 86 Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', p. 1515.
- 87 See Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', pp. 1516 and 1551, for a discussion on magical prayer.
- 88 Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', p. 1557.
- 89 Wyss, 'Johannes Chrysostomus'.
- 90 Dickie, 'Fathers of the Church'. For other studies on the evil eye in antiquity see J. Russell, 'The Evil Eye in Early Byzantine Society', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32.3, 1982, pp. 539–48; and K.M.D. Dunabin and M.W. Dickie, 'Invidia Rumpantur Pectora', *JbAC* 26, 1983, pp. 9–37.
- 91 Marasco, 'Pagani e Cristiani'.
- 92 Kalleres, 'Exorcising the Devil' and 'John Chrysostom and Baptism'.
- 93 M. Aubin, 'Gendering Magic in Late Antique Judaism', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1998.
- 94 Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic'.
- 95 Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*.
- 96 Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*.
- 97 For a more detailed commentary on this work see Frankfurter's review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2002.
- 98 See Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, p. 14.
- 99 Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.
- 100 On the influence of evolutionary theories see also Phillips, 'Magic and Politics', p. 66.
- 101 For instance, in discussing the confusion of magic and religion Frazer gives the example of Melanesia and states: 'the same confusion of magic and religion has survived among peoples that have risen to higher levels of culture' (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp. 52–3).
- 102 Tylor, *Early History of Mankind*.
- 103 Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 53.
- 104 Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, pp. 15–16.
- 105 Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, p. 16.
- 106 See Brown, 'Sorcery'; as well as Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*; and Douglas, *Purity and Danger*. The accusations and Peter Brown's work receive further attention in Chapter 5.
- 107 For example Barb, 'Survival of Magic Arts'.
- 108 J.J. Winkler, 'The Constraints of Eros', in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 234.
- 109 Winkler, 'The Constraints of Eros', p. 230.
- 110 Winkler, 'The Constraints of Eros', pp. 226–30. Faraone disagrees with Winkler on this proposal. He argues that 'Winkler's arguments have been influential, but they are erroneous to the degree that they imply a standardized lovesick performer or client', and that the vast majority of extant erotic spells give no clue as to the frame of mind or motives of the individual agent (Faraone, *Love Magic*, pp. 82–3).
- 111 Winkler, 'The Constraints of Eros', pp. 226–7.
- 112 Faraone, *Love Magic*, pp. 42–9, 78–80, 85.

- 113 For example, J.H. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991.
- 114 P.F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds. Socio-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- 115 Esler, *First Christians*, p. 22.
- 116 R.L. Rohrbaugh, *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996, p. 43.
- 117 See further, Esler, *First Christians*, pp. 22–3, 25. Regarding the concept of the collective, see Rohrbaugh, *Social Sciences and New Testament*, p. 44.
- 118 See A. Dundes (ed.), *The Evil Eye. A Casebook*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992; and B. Malina, *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, Atlanta, Ga. and London: SCM Press, 1981, p. 90.

### 3 SYRIA AND PALESTINE: A FOURTH-CENTURY BACKGROUND

- 1 M.L.W. Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture in the Later Roman Empire*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967, pp. 3–4.
- 2 P. Garnsey and C. Humfress, *The Evolution of the Late Antique World*, Cambridge: Orchard Academic, 2001, p. 33; J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, London: Duckworth, 1989, p. 253; A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602. A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, Vols 1 and 2, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1964 (reprint 1986), p. 136.
- 3 A. Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395–600*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 91. See also Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, p. 83.
- 4 A.H.M. Jones, ‘The Social Background of the Struggle between Paganism and Christianity’, in A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, pp. 26–7.
- 5 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 133.
- 6 J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, p. 163.
- 7 Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, p. 35.
- 8 D.J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society and Civilization Seen Through Contemporary Eyes*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 1.
- 9 For a discussion of this issue see P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p. 22.
- 10 Consider for example Festinus of Tridentum who, while governor of Asia, punishes the practising of *veneficium* and consequently kills a philosopher, an elderly woman, a distinguished townsman, and a young man with stomach troubles, in order to gain promotion (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 29.2 [ed. and trans. Rolfe, 1939, pp. 23–8]).
- 11 The most popular view is that the area was initially separated from Palaestina Salutaris in 358. At the end of the fourth century, then, the original territory of Palestine was split into two, and the three provinces were called Palaestina Prima (capital Caesarea), Palaestina Secunda (capital Scythopolis), and Palaestina Tertia (capital Elusa, then Petra). See G. Stemberger, *Jews and Christians in the Holy Land. Palestine in the Fourth Century*, trans. R. Tuschling, Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 2000, pp. 7–9; also Y.E. Meimaris, *Sacred Names*,

- Saints, Martyrs and Church Officials in the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Pertaining to the Christian Church of Palestine* (MEΛETHMATA, 2) Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, Centre for Greek and Roman Antiquity, 1986, p. 8; and C.A.M. Glucker, *The City of Gaza in the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (BAR International Series 325), Oxford, 1987, pp. 50–1.
- 12 P. Johnson, *Civilizations of the Holy Land*, London: Book Club Associates, 1979, p. 146.
  - 13 Stemberger, *Jews and Christians*, p. 9.
  - 14 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 136. On Constantius' financial abuses and heavy taxations see Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 130–1.
  - 15 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 123, 136.
  - 16 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 109, 146.
  - 17 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 100, 608.
  - 18 D. Bowder, *The Age of Constantine and Julian*, London: Paul Elek, 1978, p. 53. Jones points out that Julian's motives for invading Persia are actually not that clear (*Later Roman Empire*, p. 123).
  - 19 See W.S. McCullough, *A Short History of Syriac Christianity to the Rise of Islam*, Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982, pp. 41, 51–3; and Bowder, *Age of Constantine and Julian*, pp. 51–2.
  - 20 Cameron, *Mediterranean World*, pp. 87–8. On Palestine see A.S. Rappoport, *History of Palestine*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1931, p. 223.
  - 21 CT 5.17.1, 2 and 5.18.1, 3. See Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, p. 229; also Jones, 'Social Background', p. 22.
  - 22 Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, p. 107.
  - 23 Jones, 'Social Background', p. 34.
  - 24 See Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, pp. 5, 107.
  - 25 Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, p. 5.
  - 26 See Stemberger, *Jews and Christians*, pp. 14–15.
  - 27 R. Brändle, *John Chrysostom. Bishop-Reformer-Martyr*, trans. J. Cawte and S. Trzcionka (Early Christian Studies 8) Sydney: St Pauls, 2004, p. 7.
  - 28 Brändle, *John Chrysostom*, p. 38.
  - 29 On the riots at Antioch see W. Mayer and P. Allen, *John Chrysostom* (The Early Church Fathers) London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 104–17; and Brändle, *John Chrysostom*, pp. 28–31.
  - 30 For example, in the fourth century Constantius, Julian and Valens all spent time residing in Antioch.
  - 31 Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, p. 72.
  - 32 Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, p. 107; also Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, p. 410.
  - 33 Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, 14.7 esp. 14.7.1–5; Libanius 'Oration' (henceforth 'Lib., Or.') 1.103, in *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. A.I. Norman (Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992; and Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, pp. 72, 406–7.
  - 34 Ammianus hints that Gallus was about to leave on campaign against Persia (*Res Gestae*, 14.7.5).
  - 35 See Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, pp. 108, 409–10.
  - 36 Lib., Or. 15.22; Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, p. 412.
  - 37 Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.17 (in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 2, 1886. Online: available <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/>>); Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, p. 120.
  - 38 Glucker, *City of Gaza*, pp. 1–2, 4, 86ff., 93ff.

- 39 Glucker, *City of Gaza*, pp. 96–7; and E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312–460*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, pp. 128, 154.
- 40 See Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, p. 151.
- 41 For Antioch, see Brändle, *John Chrysostom*, pp. 3–7. On the prosperity of Antioch see also J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch, City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 256.
- 42 Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, p. 397.
- 43 Ammianus, *Res Gestae* 14.8.8–9, 14.8.11; Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, pp. 389–92.
- 44 See H.J.W. Drijvers, *History and Religion in Late Antique Syria*, Aldershot, UK; Brookfield, Vt.: Variorum, 1994, pp. 124–7. On Antioch as thoroughly Greek see R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 4, 18, 27. Also, S. Brock, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1984, p. 17.
- 45 Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 152–3.
- 46 S. Brock, ‘Syriac Culture, 337–425’, in A. Cameron and P. Garnsey (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History. The Late Empire, A.D. 337–425* (The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. 13), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 708–9, 714. On the bilingualism of Syria and Edessa see also Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 25; and Brock, *Syriac Perspectives*, p. 19.
- 47 Brock, ‘Syriac Culture’, p. 714. Although an interesting exception to this notion is the prominent Syrian Church figure, John Chrysostom, who appears not to have spoken or understood the language.
- 48 Brock, ‘Syriac Culture’, p. 717; see also Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 3.
- 49 Brock, ‘Syriac Culture’, pp. 708–12. On Palestine and the development of the Palestinian Talmud and rabbinical biblical commentaries around this time, see Stemmerger, *Jews and Christians*, pp. 3–4. See also, S. Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity. History, Literature and Theology*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1992, pp. 212, 225–6.
- 50 Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, p. 43.
- 51 Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, p. 11. Education in classical rhetoric was essential for a career in the imperial bureaucracy and any secular office (Cameron, *Mediterranean World*, p. 136).
- 52 In Antioch, Jews and Christians mingled freely, and Jews received a Greek education and followed the same careers as others while maintaining their own religious traditions. See Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, pp. 35, 49, 59. In contrast see Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, p. 25. On teaching and Julian’s edict against Christians teaching, see Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, p. 128; Bowder, *Age of Constantine and Julian*, p. 106.
- 53 R. Browning, ‘Tradition and Originality in Literary Criticism and Scholarship’, in A.R. Littlewood (ed.), *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1995, pp. 17–28.
- 54 Cameron, *Mediterranean World*, p. 145.
- 55 See the discussion in Brändle, *John Chrysostom*, pp. 20–3.
- 56 Consider for example John Chrysostom’s close friend Olympias who did not remarry and devoted her great personal fortune to the works of the Church (see Brändle, *John Chrysostom*, pp. 57–8). On the impact of Christianity in the repositioning of women into the public sphere see Cameron, *Mediterranean World*, p. 148.
- 57 Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, p. 4.

- 58 K. Seligmann, *The History of Magic*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1948, p. 116.
- 59 Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, p. 45.
- 60 For instance, F.R. Trombley's work on the Christianisation of the empire (*Hellenic Religion and Christianization c.370–529*, vol. 2, R. Van den Broek, H.J.W. Drijvers and H.S. Versnel [eds], Leiden: Brill, 1993). See also R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 6–7; and Cameron, *Mediterranean World*, p. 13.
- 61 Bowder, *Age of Constantine and Julian*, pp. 22–3.
- 62 Bowder, *Age of Constantine and Julian*, p. 18.
- 63 See, for example, CT 4.7.1; Sirm. 1 (= Constitutiones Sirmundianae, in *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmundian Constitutions*, trans. Pharr, New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1952); and Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 90.
- 64 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 90.
- 65 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 89, 91.
- 66 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 96.
- 67 See Jones on Gregory of Nazianzus (*Later Roman Empire*, p. 123).
- 68 CT 16.1; Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 165.
- 69 Sozomen, *HE*, 6.21.
- 70 McCullough, *Short History of Syriac Christianity*, p. 57.
- 71 See Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 88.
- 72 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 150.
- 73 Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, pp. 174–5.
- 74 Consider edicts against various traditional practices, such as sacrifice (CT 16.10.11) and divination (CT 9.16.5), in the *Codex Theodosianus*.
- 75 This is discussed further in Chapter 8. See also Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, pp. 232–3.
- 76 Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 36.
- 77 Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 36.
- 78 Some scholars believe that the majority of the population in Antioch was Christian. For example, Bowder, *Age of Constantine and Julian*, p. 121.
- 79 S.K. Ross, *Roman Edessa. Politics and Culture on the Eastern Fringes of the Roman Empire, 114–242 CE*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 123–7; Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 38.
- 80 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 122–3.
- 81 On Ephrem in particular, see McCullough, *Short History of Syriac Christianity*, p. 57.
- 82 Bowder, *Age of Constantine and Julian*, p. 61.
- 83 Glucker, *City of Gaza*, p. 43.
- 84 For a discussion of this, see Glucker, *City of Gaza*, pp. 46–7, 49.
- 85 On the fundamental place of asceticism in early Syrian Christianity see S.A. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis. John of Ephesus and the "Lives of the Eastern Saints"*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, p. 4. For types of monasticism see Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, p. 165.
- 86 Cameron, *Mediterranean World*, p. 73.
- 87 See Johnson, *Civilizations of Holy Land*, p. 157; and Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 36. By far the most influential work done on this has been P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies* 61, 1971, pp. 80–101. For further reactions to this work see also Cameron, *Mediterranean World*, pp. 73ff.; L.M. Whitby, 'Maro the Dendrite:

- an Anti-social Holy Man', in Whitby *et al.* (eds), *Homo Viator. Classical Studies for John Bramble*, Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987, pp. 309–17; also P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997', *J ECS* 6.3, 1998, pp. 353–76. On monks representing a new power in the countryside, in the secular realm as well as religious, see Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, p. 239. For an interesting discussion on the involvement of holy men in communities, see also Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, pp. 28–31.
- 88 For discussion see F.R. Palanque, G. Bardy, P. de Labriolle and L. Brehier, *The Church in the Christian Roman Empire. Volume II, The Life of the Church in the Fourth Century*, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 1952, pp. 491–2.
- 89 CT 16.3.1 (390 CE), revoked CT 16.3.2 (392 CE). Also Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, pp. 147–9; Palanque *et al.*, *Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, pp. 496–7.
- 90 Brock, *Syriac Perspectives*, pp. 3, 10, 13. See also, Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 33.
- 91 For an example of a Syrian monastery could be found at Rhossos on the Syrian Coast (Palanque *et al.*, *Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, p. 480).
- 92 McCullough, *Short History of Syriac Christianity*, p. 58.
- 93 See Brock, *Syriac Perspectives*, pp. 11–12.
- 94 Palanque *et al.*, *Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, p. 479.
- 95 See Brock, *Syriac Perspectives*, p. 1, and Palanque *et al.*, *Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, p. 497.
- 96 For discussion on the holy man and communities, see especially Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 26.
- 97 For example, Jerome, 'The Life of St Hilarion', *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 6. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/Npnt2-06-05.htm>>, and Cyril of Sythopolis, *The Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, trans. R.M. Price, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1991.
- 98 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 24.
- 99 J. Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ. The Monasteries of Palestine 314–631*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 155.
- 100 See Palanque *et al.*, *Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, pp. 448–52; and Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*, p. 84.
- 101 See Palanque *et al.*, *Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, pp. 448–52, 478; and Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, p. 138.
- 102 Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*, p. 89. The political circumstances of the western empire at the end of the fourth century helped direct wealth towards the Holy Land Church, as people liquidated their estates in the West (Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, p. 138).
- 103 Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 124, 107–27.
- 104 Bowder, *Age of Constantine and Julian*, p. 62; Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 90.
- 105 On the female pilgrims to the Holy Land see Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, p. 34; Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*, pp. 85–91.
- 106 Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 53–9. The pilgrimage journey itself was a formidable element of the trip, and could involve extensive travel by land, sections of which required soldiers as escorts, as recorded by Egeria, *Egeria's Travels*, ed. and trans. J. Wilkinson, London: SPCK, 1971.
- 107 Palanque *et al.*, *Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, pp. 504–6; also Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*, p. 84; Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, p. 54.

- 108 Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*, p. 91; Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 135–7.
- 109 Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, p. 128.
- 110 Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*, pp. 129–31, 135–6. ‘Trafficking’ in relics was prohibited by Theodosius (CT 9.17.7, 386 CE).
- 111 Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, p. 6; and Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, p. 225. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization*, provides an excellent discussion on religion in the separate regions of the empire.
- 112 Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, p. 228.
- 113 Jones, ‘Social Background’, p. 30. See also MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, pp. 22–3.
- 114 Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, pp. 35–6.
- 115 Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 36.
- 116 Joshua Stylite, *Chronicle*, p. 30; cf. 27, pp. 38, 72 (in *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite*, trans. F.R. Trombley and J.W. Watt [translated texts for Historians 32], Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000); Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, p. 39; Ross, *Roman Edessa*, p. 100.
- 117 See Ross, *Roman Edessa*, p. 100.
- 118 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, p. 150.
- 119 On the bans on sacrifice: CT 16.10.8; Lib., Or. 30.17–19; Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, p. 154.
- 120 Bowder, *Age of Constantine and Julian*, p. 99.
- 121 Bowder, *Age of Constantine and Julian*, pp. 120–1.
- 122 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 122–3.
- 123 Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, pp. 166–7.
- 124 Garnsey and Humfress, *Evolution of Late Antique World*, p. 139.
- 125 On the Jewish population in Palestine see B. Isaac, ‘Jews, Christians and others in Palestine: The Evidence from Eusebius’, in M. Goodman (ed.), *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 65–74. On the small Jewish population in Gaza see Glucker, *City of Gaza*, pp. 99–100.
- 126 Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, pp. 35, 38.
- 127 Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, p. 13.
- 128 On John Chrysostom and the Jewish community see Mayer and Allen, *John Chrysostom*, esp. pp. 48–167; also Wilken, *John Chrysostom*.
- 129 On the Jewish community in Antioch see Wilken, *John Chrysostom*; also Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, pp. 232–4.
- 130 Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, p. 54.
- 131 Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, p. 51.
- 132 Brock, *Syriac Perspectives*, pp. 267–8.
- 133 See Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, pp. 37–8, 54–5.

#### 4 CURSES FOR COURSES: HEAVY TACTICS IN THE HIPPODROME

- 1 Trans. Morgan, *SHR*, pp. 61–2. The *Sepher Ha-Razim* is dated to the fourth century, or possibly late third. It is believed to stem from either Palestine, Syria, or Egypt (R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and The Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, p. 86).
- 2 Morgan argues that here ‘the circling celestial bodies are viewed as the circling chariots of the hippodrome. Thus RHTY’L appears as the ruler of chariot races

- and his name (RHT = run) indicates that he was created for this function' (*SHR*, p. 61 n. 3).
- 3 R. Brändle, *John Chrysostom. Bishop-Reformer-Martyr*, trans. J. Cawte and S. Trzcionka (Early Christian Studies 8), Sydney: St Pauls, 2004, p. 7.
  - 4 John complains that despite a congregation's unwillingness to endure a lengthy sermon, a horse racing audience would endure extremes of physical discomfort without a thought. John Chrysostom, *De Anno Sermo 4* (PG 54. 660–661), *Homily 6 in Genesim* (PG 53.54–56), and *De mutione nominum homily 4* (PG 51.147).
  - 5 A. Cameron, *Circus Factions. Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, p. 56.
  - 6 See Cameron, *Circus Factions*, pp. 75–7, esp. p. 56, on Pliny's and Procopius' accounts of fans and their behaviour.
  - 7 F. Heintz discusses these various methods ('Agonistic Magic in the Late Antique Circus', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1999, pp. 18–40).
  - 8 See no. 4 in J.G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 51–3.
  - 9 Jordan (SGD, 193) reports that J.H. Humphrey, *Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research* 213, 1974, p. 40, mentions three. Humphrey (*Roman Circuses. Arenas for Chariot Racing*, London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1986, p. 455) also mentions that five lead tablets were found beside the turning posts. Another curse tablet (no. 107 in D.R. Jordan, 'New Greek Curse Tablets (1985–2000)', *GRBS* 41, 2000, p. 41) was found in the drains around the far turning point in the *meta* of the hippodrome at Antioch. It dates to the third or fourth century, and is still rolled up. See also F. Heintz, 'Magic Tablets and the Games at Antioch', in C. Kondoleon (ed.), *Antioch. The Lost Ancient City*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press and Worcester Art Museum, 2000, p. 166.
  - 10 Jordan, SGD 166; *SEG* 7.234.
  - 11 For a discussion on the form of inscriptions on *defixiones* see Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 4–12.
  - 12 *SEG* 15.847, 7.213; Jordan, SGD 167; and no. 5, Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 53–6.
  - 13 This dating is set on the basis of circus factions only being attested in the East from 315 CE. See Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', p. 213.
  - 14 For a drawing of the figure see Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 54.
  - 15 On *voces magicae*, the frequent occurrence of incomprehensible sequences of vowels and consonants, often formulaic, see D.E. Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity', *ANRW* II.23.2, 1980, p. 1549.
  - 16 Trans. see Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 53–6.
  - 17 *SEG* 7.213, II.31–33, trans. in Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 53–56. See also Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 213–15.
  - 18 No. 6 in Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 56–8; Tablet A in W. van Rengen, 'Deux défixions contre les bleus à Apamée (VI siècle apr. J.-C.)', *Apamée de Syrie*, Brussels, 1984, pp. 213–34. Also *SEG* 34.1437; Jordan, SGD, pp. 192–3.
  - 19 Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 56–7.
  - 20 Trans. from Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 57–8. For the Greek text see: Tablet A in van Rengen, 'Deux défixions', p. 215.
  - 21 Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 57–8; van Rengen, 'Deux défixions', p. 215.
  - 22 Trans. H.J. Magoulias, 'The Lives of the Byzantine Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Magic in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D.: Sorcery, Relics and Icons', *Byzantion* 37, 1967, p. 243. For the Greek text see *Kosmas und Damian. Texte und Einleitung*, trans. L. Deubner, Leipzig and Berlin: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1907 (reprint 1980), pp. 25–9.

- 23 Magoulias, 'Lives of the Saints', p. 244.
- 24 Magoulias, 'Lives of the Saints', p. 244. See *Kosmas and Damian*, pp. 122–8; and the discussion and part translation of the text in Magoulias, 'Lives of the Saints', pp. 243–4.
- 25 There are various arguments regarding the valid use of hagiographies given their repetitive and formulaic presentations. However, J. Seiber ('The Urban Saint in Early Byzantine Social History', *British Archaeological Reports Supplementary Series* 37, 1977, p. 2) points out that despite the stylised anecdotes, which can appear in several sources, 'hagiography reflects very reliably how Byzantine society thought of itself and of its worldly surroundings'. Alternatively, Dickie has more recently commented that the constant reworking and oral presentation of texts could be seen as influential in the formulaic character and stereotypical story-patterns of some hagiographical accounts (M.W. Dickie, 'Narrative-patterns in Christian Hagiography', *GRBS* 40, 1999, pp. 83–98).
- 26 Libanius, 'Oration', 36.15, in Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. A.F. Norman (Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992. For a discussion on Libanius' comments see Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 87–8.
- 27 See Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 89–93.
- 28 Lib., Or. 35.13–14. See also Heintz's discussion of this excerpt and the argument that divination relating to the outcome of races could be closely linked with the 'next step' of ensuring the outcome. Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 88–93.
- 29 Heintz, 'Magic Tablets at Antioch', p. 167.
- 30 Heintz, 'Magic Tablets at Antioch', p. 167, and 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 53–5, and on apotropaic seashells, *lunulae*, pendants, and brandmarks, 'Agnostic Magic', pp. 183–93. See also an example of a spell recipe in the *Sepher Ha-Razim* for making tired horses run 'like the wind' (3rd firmament, II.36–44 of trans: SHR, 64; no. 7; Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 59).
- 31 See Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 55–7.
- 32 Jerome, 'The Life of St Hilarion', *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 6. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/NpnF2-06-05.htm>>, 16; *PL* 23.36 12–15. Translation of Jerome's 'Hilarion' are based on that found in NPNF (see online address preceding) with occasional variations where considered appropriate. For further commentary on this passage see Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 95–7.
- 33 From Carthage. Audollent, *DT* 241; trans. no. 12, Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 65–7.
- 34 Audollent, *DT* 237; trans. no. 9, Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 60–2.
- 35 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 20; *PL* 23.38 8–31.
- 36 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 20; *PL* 23.38 36–39 5.
- 37 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 20; *PL* 23.38 36–39 5.
- 38 John Chrysostom also commented on chariot races and associated the races with 'deeds that are the product of sorcery' (*μαγγανείας*). In *Joannem*, hom 58; *PG* 59.321. In support, Heintz cites as genuine a spurious homily attributed to John Chrysostom, which may or may not be contemporary (*PG* 59.567). See Heintz, 'Magic Tablets at Antioch', p. 167; also Heintz's discussion regarding circus curses and their daimonic associations and locations in F. Heintz, 'Circus Curses and their Archaeological Contexts', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 11, 1998, pp. 337–42.
- 39 Heintz comments on the perceptions of the sprinkling of water, and the pious addition of the blessing of the water in some editions of the text. See Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 103–4.

- 40 See Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 97–104, esp. pp. 101–2.
- 41 Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic'.
- 42 *CT* 9.16.11 (trans. Pharr, Greenwood Press Publishers, New York, 1952).
- 43 Indeed, Cameron proposes that 'The curiously complex nature of the law suggests that it was framed with reference to a particular case when a charioteer was accused of doing away with a magician suspected of being his accomplice' (A. Cameron, *Porphyrius. The Charioteer*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, p. 245 n. 11).
- 44 *Veneficium* can refer to poisons, the preparation of drugs, *magica* or *γοητεία*. Yet, even if referring specifically to poisons, the construction of these potions was often accompanied by incantations appealing to supernatural beings.
- 45 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 28.1.27. All translations of the *Res Gestae* are taken from the Loeb edition (ed. and trans. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Texts, 3 vols, 1935–9).
- 46 Libanius mentions that his former teaching assistant is charged with such suspicious involvement in the races (Or. 1.161–162).
- 47 In a media interview, a former number one tennis player was asked about the reason for wearing his hat backwards, the star reluctantly admitted that he wore it that way by chance in his first professional victory, and has subsequently retained the style. For a survey of similar behaviour amongst American professional baseballers see Gmelch, who identifies Malinowski's elements of ritual, taboo, and fetishes amongst pitchers and batters as a means of asserting control over chance (G. Gmelch, 'Magic in Professional Baseball', in G.P. Stone [ed.], *Games, Sport and Power*, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1972, pp. 128–37, and his 'Baseball Magic', in R.R. Sands [ed.], *Anthropology, Sport and Culture*, Westport, Conn. and London: Bergin & Garvey, 1999, pp. 191–200).
- 48 Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 46.
- 49 See C.A. Faraone 'Aeschylus' *Hymnos Desmios* (*Eum.* 306) and Attic Judicial Curse Tablets', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105, 1985, p. 151; and Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 43–4.
- 50 B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1948.
- 51 Cameron, *Porphyrius*, p. 245.
- 52 Heintz argues that there is no strong evidence for the involvement of fans ('Agonistic Magic', pp. 17–18).
- 53 Cameron, *Porphyrius*, p. 245.
- 54 R. Fox, 'Pueblo Baseball. A New Use for Old Witchcraft', *Journal of American Folklore* 74, 1961, pp. 9–16.
- 55 Cameron, *Circus Factions*, p. 7; and A.P. Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 412.
- 56 Libanius, *Progy.* 12.5.8.
- 57 Heintz, 'Magic Tablets at Antioch', p. 167.
- 58 Heintz, 'Magic Tablets at Antioch', p. 167.
- 59 Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', p. 17.
- 60 Cameron, *Circus Factions*, p. 6.
- 61 For example, Aurelius Symmachus' desire, years in advance of his son's sponsorship of an event, to find the best Spanish horses. See discussion in Cameron, *Circus Factions*, pp. 8–9.
- 62 For example, Diocles won 35,863,120 sesterces in prize money alone (Cameron, *Porphyrius*, p. 245). For further discussion of the involvement of charioteers see especially Cameron, *Porphyrius*, p. 245.

- 63 A concept stressed by Cameron in his discussion of charioteers' victories and their association with imperial victory (*Porphyrius*, pp. 248–51).
- 64 Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', p. 18.
- 65 J.P. Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome*, Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1995, p. 94.
- 66 Toner, *Leisure*, pp. 92–3.
- 67 Harris provides some discussion on gambling and chariot races, see H.A. Harris, *Sport in Greece and Rome*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1972, pp. 223–6.
- 68 For example, John Chrysostom, *De statuis hom. 15*; series in *PG* 49.15–222.
- 69 See the examples in Gager, *Curse Tablets*, ch. 1: 'Competition in Theater and Circus', pp. 42–77.
- 70 Heintz, 'Magic Tablets at Antioch', p. 166.
- 71 For a discussion of honour and its importance in the Roman world see P.F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds. Socio-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 25–8; also J.K. Campbell, 'Honour and Shame', in G. Speak (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition*, London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000, pp. 773–5.
- 72 Cameron, *Porphyrius*, pp. 244–52.
- 73 A more complete discussion of the concept of limited good and envy is offered in Chapter 7. See also Esler, *First Christians*, p. 35.
- 74 Heintz also discusses charioteers as subjects and victims of envy. Furthermore he points out that horses competing in the races were also considered highly vulnerable to envy. See Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 34–40.

## 5 SUPERNATURAL SABOTAGE: ENSURING A SUCCESSFUL LIVELIHOOD

- 1 Most notably, P. Brown, 'Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages', in M. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1970, pp. 17–45. Also J.O. Ward, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in the Later Roman Empire and the Early Middle Ages', *Prudentia* 12.2, 1980, pp. 93–108; K. Hay, 'Sorcery Trials in the Fourth century AD: Magic or Manipulation?', *Scriptorium* 2.1, 1997, pp. 40–50; R. von Haehling, 'Ammianus Marcellinus und der Prozess von Skythopolis', *JbAC* 21, 1978, pp. 74–101; and H. Funke, 'Majestäts und Magieprozesse bei Ammianus Marcellinus', *JbAC* 10, 1967, pp. 145–75. Many general studies of Graeco-Roman magic also include some commentary on the accusations.
- 2 John Chrysostom mentions people's use of supernatural methods to ensure good business (*Ad illuminados catechesis* 2; *PG* 49.240).
- 3 John Chrysostom criticises people for going to a seer to find their lost money (*In ep.1 ad Thess hom* 3; *PG* 62, 413).
- 4 They are dated third to fourth century. Nos. 109–10 in D.R. Jordan, 'New Greek Curse Tablets (1985–2000)', *GRBS* 41, 2000, p. 28; also F. Heintz, 'Magic Tablets and the Games at Antioch', in C. Kondoleon (ed.), *Antioch. The Lost Ancient City*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press and Worcester Art Museum, 2000, pp. 164–5, nos. 50–1 (photos).
- 5 Heintz, 'Magic Tablets at Antioch', p. 166.
- 6 No. 109 in Jordan, 'New Greek Curse Tablets', p. 28.

- 7 One of the tablets has noticeable Jewish elements, through the invocation of Iao and reference to the book of Exodus (no. 109 in Jordan, 'New Greek Curse Tablets', p. 28).
- 8 Consider, for instance, John Chrysostom's concern that members of his congregations are going to Jewish healers, or using traditional charms and healing incantations (see Chapter 8). See also Bonner regarding the eclectic nature of practices and the difficulty of assigning a religious affiliation to the curser or victim (C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950, p. 18).
- 9 Heintz, 'Magic Tablets at Antioch', p. 166; Libanius, 'Oration' (henceforth 'Lib., Or.')
- 29.9, in Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. A.F. Norman (Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992, and Or. 54.42.
- 10 See comments already made, especially Chapter 4, n. 25.
- 11 Theodoret, *HR*, 8.14. The translation of Theodoret's history used here and in other citations is from *A History of the Monks of Syria*, trans. R.M. Price, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1985.
- 12 Theodoret, *HR*, 8.14.
- 13 For example the plagues of Egypt related in the Old Testament. Also, the sprinkling of divinely blessed water presents a parallel, with both the ingredients and the action, to the blessing and protective properties of baptism (see Chapter 7). See also the protective capabilities of water sprinkled by a holy man in the discussion of Hilarion and the chariot races in Chapter 4.
- 14 *CT* 9.16.3; trans. from Pharr, *Codex Theodosianus*, p. 237.
- 15 Theodoret, *HR*, 14.4.
- 16 For a discussion of the holy man as mediator see P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies* 61, 1971, esp. p. 99; and his later revision of this paper 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997', *J ECS* 6.3, 1998, pp. 353–76.
- 17 Theodoret, *HR*, 14.4.
- 18 Youtie and Bonner's discussion of this tablet includes an extensive analysis of the origin of names, and concludes that Pancharia was most likely a Christian. H.C. Youtie and C. Bonner, 'Two Curse Tablets from Beisan', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 68, 1937, pp. 48–52, 58–9.
- 19 No. 77 in J.G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 168–9; Youtie and Bonner, 'Two Curse Tablets', pp. 43–72; Jordan, *SGD* 164.
- 20 Lines 2–6, 20–25 in Youtie and Bonner, 'Two Curse Tablets', pp. 54–5; trans. Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 168–9.
- 21 There is a second-century reference to a certain Manilius who claims to have deposited some money with a woman and who had difficulty recovering it. The emperor consequently advises him that the judge can issue an order obliging the woman to show her account books. Gardner argues that this does not necessarily infer that the woman concerned was professionally engaged in banking. See J.F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986, pp. 235–6.
- 22 On referring to the mother rather than the father in spells as charms, as only the identity of the mother (as parent) provides the certainty needed for the rituals, see J. Goldin, 'The Magic of Magic and Superstition', in E.S. Fiorenza (ed.), *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*,

- Notre Dame, Ind. and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976, p. 124, n. 46.
- 23 Questions could also reasonably be raised here regarding the dishonour of a woman auditing the financial accounts of a man who does not belong to her family.
- 24 Youtie and Bonner, 'Two Curse Tablets', p. 47.
- 25 Jordan, SGD 165. Dated to the last quarter of the third century or the first quarter of the fourth century. (Youtie and Bonner, 'Two Curse Tablets', pp. 44, 72–3.)
- 26 See Youtie and Bonner, 'Two Curse Tablets', pp. 47–8, 72–7.
- 27 Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 117.
- 28 Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 116–50, esp. 117.
- 29 Heintz, 'Magic Tablets and Antioch', p. 166. See further examples in Preisendanz, *PGM* 8.1–63, 4.2359–72 and 4.2373–440.
- 30 For an explanation and discussion of the evil eye, see Chapter 7.
- 31 Heintz, 'Magic Tablets at Antioch', p. 166.
- 32 See C.A. Faraone, 'The Agnostic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells', in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, esp. pp. 10–17.
- 33 The association of the notion of limited good with the fourth-century Graeco-Roman belief system receives more detailed attention in Chapter 7.
- 34 For an introductory discussion on the concepts of honour and shame see J.K. Campbell, 'Honour and Shame', in G. Speak (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition*, London and Chicago, Ill.: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000, pp. 773–5. Also: P.F. Esler, P.F., *The First Christians in their Social Worlds. Socio-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 25–8.
- 35 I make this assertion based on the fact that I have found little evidence of female protagonists, but, at the same time, I have not surveyed the complete corpora of *defixiones* and cannot offer such a survey as support. It is, however, worth noting that in the area of erotic *defixiones* males are the predominant spell casters (see Chapter 6, n. 9; also Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 80).
- 36 On local leading figures acting as tax collectors for the empire, see P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity. Towards a Christian Empire*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p. 26.
- 37 M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, London: Gollancz, 1978, p. 114.
- 38 On the exercising of a curse and the holy man, see Brown, 'The Holy Man in Late Antiquity', 1971, p. 88.
- 39 See Chapter 4, pp. 143–5.
- 40 See Chapter 9 for a discussion of baptism, and also D. Kalleres, 'Exorcising the Devil to Silence Christ's Enemies: Ritualized Speech Practices in Late Antique Christianity', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, Providence, R.I., 2002, regarding the apotropaic quality of baptismal formulae.
- 41 See n. 1 of this chapter.
- 42 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* ed. and trans. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Texts, 3 vols, 1935–9; and Ammiani Marcellini, *Rerum Gestarum libri qui supersunt*, ed. W. Seyfarth, 2 vols, Stuttgart and Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1999.
- 43 Libanius' orations, in particular his autobiography, Oration 1. (Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, Vols I and II, ed. and trans. A.F. Norman [Loeb Classical Library], Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992; *Libanii Opera*, trans. R. Foerster, Vols 1 and 3, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner,

- 1903–6; *Libanii Opera*, trans. R. Foerster, Vol. 10, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963).
- 44 Zosimi, *Comitis et Ex Exadvocati Fisci. Historia Nova*, ed. L. Mendelssohn, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1887.
- 45 C. Bonner, ‘Witchcraft in the Lecture Room of Libanius’, *Transactions of the American Philological Society* 63, 1932, p. 44. (See a similar sentiment in B. Wyss, ‘Johannes Chrysostomus und der Aberglaube’, *Heimat u. Humanität. Festschrift für K. Menli zum 60 Geburtstag*, Basel: G. Krebs, 1951, p. 265.)
- 46 See A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, pp. 81–3, 88.
- 47 It should be noted that although Zosimus is also a source of information and an adherent of traditional Graeco-Roman religion, he writes in the early sixth century and draws on fourth-century evidence. (See the introduction in Zosimus, *New History*, Books I–VI, trans. R.T. Ridley [Byzantina Australiensia 2], Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982, pp. xi–xv).
- 48 CT 9.16.4; also 9.40.1, 9.16.1–2.
- 49 The relation of divination with other supernatural activities, as is represented in the extension of the treason trials presented on pp. 64–6, 68–70, 74–5, suggests that divination may have been more closely aligned with these practices in social perception and understanding than this study, and its methodology, has accounted for. However, the evidence is not sufficient to support this connection with any certainty.
- 50 Zosimus, *HN*, 4.1.1. The translation of Zosimus used throughout the book is based on Zosimus, *New History*.
- 51 *Res Gestae*, 16.8.2. All Ammianus’ translations are based on the text ed. and trans. by Rolfe (Loeb Classical Texts), 3 vols, 1935–9.
- 52 *Res Gestae*, 14.7.7–8.
- 53 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.6.
- 54 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.6–7.
- 55 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.9. Zosimus also refers to Theodorus’ knowledge of the prediction in *HN*, 4.13.3.
- 56 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.10.
- 57 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.12.
- 58 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.13. See also Zosimus, *HN*, 4.14.3.
- 59 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.15–17
- 60 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.18.
- 61 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.19–20.
- 62 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.19, 29.1.21. Zosimus openly states that the ‘aim of these various sacrileges was to collect a fortune for treasury’ (*HN*, 4.14.4).
- 63 CT 9.42.2 (356 CE); and CT 9.42.4 (358 CE).
- 64 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.27.
- 65 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.25–44. Also 29.2.5.
- 66 Zosimus, *HN*, 4.14.2.
- 67 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.44.
- 68 *Res Gestae*, 29.2.6–7.
- 69 *Res Gestae*, 29.2.9–10.
- 70 *Res Gestae*, 29.2.3.
- 71 Zosimus, *HN*, 4.15.
- 72 *Res Gestae*, 29.2.17.
- 73 *Res Gestae*, 29.1.41.
- 74 *Res Gestae*, 29.2.4.
- 75 *In Acts*, hom. 38; PG 60.275.

- 76 For example, see Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, 29.2.4.  
 77 His name is recorded as both Festus (Zosimus) and as Festinus (Ammianus).  
 78 *CT* 9.16.3.  
 79 Zosimus, *HN*, 4.15.  
 80 *Res Gestae*, 29.2.22–28.  
 81 *Lib.*, Or. 1.2.  
 82 Libanius alleges that one of his rivals did just this (Or. 1.65). It is worth noting here that it has not been proved that this rivalry and competition for students was restricted to this period of Roman history, as is often implied in studies of sorcery accusations.  
 83 Or. 1.171. The translation of Libanius' Or. 1. throughout the book is based on the Loeb edition: Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*.  
 84 Or. 1.172. Libanius tells that his friend Adelphius was tortured and put to death, though he did not incriminate his friends.  
 85 Or. 1.178.  
 86 Or. 1.176–178.  
 87 Or. 54.40. (The formulation of this charge is mentioned in *Ep.* 844.)  
 88 Or. 1.159.  
 89 Or. 1.98.  
 90 Or. 1. 98–99.  
 91 Or 1.98, note b (Loeb edition: Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*).  
 92 Note on the text, by Norman, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, Or. 1.98.  
 93 Or. 1.62.  
 94 Or.1.62–63.  
 95 Or. 1.194.  
 96 See Or. 1.194–196.  
 97 Or. 1.43.  
 98 Or 1.43.  
 99 Or. 1.42.  
 100 Or. 1.44.  
 101 Or. 1.96.  
 102 Or. 1.245–246.  
 103 Or. 1.246, 1.246–247.  
 104 Or. 1.248.  
 105 Or. 1.249.  
 106 For a discussion of this see Bonner, 'Witchcraft in the Lecture Room', esp. pp. 38–9.  
 107 Or. 1.250.  
 108 Or. 1.250.  
 109 We are shown here an indication of a genuine belief in the malice behind the accusations (true or false) for which people were brought to trial with regard to supernatural activity. The validity of supernatural practices is not questioned in any of the accounts; it is rather the allegations of involvement that are at issue for the author.  
 110 This could simply be referring to the unearthing of an instrument by which the curse was able to affect him. The exposure of the tool could remove its power, as it was no longer in a position to appeal to and instruct *daimones* – recall that curse tablets, for example, are typically buried or deposited in wells (that is, away from sight and in close proximity to *daimones*).  
 111 Compare a fourth-century case in Rome recorded by Ammianus, *Res Gestae* 28.1.50.  
 112 Or. 36.1–3 and 36.15.

- 113 *Res Gestae*, 19.12. 3–5.
- 114 *Res Gestae*, 19.12.2.
- 115 *Res Gestae*, 19.12.7–8.
- 116 *Res Gestae*, 19.12.9–13. Note also, that although Ammianus mentions that noble and obscure alike were brought to trial he provides no evidence or detail of people without social standing or education.
- 117 *Res Gestae*, 19.12.14.
- 118 *Res Gestae*, 19.12.17–18.
- 119 Sozomen, *HE*, 2.25.1. Translations of Sozomen throughout the book are based on Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen. Comprising a History of the Church from A.D. 324 to A.D. 440, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 2, 1886. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/>>.
- 120 Sozomen, *HE*, 2.25.3–4.
- 121 Sozomen, *HE*, 2.25.7.
- 122 Sozomen, *HE*, 2.25.9–13.
- 123 *Res Gestae*, 15.7.7–8.
- 124 Canon 36.
- 125 Sozomen, *HE*, 4.24.10.
- 126 For example Brown, ‘Sorcery’; also Hay, ‘Sorcery Trials’.
- 127 On Valens, for example, see *Res Gestae*, 29.1.
- 128 See for instance T. Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994. On a link between astrology and fatalism see G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi. Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, p. 317; and the discussion in W.C. Greene, *Moira. Fate, Good and Evil in Greek Thought*, New York and Evanston, Ill.: Harper Torchbooks, 1963, pp. 331–98.
- 129 See *Res Gestae*, 31.14.
- 130 The practice had not yet been erased by Christianisation, and was popular, and survived, in various forms. Consider also Zosimus’ account of Constantine, who ‘was afraid that people enquiring about the future might hear prophecies about his misfortunes. For this reason he applied himself to the abolition of divination’ (Zosimus, *HN*, 2.29.4).
- 131 Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis*, 2.30.3–4, trans. by J. Rhys Bram (Firmicus Maternus, *Ancient Astrology Theory and Practice. Mathesos Libri VIII*, trans. J. Rhys Bram, Park Ridge, N.J.: Noyes Press, 1975, p. 69).
- 132 See, for example, J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, London: Duckworth, 1989, p. 512.
- 133 This is also seen to some degree in the *CT* (9.16.4).
- 134 MacMullen points out that by 400 CE the government in the East is overwhelmingly Christian, but ‘that Christianity had made no clean sweep of the summits of power and publicity’. R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 22–3.
- 135 See Funke, ‘Majestäts und Magieprozesse’, p. 175; and Hay, ‘Sorcery Trials’, p. 43.
- 136 See discussion p. 65.
- 137 Brown, ‘Sorcery’, p. 20. Hay’s argument is based on this notion, identifying the increasing imperial control of society by the emperor and his lackeys as a fundamental aspect of the prevalence of accusations in this period. Hay, ‘Sorcery Trials’, pp. 40–50.
- 138 See D.E. Aune, ‘Magic in Early Christianity’, *ANRW* II.23.2, 1980, p. 1523.
- 139 Brown, ‘Sorcery’, p. 21.

- 140 Brown, 'Sorcery', esp. pp. 20–5.  
 141 Esler, *First Christians*, p. 141.  
 142 See note b in Or.1.98, Loeb edition.  
 143 See Esler, *First Christians*, p. 140.  
 144 For example, Libanius speaks of the inability of a rival to outstrip him in his oratory (Or. 1.42).  
 145 Or. 1.243–244.  
 146 Or. 1.245.  
 147 Or. 1.246.  
 148 Faraone, 'Agonistic Context', p. 15.  
 149 See F. Graf, 'How to Cope with a Difficult Life. A View of Ancient Magic', in P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (eds), *Envisioning Magic. A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997, p. 107.  
 150 Or. 36 and Or. 1.  
 151 See further discussion of this in Chapter 8.  
 152 See, for example, Chapter 7 regarding the evil eye as well as envy.  
 153 Or. 1.240.  
 154 Or. 1.44.  
 155 This is a concept which has been identified in modern eastern Mediterranean cultures, and which has been convincingly used in studies of the New Testament period. See Esler, *First Christians*, p. 35; also Chapter 7.  
 156 Esler, *First Christians*, p. 29. Also Campell, 'Honour and Shame', pp. 773–4.  
 157 Esler, *First Christians*, p. 25. Also Campell, 'Honour and Shame', p. 773.  
 158 Esler, *First Christians*, p. 27. Also Campell, 'Honour and Shame', pp. 773–4.  
 159 Or. 36.  
 160 Or. 36.12.  
 161 See parallels for Libanius' behaviour in an Indian community in which members of the same caste seek not to appear to surpass publicly those on the same social level (D.F. Pocock, 'The Evil Eye – Envy and Greed Among the Patidar of Central Gujerat', in A. Dundes [ed.], *The Evil Eye. A Casebook*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p. 204). See also Chapter 7.

## 6 DEMANDING DESIRE: RITUALS OF LOVE AND LUST

- 1 J. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 78.
- 2 C.A. Faraone, 'The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells', in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 15, including n. 66.
- 3 Theodoret, *HR*, 8.13.
- 4 John Chrysostom, *In Matt. hom.* 67/68; *PG* 58.636 48 – 637 22 (see also *PG* 51.216).
- 5 Aphrahat was based in Antioch from 360/1 CE, and lived there for approximately fifty years (Theodoret of Cyrillus, *A History of the Monks of Syria*, trans. R.M. Price, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1985, p. 80).
- 6 C.A. Faraone, 'Deianira's Mistake and the Demise of Heracles: Erotic Magic in Sophocles' *Trachinae*', *Helios* 21.2, 1994, p. 124. The Talmud even suggests garlic as an aphrodisiac (*B. Kama* 82a). See T. Schrire, *Hebrew Amulets. Their Decipherment and Interpretation*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, p. 52.

- 7 Extant evidence would here suggest the use of some form of binding spell. Cf. Faraone, who argues in his study of classical Greek practices that such a spell type forms one of the categories of ritual generally utilised by men to instil erotic passion in women, and that females generally used rituals seeking to maintain or increase affection in men (*Ancient Greek Love Magic*, London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 27).
- 8 See Faraone, *Love Magic*, p. 149, n. 64, in which he cites examples of *eros*-spells used by women (probably courtesans and prostitutes): Preisendanz, *PGM* 15.1–21, 39.1–21, 48.1–20, 16.1–75, 19b.1–3; and Andollent, *DT* 270, 271.
- 9 Faraone records that of eighty-one published erotic spells (i.e. used to compel one person to have passion for another, or to come to another for sex), sixty-nine had a female target (of which two were homoerotic), nine had a male target (of which one was homoerotic), and three targeted either a male or a female (*Love Magic*, p. 43 n. 9). See also Faraone, *Love Magic*, pp. 149–59.
- 10 On the topic of a female feeling that her place in the household is threatened, see Faraone's discussion on Deianira ('Deianira's Mistake', pp. 120–2).
- 11 Theodoret, *HR*, 8.13.
- 12 Faraone proposes that *philia* practices sought to induce affection rather than the desire induced by *ἔρωσ* spells. See Faraone, *Love Magic*, p. 29. For a discussion of *philia* see *ibid.* pp. 27, 96, 120. Aphrahat's potion was to have a similar effect to the Kestos, a charm which could 'enhance the attractiveness of the female wearer, diminish marital strife, or control and subdue an angry or hostile husband' (C.A. Faraone, 'Sex and Power: Male-targeting Aphrodisiacs in the Greek Magic Tradition', *Helios* 19:1/2, 1992, pp. 92–3).
- 13 For a discussion on the elite users of love spells etc., see L. LiDonnici, 'Burning for It: Erotic Spells for Fever and Compulsion in the Ancient Mediterranean World', *GRBS* 39, 1998, pp. 63–98. Regarding the wealthy and notable consulting and supporting the holy man, see P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997', *J ECS* 6.3, 1998, p. 372.
- 14 Theodoret, *HR*, 13.10–12.
- 15 Theodoret, *HR*, 13.10–12.
- 16 Theodoret, *HR*, 13.10–12.
- 17 Theodoret, *HR*, 13.10–12.
- 18 *Defixiones* (καταδεδσμοι) refer to binding spells that seek to bind the victim in some way. *Agogai* are spells which often have the same characteristics, but which also seek to lead the victim back to the spell's instigator. Most late-antique erotic spells are *agogai*.
- 19 J.J. Winkler, 'The Constraints of Eros', in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 223. Also Faraone, *Love Magic*, pp. 43–7; and M.S. Cyrino, *In Pandora's Jar. Lovesickness in Early Greek Poetry*, Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995, pp. 1–3, 165–6.
- 20 Faraone, *Love Magic*, p. 44; see also LiDonnici, 'Burning for It', pp. 74–5.
- 21 LiDonnici discusses control of *ἔρωσ* for social standing: 'Burning for It', pp. 74–5, 87–9.
- 22 Winkler, 'Constraints of Eros', pp. 222–3; also LiDonnici, 'Burning for It'.
- 23 Theodoret, *HR*, 13.12.
- 24 Consider for instance, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (*The Golden Ass*).
- 25 Faraone, *Love Magic*, 29; and see this chapter n. 9.
- 26 No. 41, Daniel and Maltomini, *SM*, pp. 129–31 (unknown provenance, dated III–IV CE).

- 27 Line 43, no. 45, Daniel and Maltomini, *SM*, pp. 162–73 (provenance north of Assuit, dated V CE).
- 28 Preisendanz, *PGM* 7.888–889. Translation of *PGM* here and throughout the book based on H.D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation. Including the Demotic Spells*, Chicago, Ill. and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992. For these symptoms as frenzy, see Winkler, ‘Constraints of Eros’, p. 225.
- 29 For example: ‘remain in her heart and burn her guts, her breast, her liver,/her breath, her bones, her marrow, until she comes to me NN, loving me, and until she fulfils all my wishes . . . As I burn you up and you are potent, so burn the brain of her, NN, whom I love. Inflame her and turn her guts inside out . . .’ (ll.1525–1545, Preisendanz, *PGM* 4.1496–1549). On the intention of ‘heating and burning’ to incite desire, see LiDonnici, ‘Burning for It’.
- 30 For example, no. 78 in Meyer and Smith, *ACM*. See also PDM 14.428–50 and 14.636–69, in Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*.
- 31 *Res Gestae*, 29.2.3.
- 32 Local laws were often allowed to operate as the predominant legal code. For instance, on Palestine see P. Johnson, *Civilizations of the Holy Land*, London: Book Club Associates, 1979, p. 146.
- 33 *CT* 9.16.3.
- 34 Possible reasons for his immediate and official actions are offered in the discussion on pp. 95–9 and relate to concerns of bridal theft or unsanctioned matrimony, as well as family honour.
- 35 The editor of Theodoret’s *HR* includes a footnote proposing that by consenting to hear the daimon outside of the courtroom, the judge treated the evidence as judicially inadmissible (*History of the Monks of Syria*, trans. Price, p. 109 n. 8).
- 36 No. 31 in Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 106; and *SHR*, pp. 45–6.
- 37 No. 26 in Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 93–4; and no. 10 in Naveh and Shaked, *AMB*, pp. 84–9. Gager, *Curse Tablets*, and Naveh and Shaked suggest different dates for the amulet. Gager dates it fourth to fifth century or possibly earlier, whereas Naveh and Shaked assign a slightly later date of fifth to sixth century. I therefore take the tablet to belong somewhere between the fourth and sixth centuries, and include it in the study.
- 38 No. 10, Naveh and Shaked, *AMB*; trans. *AMB*, pp. 84–9.
- 39 For example *Sword of Moses*, 15:17–18. See Naveh and Shaked, *AMB*, pp. 88–9.
- 40 See examples in Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 78–115. On generic spell types see also Faraone, *Love Magic*, p. 5.
- 41 Also LiDonnici, ‘Burning for It’.
- 42 On the invocation of angels in the text see Naveh and Shaked, *AMB*, p. 89.
- 43 Regarding the non-Jewish use of Hebrew in incantations and spells, see for instance R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 85.
- 44 Jerome, ‘The Life of St Hilarion’, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 6. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/Npnf2-06-05.htm>>, 21; *PL* 23.39 7–40 7.
- 45 Dukes argues that Jerome shows the close relationship between love and ‘magic’ that was probably accepted as a matter of course by his contemporaries (E.D. Dukes, *Magic and Witchcraft in the Dark Ages*, Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, Inc., 1996, p. 90).
- 46 See *PL* note on this (*PL* 23.39).
- 47 See F. Graf, ‘How to Cope with a Difficult Life. A View of Ancient Magic’, in P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (eds), *Envisioning Magic. A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997, pp. 94–5.

- 48 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 21; *PL* 23.39 15–18.
- 49 See various examples in Gager, *Curse Tablets*.
- 50 Graf, 'How to Cope', p. 94.
- 51 In relation to the victim's symptoms and those sought by ἔρωσ spells see, for example, Gager, *Curse Tablets*, pp. 78–115; as well as discussion on pp. 85–6.
- 52 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 21; *PL* 23.39 30.
- 53 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 21; *PL* 23. 40 5–7.
- 54 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 21; *PL* 23.39 28–29.
- 55 Faraone, *Love Magic*, pp. 156–60.
- 56 Faraone, 'Sex and Power', p. 100. See also Graf regarding literary fantasies of male wariness of female attacks of magic threatening male autonomy in choosing a mating partner ('How to Cope', p. 96).
- 57 Faraone, *Love Magic*, p. 96.
- 58 Faraone, 'Deianira's Mistake', p. 122.
- 59 See LiDonnici, 'Burning for It', pp. 74–5; also Faraone, 'Deianira's Mistake', pp. 115–16, 126.
- 60 Faraone, 'Deianira's Mistake', p. 126; also LiDonnici, 'Burning for It', p. 76.
- 61 On concubinage and the law see A. Rousselle, *Porneia. On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988, pp. 80–5, esp. p. 96.
- 62 Winkler, 'Constraints of Eros'.
- 63 Winkler, 'Constraints of Eros', esp. pp. 226–30.
- 64 Winkler, 'Constraints of Eros', p. 233. Winkler cites the following examples: Preisendanz, *PGM* 4.2757–60, 15.4, 19a.53, 61.29–30; Audollent, *DT* 266, 268.
- 65 LiDonnici, 'Burning for It', pp. 95–7.
- 66 LiDonnici, 'Burning for It', esp. pp. 92–5.
- 67 Cyrino, *In Pandora's Jar*, p. 168.
- 68 Also, on men casting spells because of the marginalised position of women see Graf, 'How to Cope', p. 95.
- 69 On the use of 'marriage magic' for attaining social position see Graf, 'How to Cope', p. 104.
- 70 See discussion in Faraone, *Love Magic*, pp. 161–5.
- 71 Faraone, *Love Magic*, pp. 78–80.
- 72 Faraone, *Love Magic*, p. 84.
- 73 On the need for a rejected male suitor to reclaim his honour, and abduction providing an effective method of doing so, see J. Evans-Grubbs, 'Abduction Marriage in Antiquity: A Law of Constantine (*CTh* IX.24.1) and its Social Context', *Journal of Roman Studies* 79, 1989, p. 62.
- 74 Faraone, *Love Magic*, p. 85.
- 75 On the edict of Constantine, *CT* 9.24.1, relating to bridal theft and the punishment of virtually all involved in an abduction, including the victim and her family, see Evans-Grubbs, 'Abduction Marriage in Antiquity', esp. pp. 59–61, 64–83. On the concept of abductions and individual, familial and social shame see *ibid.*, pp. 61–4.
- 76 Winkler, 'Constraints of Eros', p. 217.
- 77 J.K. Campbell, 'Honour and Shame', in G. Speak (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition*, London and Chicago, Ill.: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000, p. 773.
- 78 Possibly also protecting his family from any possible prosecution in relation to abduction marriage. See *CT* 9.24.1, as well as Evans-Grubbs's discussion of the law (Evans-Grubbs, 'Abduction Marriage in Antiquity').
- 79 This is inferred from *CT* 9.16.3.

- 80 Campbell writes about the extremely protective attitude towards female relatives that develops as a consequence of an 'obsession with personal and family honour', which depends upon appearance and the acknowledgement of others ('Honour and Shame', p. 773). Also regarding the linking of honour amongst family see P.F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds. Socio-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 31.
- 81 Cyrino, *In Pandora's Jar*, pp. 2, 166.
- 82 Campbell ('Honour and Shame', p. 774) refers to women's sexual shame as *dropi*.
- 83 Based on Campbell's comments on modern Mediterranean societies ('Honour and Shame', p. 774).

## 7 THE APOTROPAIC: PROTECTING GOOD FORTUNE

- 1 In the verse, Genesis 48:16, in the original Hebrew, 'and let them grow into a multitude' means literally 'and let them multiply as fishes'. Schrire argues that because fish live and are unseen beneath the surface of the water, and are thus traditionally immune to the effects of the evil eye, this explains the use of the passage as protection against the evil eye. T. Schrire, *Hebrew Amulets. Their Decipherment and Interpretation*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, p. 102.
- 2 Belief in the evil eye is almost universal. It can be traced throughout most periods of recorded history, and apart from variation in the forms of protection, it pays little heed to religious affiliations.
- 3 See also M.W. Dickie, 'The Fathers of the Church and the Evil Eye', in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995, pp. 12, 30.
- 4 *Les Éthiopiennes*, 3.7.3; trans. Lamb (Heliodoros, *Ethiopian Story*, trans. W. Lamb, London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1961, pp. 75–6).
- 5 On the inability of the highly educated and sophisticated, particularly Christians, to dismiss ideas of envy lending malign power to eyes, see Dickie, 'Fathers of the Church', esp. p. 9.
- 6 Homily 11, 'On Envy'; PG 31.380 28–35. Trans. M.M. Wagner in *The Fathers of The Church*, Vol. 9, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1950.
- 7 For an in-depth discussion of the fourth-century Church Fathers' views on the evil eye and envy see Dickie, 'Fathers of the Church'. On John Chrysostom in particular, see Dickie, esp. pp. 22–4. On the evil eye in the New Testament, see Yamauchi's interesting discussion on the evil eye and Galatians (E.M. Yamauchi, 'Magic in the Biblical World', *Tyndale Bulletin* 34, 1983, p. 189); and Elliot's discussion on the evil eye in Galatians (J.H. Elliott, 'Paul, Galatians, and the Evil Eye', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 17.4, 1990, p. 263).
- 8 For example, see J. Russell, 'The Archaeological Context of Magic in the Early Byzantine Period', in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995, p. 36.
- 9 Libanius, *Ep.*127.1.
- 10 *Ep.* 1403.1–2; See Dickie, 'The Fathers of the Church', p. 13.
- 11 See Chapter 5.
- 12 Kotansky gives the amulet considerable attention. For his valuable commentary see amulet no. 52 in Kotansky, *GMA*, pp. 270–300.
- 13 No. 52, Kotansky, *GMA*; trans. Kotansky.

- 14 Kotansky has suggested that the long litany of angelic names given, identifying the heaven in which each rules and the realm of influence, appears to be a well-circulated and widely documented tractate that probably had an independent existence before it became part of this spell. The catalogue probably has Alexandrian Hellenistic Jewish community derivations (*GMA*, pp. 270–3).
- 15 Lines 71–121, Amulet 52, Kotansky, *GMA*; trans. Kotansky.
- 16 Kotansky translated it as ‘evil eye’.
- 17 Kotansky, *GMA*, p. 270.
- 18 J.K. Campbell, ‘Honour and Shame’, in G. Speak (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition*, London and Chicago, Ill.: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000, p. 775.
- 19 The opening list of names and formulaic language of this phylactery are similar to certain curse tablets. F. Heintz, ‘Magic Tablets and the Games at Antioch’, in C. Kondoleon (ed.), *Antioch. The Lost Ancient City*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press and Worcester Art Museum, 2000, p. 166.
- 20 Heintz, ‘Magic Tablets at Antioch’, p. 166.
- 21 That is, those spirits who are most often called upon to act in curses through invocation and/or location.
- 22 Heintz, ‘Magic Tablets at Antioch’, p. 166.
- 23 John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catechesis 2.5*; PG 49.240. Translations of Chrysostom here and throughout the book are based on the *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 2, 1886 (Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2>>), unless otherwise cited. Many Alexander amulets have been found; see B. Wyss, ‘Johannes Chrysostomus und der Aberglaube’, *Heimat u. Humanität. Festschrift für K. Menli zum 60 Geburtstag*, Basel: G. Krebs, 1951, p. 266.
- 24 For the use of coins as apotropaic devices see H. Maguire, ‘Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages’, *Speculum* 72.4, 1997, pp. 1037–54. On the popularity and potency of coins with a depiction of Alexander the Great on them, see esp. p. 1040. Regarding the potency of the image in late antiquity, and particularly its supposed popularity with charioteers, see also F. Heintz, ‘Agonistic Magic in the Late Antique Circus’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1999, pp. 178–82.
- 25 John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos Cat. 2*; PG 49.240 33–35. For further discussion on the ‘old-women’ see Chapter 8, p. 125.
- 26 See also John Chrysostom, *Hom. 8 on Col.*, where those using amulets would retort that they did not constitute idolatry but that they were simply charms (ἐπιφώδη), PG 62.358. Also *Hom. 4 on 1 Cor.*, PG 61.38 14–20; and *Hom. 10 on 1 Tim.*, PG 62.552.
- 27 This ruling prohibited the clergy from providing amulets themselves. It is unknown what form these amulets took – whether Christian or non-Christian – in their divine or religious appellations. They could quite possibly have been strictly Christian in form but still of a prophylactic medium considered illegitimate in the Eastern Church.
- 28 *Ad illuminandos Cat. 2*; PG 49.240 5–55.
- 29 John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos Cat. 2*, PG 49.240 57–61. On the apotropaic features of the ritual language prescribed in baptismal instructions see D. Kalleres, ‘Exorcising the Devil to Silence Christ’s Enemies: Ritualized Speech Practices in Late Antique Christianity’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, Providence, R.I., 2002. This work is particularly addressed in Chapter 9.
- 30 *In ep 1 ad Cor. hom. 12*, PG 61.106.

- 31 For other references to the use of the cross, see John Chrysostom, *Hom 8 in Col.*, PG 62.357–8; *Adv. Jud. Or.* 8, PG 48.940.
- 32 R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 87–8.
- 33 John Chrysostom, *Hom. 12 in 1 Cor.*; PG 61.105. Also on bell-ringing to keep away demons, see R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 143.
- 34 John Chrysostom, *Comm. on Galatians*; PG 61.623.
- 35 John Chrysostom, *Hom. 12 on 1 Cor.*; PG 61.105.
- 36 *Hom. 12 on 1 Cor.*; PG 61.106 9–38. On salt, soot, and ash, see John Chrysostom, *On Col. hom.8*; PG 62.359.
- 37 H. Maguire, ‘Magic and the Christian Image’, in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 1995, p. 61. It should be noted here that the baptism of infants was probably minimal compared to adult and death-bed baptism.
- 38 John Chrysostom, *De statuis hom. 19*; PG 49.196 37–46.
- 39 Kalleres provides a strong argument for the potency of ritual language in emerging Christian baptismal discourse. (See Kalleres, ‘Exorcising the Devil’, esp. Introduction and chs 1–3, which relate to John Chrysostom.)
- 40 P. Brown, ‘The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 61, 1971, p. 100.
- 41 Theodoret, *HR*, 21.10.
- 42 Theodoret, *HR*, 21.15.
- 43 For instance Symeon the Stylite’s protection of an entire community early in the following century (Theodoret, *HR*, 26.28).
- 44 On the popularity of relics, see also Chapter 3.
- 45 Theodoret, *HR*, 17.10.
- 46 J. Leemans, W. Mayer, P. Allen and B. Dehandschutter, ‘*Let Us Die That We May Live*’. *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria, c. AD350–AD450*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 127–8.
- 47 D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, Vol. 1, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, London: Oxford University Press, and The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1947, pp. 262–3, 321–3. Levi mentions a mosaic with nine peacocks spreading their tails, arranged in an arch, and each under an arch in the narthex of a church in Nikopolis (pp. 321–3). See also K.M.D. Dunabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. For earlier Antiochene examples see Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, pp. 28–34, and Heintz, ‘Magic Tablets at Antioch’, p. 163.
- 48 H. Maguire, ‘Garments Pleasing to God: The Significance of Domestic Textile Designs in the Early Byzantine Period’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44, 1990, p. 216.
- 49 No. 175 in Dunabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, p. 169. For a diagram of the Solomon knot, see *ibid.* p. 341.
- 50 Downey and Prentice recorded several lintel inscriptions from Antioch, but their dating is either vague or concerned with a slightly later period. (Downey’s seventeen Antiochene examples, given the context of the book, are possibly from the fourth century; however, Prentice’s material begins with fifth-century inscriptions, and Downey depends largely on Prentice. See G. Downey, *Antioch in the Age of Theodosius the Great*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962, pp. 133–4; and W.K. Prentice, ‘Magical Formulae

- on Lintels of the Christian Period in Syria', *American Journal of Archaeology* [Second Series. Journal of the Archaeological Institute of America] 10.2, 1906, pp. 137–50.) Downey thought many of his examples to be Antiochene declarations of Christian faith. Though the inhabitants may also have been Christian, the inscription alone is no clear indicator of their religious belief, only of their belief in the efficacy of Christian power to protect them and their abode.
- 51 Prentice, 'Magical Formulae on Lintels', p. 138. Common formulae on lintels in Syria (a practice also observed by the Church [John Chrysostom, *On Matt. hom 54/55*, PG 58.537]) included: *ἦεις θεος μονος* (Prentice ['Magical Formulae on Lintels', pp. 139–40] suggests this formula has a Jewish origin subscribing to the commands of Deuteronomy 6.9.); *κυρι βοήθι*; XMIΓ (this is considered to mean X[ριστός], M[ιχαήλ], Γ[αβριήλ]; X[ριστός] M[αρία] γ[εννηθείς]; or to represent some form of cryptogram. See Prentice, 'Magical Formulae of Lintels', pp. 146–7, for discussion); IXΘΥΣ ('fish' but also signifies 'Ιησοῦς] X[ριστός], Θ[εοῦ] Υ[ιός], Σ[ωτήρ]); and the trisagion ('Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us'. On these formulae see Russell, 'Archaeological Context of Magic', p. 38; and Prentice, 'Magical Formulae on Lintels', esp. pp. 145–7). A particularly Syrian trait which Prentice points out is the *disk*, which formed a frame for all types of symbols and inscriptions, Christian, Jewish, or Graeco-Roman. (See Prentice, 'Magical Formulae on Lintels', pp. 138–9, 143–4.)
- 52 Prentice, 'Magical Formulae on Lintels', p. 138.
- 53 Prentice, 'Magical Formulae on Lintels', p. 141.
- 54 Prentice, 'Magical Formulae on Lintels', p. 138.
- 55 Downey, *Antioch in the Age of Theodosius*, p. 133.
- 56 See for instance the introductory discussion of the evil eye belief on pp. 101–2, and Chrysostom's advice on Christian methods to deal with the threat, rather than dispel it. See also Dickie, 'Fathers of the Church.'
- 57 No. 118 in E.D. Maguire, H.P. Maguire and M.J. Duncan-Flowers, *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989, p. 194.
- 58 See Maguire *et al.*, *Art and Holy Powers*, pp. 3–4.
- 59 Russell, 'Archaeological Context of Magic', p. 45. Evidence from other regions also suggests that terracottas provided protection for homes and streets, as did oil lamps, grave stelae, and the entrances to tombs. (For examples see K.M.D. Dunabin and M.W. Dickie, 'Invidia Rumpantur Pectora', *JbAC* 26, 1983, pp. 21–2; J. Engemann, 'Zur Verbreitung magischer Übelabwehr in der nichtchristlichen und christlichen Spätantike', *JbAC* 18, 1975, pp. 26, 29; C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950, p. 99.)
- 60 It has been argued that throughout the Roman world at this time the greatest threat to crops and livestock was the unseen force of the evil eye (Russell, 'Archaeological Context of Magic', p. 37). Consequently herds and flocks were said to have had crosses marked on their heads in order to protect them from pests (MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, p. 143).
- 61 It is worth noting here Prentice's assertion that people also protected their shops with inscriptions. Indeed, protection of trading premises may also have been achieved through other means, as we have a reference to a Roman practice of placing an image of Saint Symeon in front of the building in order to protect the business. Theodoret writes of the next century in relation to Symeon Stylites that the people of Rome so celebrated the holy man that small representations

- of him were set up at the entrances of all the city's workshops, and that these provided them with some safety and protection. (*HR*, 26.11).
- 62 See also Heintz's argument for a package of products that included aggressive and defensive supernatural techniques ('Magic Tablets at Antioch', pp. 166–7). On the measures taken in the circus to protect vulnerable charioteers and their horses from malevolent supernatural attacks, see Heintz, 'Agonistic Magic', pp. 174–95.
- 63 Dated fourth–fifth centuries. *SEG* 18.625.
- 64 *SEG* records: 'Fragmentum armillae aeneae c.delineatione incisa equitis qui hostem iacentem hasta transfigit.'
- 65 Another popular iconographic form, the rider saint, is closely linked with the image of Solomon. This figure on horseback is generally depicted piercing an eye through with his spear, and would often be complemented by the motif of the 'much-suffering eye'. Some Syrian bronzes from the third century to Byzantine times have on their obverse the figure on horseback (Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, p. 99).
- 66 For a later comparative example from Palestine (fifth–sixth century), see no. 127 in J.G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 236; no. 13, Naveh and Shaked, *AMB*, pp. 98–101.
- 67 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. hom.* 1; *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 1–18, *PG* 53.369–1060.
- 68 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. hom.* 1.
- 69 *Cat. hom.* 17.35. On the rite of the Seal see Kallerers, 'Exorcising the Devil', pp. 146–9.
- 70 Kalleres discusses Cyril's promotion of the potency of Christian ritual language in his baptismal training, particularly in relation to exorcising the daimonic from heretics. See 'Exorcising the Devil', Part II, pp. 133–245.
- 71 Jerome, *Comm. in Matt.*, 4.23; *PL* 26.128; see also MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, p. 141.
- 72 Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, fig. 103, pp. 262–3, fig. 135, pp. 321–3.
- 73 No. 22, 'The Sacred Natural Cave', in R. Ovadiah and A. Ovadiah, *Hellenistic, Roman and Early Byzantine Mosaic Pavements in Israel* (Bibliotheca Archaeologica, 6), Rome: «L'Erma» Di Bretschneider, 1987, p. 24. Later example: no. 19, in *ibid.*, pp. 21–3.
- 74 No. 235, Ovadiah and Ovadiah, *Mosaic Pavements in Israel*, pp. 137–8.
- 75 No. 235, Ovadiah and Ovadiah, *Mosaic Pavements in Israel*, p. 138.
- 76 Ovadiah and Ovadiah, *Mosaic Pavements in Israel*, p. 138.
- 77 Ovadiah and Ovadiah, *Mosaic Pavements in Israel*, p. 138.
- 78 There is also a possibly apotropaic fourth-century mosaic in a Samaritan synagogue at Sha'albim: Salbit which includes a Hebrew inscription of Exodus 15:18, 'The Lord shall reign for ever and ever' (no. 213, Ovadiah and Ovadiah, *Mosaic Pavements in Israel*, p. 126). On biblical passages and their supernatural power, especially against the evil eye, see Schrire, *Hebrew Amulets*, esp. pp. 89, 91–2, 102. On the potency of Old Testament verses see J. Goldin, 'The Magic of Magic and Superstition', in E.S. Fiorenza (ed.), *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*, Notre Dame, Ind. and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976, p. 124.
- 79 See P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, pp. 259–84, esp. 263–5.
- 80 The exorcisms are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

- 81 Russell, 'Archaeological Context of Magic', p. 36.
- 82 The Solomon gems usually involve Solomon depicted on horseback piercing an enemy (sometimes a female victim, possibly Lilith or a lion), or more simply involve the inscription of the text of the trisagion – σφραγις <ο>λομονος [ἐ]χι τεν βασκανιαν. (See Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, p. 210; J. Russell, 'The Evil Eye in Early Byzantine Society', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32.3, 1982, pp. 541–3.) For an example from Syria, see SEG 7.232.
- 83 The assaults on the eye usually included wounding from above by a spear, a trident, or by one or more daggers; an attack of animals such as dogs and lions; pecking by cranes and ibises; and stinging by scorpions and snakes (Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, p. 97). This image sought to discourage daimons by illustrating the endless torture which would be suffered (see Russell, 'Archaeological Context of Magic', pp. 41–2).
- 84 See n. 67 above; for examples of the rider saint, or suffering eye, from Syria, see SEG 36.1313–1318 and 35.1558.
- 85 See especially Bonner and his collection of Syrian, and Palestinian amulets (*Magical Amulets*, pp. 208–28). On the use of a few words of a verse or using abbreviations see Naveh and Shaked, *MSF*, p. 23.
- 86 For instance, the representations of large birds, such as wading birds, as well as attacking snakes and other reptiles, were 'widely accepted as symbols of the victory of good over evil of every kind' (Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, p. 214).
- 87 For a plate of the image and discussion of the inscription see Maguire *et al.*, *Art and Holy Powers*, p. 216.
- 88 For photographs of both sides of the amulets, as well as a description, see Maguire *et al.*, *Art and Holy Powers*, p. 217.
- 89 See Maguire, 'Magic and the Christian Image', p. 61; and 'Garments Pleasing to God', p. 218, n. 30.
- 90 Maguire, 'Magic and the Christian Image', pp. 63–4. The textile evidence which survives stems from Egypt due to its dry environment. However, it has been argued that this apotropaic practice was more widespread (for example, Maguire, 'Garments Pleasing to God', pp. 215–24).
- 91 Schrire, *Hebrew Amulets*, p. 14.
- 92 For a discussion on the use of amulets see Schrire, *Hebrew Amulets*, pp. 13–15, 50.
- 93 J. Barclay, *The Talmud*, London: John Murray, 1878, pp. 360–2.
- 94 Barclay, *The Talmud*, p. 363.
- 95 Barclay, *The Talmud*, p. 363.
- 96 Samaritans wrote various texts from the Pentateuch on door-posts and on house entrances with the intention of protecting their households from harm and affliction (Naveh and Shaked, *MSF*, p. 30).
- 97 The importance of a female's sexual virtue was discussed in Chapter 6.
- 98 John Chrysostom, *Hom. on St Pelagia*; PG 50.579–582. For a recent translation see Leemans *et al.*, 'Let us Die', pp. 148–57. The same approval is found in Chrysostom's homily on the female martyrs Domnina, Prosdoke and Bernike (*On Saints Bernike and Prosdoke*; PG 50.638–40).
- 99 See Chapter 6 (relating to Theodoret's account concerning a hostile husband).
- 100 See Chapter 6; C.A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 80, 85; as well as J. Evans-Grubbs, 'Abduction Marriage in Antiquity: A Law of Constantine (CTh IX.24.1) and its Social Context', *Journal of Roman Studies* 79, 1989, pp. 59–83.

- 101 *Re Libanius and the charioteers* see Chapter 5. For a discussion of John Chrysostom's troubles see R. Brändle, *John Chrysostom. Bishop-Reformer-Martyr*, trans. J. Cawte and S. Trzcionka (Early Christian Studies 8) Sydney: St Pauls, 2004.
- 102 Freud, 'Das Unheimlich' (c. 1917–20) in H. Schoeck, 'The Evil Eye: Forms and Dynamics of a Universal Superstition', in A. Dundes (ed.), *The Evil Eye. A Casebook*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p. 195.
- 103 In a study on Indian society, Pocock similarly comments that *najar*, the evil eye, 'is an inevitable feature of a world in which men set store by looks, or health, or goods, or any pleasant thing' and because of the human and widespread characteristics of these properties there will always be someone worse off than another, and hence no one is completely immune from envy and the consequent *najar*. (D.F. Pocock, 'The Evil Eye – Envy and Greed among the Patidar of Central Gujerat', in A. Dundes (ed.), *The Evil Eye. A Casebook*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, pp. 203, 205).
- 104 *In Paralyticum demissum per tectum*; PG 51.49 7–8.
- 105 *In Cap 3 Ep. ad Gal.*; PG 61.648 32–37.
- 106 Interestingly for John, and his contemporary Basil of Caesarea, the envious are victims of their own jealousy: 'For they are the injured persons, having a continual worm gnawing through their heart, and collecting a fountain of poison more bitter than any gall' (*On I Cor. hom. 31*; PG 61.264 21–23). See also Chrysostom, *On 2nd Cor. hom. 27*, PG 61.586–588; *On Gen. hom. 46*, PG 54.427–428; *On I Cor. hom. 31*, PG 61.262–264; *On Rom. hom. 7*, PG 60.447–452. In addition Basil, *Hom. 11, On Envy*, PG 31.371–386.
- 107 P.F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds. Socio-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 35.
- 108 A. Dundes, 'Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye: An essay in Indo-European and Semitic Worldview', in A. Dundes (ed.), *The Evil Eye. A Casebook*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p. 266.
- 109 *Hom. 11, On Envy*; PG 31.380 24–42.
- 110 See especially Pocock, 'Evil Eye', p. 201.
- 111 Pocock, 'Evil Eye', pp. 204, 209.
- 112 Elliott, 'Paul, Galatians, and the Evil Eye', p. 266.
- 113 See Chapter 5, especially p. 80.
- 114 See, for example, Brändle's discussion of Antioch (*John Chrysostom*, pp. 3–7, esp. 6–7).
- 115 See the discussion in Maguire, 'Garments Pleasing to God'.
- 116 *Re female chastity and family honour*, see Chapter 6.
- 117 Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 221.

## 8 ILLNESS AND HEALING: THREATS AND RETALIATION IN A DISCOURSE OF POWER

- 1 Evidence suggests that most amulets were accompanied by some form of incantation as part of the healing ritual. See 33, Naveh and Shaked, *MSF*. For examples of healing amulets and prescriptions see nos. 9, 11, 12, 14, 22 in Daniel and Maltomini, *SM*; nos. 17, 19, 21, 24, 31 in Naveh and Shaked, *MSF*; nos. 1, 2, 3 in Naveh and Shaked, *AMB*; nos. 45, 53, 56, 57 in Kotansky, *GMA*; TS K1.94, TS K1.127 in Schiffman and Swartz, *HAIT*; and *SHR*, pp. 23–4, 51–2, 59.

- 2 No. 57, Kotansky, *GMA*, pp. 326–30; *SEG* 31.1398. Text translated and discussed by Kotansky (*GMA*) who dates it from the fourth to fifth century.
- 3 See examples listed in n. 2 above, as well as various prescriptions in Preisendanz, *PGM*, and nos. 72, 84 in Daniel and Maltomini, *SM*.
- 4 Trans. and commentary by Kotansky who also assigns it the Christian status (no. 53, *GMA*, pp. 301–5).
- 5 For other spells for eye diseases, see no. 32, Daniel and Maltomini, *SM*; and no. 31, Kotansky, *GMA*.
- 6 On ‘turning aside’ (*ἀπόσρῆψον*) ophthalmia, see also R. Kotansky, ‘Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets’, in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 120.
- 7 On epilepsy, as an example, requiring constant wearing of a healing amulet, see Kotansky, ‘Incantations and Prayers’, p. 118.
- 8 Or. 1.201.
- 9 *In ep. 1 ad Thess. hom.* 3, *PG* 62.413; *In ep. ad Col. hom.* 8, *PG* 62.357–358; *Ad illuminandos cat.* 2, *PG* 49.240.
- 10 *In ep. ad Col. hom.* 8, *PG* 62.357–258; *Ad illum. cat.* 2, *PG* 49.240.
- 11 *Ad illum. cat.* 2, *PG* 49.240.
- 12 *In Col. hom.* 8; *PG* 62.358 8–10.
- 13 For example, Caesarius (see R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 141).
- 14 Canon 36. Trans in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series I and II. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2>>. For the full acts of the councils see J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles d’après les documents originaux*, I–XI, Paris, 1907–52, I,2, pp. 989–1028.
- 15 *CT* 9.16.
- 16 *Adv. Jud. hom.* 8; *PG* 48.935.
- 17 *Adv. Jud. hom.* 8; *PG* 48.936.
- 18 *Adv. Jud. hom.* 8, *PG* 48.937, and 935–936; cf. *Comm. in Ep. ad Gal.*, *PG* 61.623. See also R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 83–4; and B. Wyss, ‘Johannes Chrysostomus und der Aberglaube’, *Heimat u. Humanität. Festschrift für K. Menli zum 60 Geburtstag*, Basel: G. Krebs, 1951, p. 269.
- 19 For John Chrysostom’s association of Jewish magic with the work of the devil, see Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, p. 87.
- 20 See J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch, City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 233.
- 21 It is difficult to discern whether these individuals were authoritative members of the Jewish communities, so they will simply be referred to as practitioners, meaning those members of the Jewish community who healed petitioners using supernatural methods.
- 22 *Sabbath* 67a, 132a. See T. Schrire, *Hebrew Amulets. Their Decipherment and Interpretation*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, pp. 12–14; as well as J. Goldin, ‘The Magic of Magic and Superstition’, in E.S. Fiorenza (ed.), *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*, Notre Dame, Ind. and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976, p. 124.
- 23 See pp. 121–2 and nn. 3–4.
- 24 Goldin argues this point; see Goldin, ‘The Magic of Magic’, p. 120.
- 25 See n. 2 above. Also Kotansky, ‘Incantations and Prayers’, p. 110.

- 26 John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos Cat.* 2; PG 49.240 33–35.
- 27 John Chrysostom, *Ad illum. cat.* 2; PG 49.240. Ammianus Marcellinus also mentions female healers who used incantations ('to introduce privily old-wives' incantations or unbecoming love-potions': *Res Gestae*, 29.2.3). He recalls the fate of one particular 'simple-minded old woman who was in the habit of curing intermittent fevers with a harmless incantation' (*Res Gestae*, 29.2.26).
- 28 Ammianus writes that if someone used an 'old wives' charm' to relieve pain the individual was denounced, even though the practice was allowed by medical authority (*Res Gestae*, 16.8.1–2); also CT 9.16.3.
- 29 CT 3.16.1; trans. Pharr.
- 30 *Ad illum. cat.* 2, PG 49.240; see also *In ep. ad Col. hom.* 8, PG 62.358.
- 31 Or. 1.243–250, and 1.268. See also Or. 1.173.
- 32 Or. 1.246. This is also discussed in Chapter 5.
- 33 See also *In ep. ad. Col. hom.* 8 (PG 62.357–8), in which Chrysostom urges people to use the sign of the cross to ward off demons and heal the sick; and *Adv. Jud.* 8.
- 34 The masculine is intentionally used here as there appears to have been no female figure endowed with the gift of healing (apart from the healing shrine of St Thecla, who lived several centuries earlier).
- 35 *In Matt. hom.* 32/33; PG 57.384.
- 36 Palladius, *LH*, 12.
- 37 *Hom. 5 De incomprehensibilitate de natura*; SC 28 bis 308.
- 38 For example, Palladius also mentions Stephen, and Julian of Edessa (Palladius, *LH*, 24.1, 42, 12.1).
- 39 Theodoret, *HR*, 9.7.
- 40 For example, Thalelaeus (Theodoret, *HR*, 28.5).
- 41 Theodoret, *HR*, 3.14, as well as 2.20. On the power of prayer to heal, see also *HR*, 2.18 for an example of the improvement of an ascetic's own health.
- 42 Theodoret, *HR*, 14.3.
- 43 Theodoret, *HR*, 9.14.
- 44 Theodoret, *HR*, 22.3–5.
- 45 Also Theodoret, *HR*, 13.9.
- 46 For example see no. 38, Naveh and Shaked, *MSF*.
- 47 Theodoret, *HR*, 11.4.
- 48 Theodoret, *HR*, 13.16–17.
- 49 Theodoret, *HR*, 9.13.
- 50 Theodoret, *HR*, 21.14.
- 51 Theodoret, *HR*, 2.19.
- 52 Theodoret, *HR*, 21.14.
- 53 Theodoret, *HR*, 21.14.
- 54 Theodoret, *HR*, 8.11.
- 55 Theodoret, *HR*, 28.5.
- 56 Theodoret, *HR*, 16.2.
- 57 Theodoret, *HR*, 6.6. The later Symeon (Stylites) was also to attract large crowds, such that people would travel great distances to see him and receive his assistance (*HR*, 26.11).
- 58 John Chrysostom refers to healing through martyrs. See PG 48.938–939; 62.357f. and 412; 49.240.
- 59 Theodoret, *HR*, 7.4.
- 60 Theodoret (*HR*, 24.2).
- 61 Palladius, *LH*, 11.

- 62 'Artemii passio', trans. M. Vermes, in S.N.C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (eds), *From Constantine to Julian: Pagan and Byzantine Views. A Source History*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 239.
- 63 Mayer, in J. Leemans, W. Mayer, P. Allen and B. Dehandschutter, 'Let Us Die That We May Live'. *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria, c.AD350–AD450*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 127–8, and trans. pp. 129–40.
- 64 Theodoret, *HR*, 16.4. For other examples of competition to secure bodies of holy men, see *HR*, 10.8, 17.10, 21.9.
- 65 See P. Maraval, *Lieux Saints et Pèlerinages D'Orient. Histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1985, p. 212; also L. de Light and P. de Neeve, 'Ancient Periodic Markets: Festivals and Fairs', *Athenaeum* 67, 1988, pp. 391–416; and the discussion on pilgrimage in Chapter 3.
- 66 Also, on non-Christian shrines and their testimony to healing (through inscriptions on walls) see Macmullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, pp. 54–5.
- 67 Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, p. 233.
- 68 No. 56, Kotansky, *GMA*, pp. 312–25.
- 69 For a discussion on prayers and invocations, see Kotansky, 'Incantations and Prayers'. See also Kotansky's comments on this amulet in *GMA*, pp. 312–25. The Babylonian Talmud also includes a prescription for an inflammatory fever; see Shabbat 67a (Goldin, 'The Magic of Magic', p. 124).
- 70 No. 106 in J.G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 203. See also no. 163, Jordan, *SGD*.
- 71 Trans. from Gager, *Curse Tablets*, p. 203.
- 72 LiDonnici argues that although fever could be a natural condition (socially), it was also frequently associated with heating that resulted from passion or desire. For men, particularly competitive men, fever could be a social disease with social consequences. It could indicate an inability to control desire, with both the illness and its treatment considered as shameful ('Burning for It: Erotic Spells for Fever and Compulsion in the Ancient Mediterranean World', *GRBS* 39, 1998, pp. 86, 89).
- 73 *Life of Saint Euthymius*, ch. 57, cited in Gager, *Curse Tablets*, no. 164, p. 262. Mid-sixth century.
- 74 Sozomen, *HE*, 5.21.
- 75 See, for instance, the discussion on pp. 128–30 regarding the popularity of the Syrian holy men and the shrines of saints and martyrs.
- 76 Jerome, 'The Life of St Hilarion', *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 6. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/Npnf2-06-05.htm>>, 13; *PL* 23.34 32–35.
- 77 Jerome, *Hilarion*, 13; *PL* 23.34 44–47.
- 78 John 11:35. Jesus also wept over the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).
- 79 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 14; *PL* 23.34 51–23.35 6.
- 80 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 14; *PL* 23.35 10–12.
- 81 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 14; *PL* 23.35 17–19.
- 82 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 14; *PL* 23.35 22–24.
- 83 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 14; *PL* 23.35 28–33.
- 84 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 14.
- 85 There are a number of accounts in hagiographies in which the ascetic is reluctant to respond to the entreaties of women. Note also, E.D. Dukes's comment regarding Jerome's 'linkage between heresy, magic, and women; all of them in

- their own way tools and pawns of the devil' (*Magic and Witchcraft in the Dark Ages*, Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, Inc., 1996, p. 94).
- 86 The abilities of holy figures are often justified in hagiographical texts as rewards for extraordinary piety and devotion.
- 87 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 19; *PL* 23.38 1–3.
- 88 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 29; *PL* 23.44 13–19.
- 89 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 29; *PL* 23.44 23–25.
- 90 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 45–47. On Antony's hidden corpse, see Jerome, 'Hilarion', 31.
- 91 The demand for relics and the popularity of those places housing them has been discussed on pp. 129–30 and in Chapter 3.
- 92 John Chrysostom comments on this practice (*In paralyticum*; *PG* 51.55).
- 93 T.S. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire*, Baltimore, Md. and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, pp. 21–3.
- 94 For example, Baldwin points out that the healing saint in hagiographies is often the last resort, and that people went to doctors. Do-it-yourself medicine applied to those people who lived far away from urban centres. (B. Baldwin, 'Beyond the House Call: Doctors in Early Byzantine History and Politics', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38, 1984, p. 19.) This assertion is also based on the ideas of scholars with whom I have spoken on matters such as healing.
- 95 See discussion on pp. 133–4. This was already mentioned in relation to Jerome's account of Aristnete's appeal to Hilarion. Also Theodoret, *HR*, 13.9.
- 96 G.P. Murdock, *Theories of Illness. A World Survey*, Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh University Press, 1980, pp. 26, 72.
- 97 See Chapter 7. A.D. Vakaloudi also comments on the daimonic source of illness in 'Illnesses, Curative Methods and Supernatural Forces in the Early Byzantine Empire (4th–7th C. A.D.)', *Byzantion* 73, 2003, pp. 172–200.
- 98 Theodoret, *HR*, 13.9.
- 99 Naveh and Shaked, *MSF*, p. 34.
- 100 Naveh and Shaked, *MSF*, p. 35.
- 101 See also F.R. Trombley who writes of daimones being seen as the cause of physical dysfunctions and psychoneurotic disorders in Christian thought (*Hellenic Religion and Christianization c.370–529*, vol. 2, R.Van den Broek, H.J.W. Drijvers and H.S. Versnel (eds), Leiden: Brill, 1993, p. 88).
- 102 Kotanksy, 'Incantations and Prayers', p. 117.
- 103 Naveh and Shaked record that this difference in aim (despite a seemingly 'magical' element to some medical texts and a degree of overlapping) means that there is little difficulty in distinguishing between 'magical' and medical writings (*MSF*, p. 32).
- 104 This helps to explain how Christianity can both support the establishment of hospitals and promote the healing potency of the cross etc., and the holy man. On Christian theology's acceptance of medicine, see particularly Miller, *Birth of the Hospital*, pp. 54–6.
- 105 For a discussion on these accusations and possible provocations for them, see Chapter 5.
- 106 See LiDonnici, 'Burning for It', pp. 87–9, 94–5.
- 107 People wanted to be healed and more than likely they would have used whoever was available and successful, Christian or non-Christian. See MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, p. 138.
- 108 For example p. 133. See also G.P. Corrington, *The Divine Man: His Origin and Function in Hellenistic Popular Religion*, New York: Peter Lang, 1986, pp. 127, 224. Also Wilken on this point in relation to Sozomen (*HE*, 5.15)

- who states that the story ‘illustrates the religious power of effective magic’ (*John Chrysostom*, p. 87).
- 109 Regarding healing as influential in religious conversion see also MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, pp. 8–9. It is interesting that in modern Thailand, those who are healed will often make a pledge to change their religion, generally Buddhist to Muslim or vice versa; however, this tends to be a token gesture of an offering of some sort, rather than an actual religious conversion. One wonders whether such token conversion may also have been evident in the fourth century. (See L. Golomb, *An Anthropology of Curing in Multi-ethnic Thailand* [Illinois Studies in Anthropology, No. 15], Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985, pp. 220–1.)
- 110 A point also briefly made by S. Jackson-Case, *Experience with the Supernatural in Early Christian Times*, New York: Century, 1929, p. 33.

### 9 POSSESSION AND EXPULSION: EXPERIENCING AND DISPELLING THE DAIMONIC

- 1 No. 18, Naveh and Shaked, *MSF*, pp. 57–60; trans. *MSF*. The provenance is unknown, but it is believed to be from either Syria or Lebanon.
- 2 For a discussion on the Semitic origin of the concept see Kotansky, as well as Merkelbach (R. Kotansky, ‘Greek Exorcistic Amulets’, in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki [eds], *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1995, p. 264; R. Merkelbach, *ABRASAX. Ausgewählte Papyri Religiösen und Magischen Inhalts. Exorzismen und Jüdisch/Christlich Beeinflusste Texte*, Vol. 4 (Papyrologica Coloniensa, Vol. 17/4), Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996, p. 1).
- 3 Kotansky, ‘Greek Exorcistic Amulets’, p. 276. On the language of Greek amulets supporting the long-standing position that Greek exorcism represents a phenomenon largely indebted to traditional Jewish practice, see Kotansky, ‘Greek Exorcistic Amulets’, p. 246.
- 4 Theodoret, *HR*, 3.9.
- 5 Theodoret, *HR*, 3.9.
- 6 Theodoret, *HR*, 3.22.
- 7 John Chrysostom, *In illud vidua eligatur*; PG 51.331 18–21.
- 8 Theodoret, *HR*, 3.9; and Theodoret writes that one victim is cured of her ‘insanity’ through the exorcism (*HR*, 3).
- 9 Term borrowed from Miller (P.C. Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994). Miller also provides an excellent study on dreams in the late antique Graeco-Roman world.
- 10 The idea that dreams could provide beneficial suggestions was not uncommon.
- 11 Palladius, *LH*, 18.22.
- 12 Theodoret, *HR*, 9.4; See also Thalladius in *HR*, 22.3. To be noted in addition is that Sozomen tells of Arsacius, a Persian turned Christian who could predict events and exorcise daimons, but he provides very little detail about his actions. Sozomen, *HE*, 4.16.
- 13 Theodoret, *HR*, 13.13.
- 14 Theodoret, *HR*, 16.2.
- 15 Theodoret, *HR*, 9.9.
- 16 Theodoret, *HR*, 9.10.

- 17 See D. Kalleres, 'Exorcising the Devil to Silence Christ's Enemies: Ritualized Speech Practices in Late Antique Christianity', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, Providence, R.I., 2002, p. 58.
- 18 Theodoret, *HR*, 6.6.
- 19 *De s. Babyla*, SC 362.294–312. See also trans. by W. Mayer in J. Leemans, W. Mayer, P. Allen and B. Dehandschutter, 'Let Us Die That We May Live'. *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria, c.AD350–AD450*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 142–8.
- 20 *In s. Julianum*; PG 50.669 57–670 5. Trans. by W. Mayer in Leemans *et al.*, 'Let Us Die', pp. 132–3.
- 21 John Chrysostom, *In s. Julianum*; PG 50.669 52–670 5.
- 22 Kotansky, *GMA*, p. 177.
- 23 No. 35 in Kotansky, *GMA*, pp. 169–80. On fourth-century spells as baptismal formulae for exorcism, see R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 92 n. 44.
- 24 John Chrysostom, *Cat. hom.* 2 and 10.
- 25 *Cat. hom.* 2.12; SC 50 bis.
- 26 *Cat. hom.* 2.12; SC 50 bis.
- 27 SC 50 bis 139–140; trans. from Kalleres, 'Exorcising the Devil'. *Cat. hom.* 2.12.
- 28 See Kalleres, 'Exorcising the Devil', pp. 4–5, 72–107.
- 29 On the popularity of the holy man, see earlier references, as well as Jerome's account of the crowds who sought him out at the monastery ('The Life of St Hilarion', *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series II, Vol. 6. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/Npnf2-06-05.htm>>, 29; *PL* 23.44 16–19). Also, recording Hilarion's ability to expel a demon by 'calling on the name of Christ', see Sozomen, *HE*, 5.15.
- 30 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 25.
- 31 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 17; *PL* 23.36.
- 32 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 18; *PL* 23.37 2–4.
- 33 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 18; *PL* 23.37 12–20.
- 34 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 18; *PL* 23.37 20–23.
- 35 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 18; *PL* 23.37 3–4. This bondage imagery is reminiscent of the intentions of many of the curses discussed in this book, which seek to bind their victim to the daimon or daimones adjured in the invocations. Perhaps this reference can also then be seen as a metaphor for a curse's effect; that is, the man is daimonically bound, because of a binding-spell/curse.
- 36 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 22; *PL* 23.40 16–22.
- 37 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 22; *PL* 23.41 2–17.
- 38 Unless the suggestion (n. 35), linking the bondage imagery of possession victims with binding spells is considered.
- 39 This is in effect a ritualisation of language. On this concept see Kalleres, 'Exorcising the Devil', esp. pp. 72–107.
- 40 Jerome, 'Hilarion', 23; *PL* 23.41 22–39.
- 41 Egeria, *Egeria's Travels*, ed. and trans. J. Wilkinson, London: SPCK, 1971, 46.1.
- 42 *Proto catechesis* 9.
- 43 (ἐκβάλλεται) trans. in Kalleres, 'Exorcising the Devil'. *Cat. hom.* 17.35. See also *Cat. hom.* 20 (*Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*. Online: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/>>, II.7.3); and for Cyril's concept of possession see *Cat. hom.* 16.15. For an in-depth study of the exorcistic rituals in baptismal training in Cyril's homilies, see Kalleres, 'Exorcising the Devil', esp. pp. 133–245.
- 44 B. Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons. Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in*

- Sri Lanka*, Providence, R.I., Oxford, and Washington: Berg Publishers Limited and Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, p. 144.
- 45 Several exorcistic amulets have been published by Naveh and Shaked, assigned a provenance of Syria–Palestine, and dated to late antiquity. These seek protection for both males and females.
- 46 For example, John Chrysostom, *Ad Stagirium* 3; PG 47.489–490.
- 47 L. LiDonnici, ‘Burning for It: Erotic Spells for Fever and Compulsion in the Ancient Mediterranean World’, *GRBS* 39, 1998, pp. 83–9.
- 48 N. Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 46.
- 49 See, for example, Kapferer, *Celebration of Demons*.
- 50 L. Golomb, *An Anthropology of Curing in Multiethnic Thailand* (Illinois Studies in Anthropology, No. 15), Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985, p. 232.
- 51 Golomb, *Anthropology of Curing*, pp. 238–41.
- 52 On the typical deviance process, see J.H. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke–Acts: Models for Interpretation*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991, p. 102.
- 53 Neyrey, *Social World of Luke–Acts*, p. 100.
- 54 The notion that the loss of one person’s honour affected that of the whole family unit has already been discussed. See in particular the discussion in Chapter 6.
- 55 For a discussion of possession and exorcism as a means for maintaining group cohesion, see E.A. Leeper, ‘The Role of Exorcism in Early Christianity’, *Studia Patristica* 26.7, 1993, p. 62. See also Golomb, *Anthropology of Curing*, pp. 231, 237–8.
- 56 Leeper, ‘Role of Exorcism’, p. 62.
- 57 Leeper, ‘Role of Exorcism’, p. 59; and for a discussion of Eusebius’ association of those who teach divergent forms of faith or who slip from Christianity as being subject to daimonic spirits (Eusebius, *HE*, 2.14.1, 3.26, 4.11.9, 5.14; Leeper, ‘Role of Exorcism’, p. 60).
- 58 See Leeper, ‘Role of Exorcism’, p. 62.
- 59 D. Kalleres, ‘Christianity’s Holy Seal of Baptism’, paper presented at ‘In Heaven as it is on Earth’, Princeton University Colloquium, January, 2001. This concept is revisited on pp. 159–60 in relation to the act of exorcism and Kalleres’ assertion that the ritual was a daily realignment of the contract between the candidate and the devil.
- 60 P. Brown, ‘The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 61, 1971, p. 88.
- 61 Indeed, potency in exorcism did actually effect conversions in late antiquity.
- 62 See Kalleres, ‘Exorcising the Devil’, pp. 133–40.
- 63 Kalleres, ‘Exorcising the Devil’, pp. 50–60.
- 64 Kalleres, ‘Exorcising the Devil’, pp. 61–2.

## 10 CONCLUSION: AMBITIONS, DESIRES, FEARS AND INSECURITIES

- 1 Lines 43–44, no. 58, Kotansky, *GMA*, pp. 332–3.

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