Restoring the Magician:

Making Room for Ritual Specialists in the Graeco-Roman World

by

Owain Bamforth

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Department of Religious Studies

University of Alberta

Abstract

Graeco-Roman magic and magicians have been studied and theorized by classicists and historians of religion for at least a hundred years. Despite the sustained interest by the academy, magic and magicians have not, until recently, been systematically theorized as belonging to a broader pattern of cultural activity that involved coercing the gods to achieve desirable outcomes. Classicists and historians have also tended to see Graeco-Roman magicians in the ancient world as antithetical to classical Greek thought and philosophy. Practitioners of magic have seldom been taken seriously. This study reappraises the wealth of evidence for the presence practitioners of magic in the ancient world, as well as the category "magic" itself, for the purpose of understanding how a broad group of freelance ritual actors worked, operated, and rose in popularity during the first four centuries of the common era.

I begin by reassessing the category magic and argue that "freelance ritual specialists" can better encompass the broad group of ritual actors who performed private coercive rituals for clients. I then examine the cultural reception of freelance ritual specialists to demonstrate their enduring presence in Roman culture and demonstrate that they were not cultural oddities or outliers. I conclude the study with a theoretical approach to understanding different types of freelance ritual specialists in the ancient world, as well as theorizing how Roman imperialism may have produced an increase in freelance ritual specialists by dislocating local specialized priests from their temples and gods.

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Introduction

Fighting against a tide of opinions, judgements, and polemics from aristocrats, senators, philosophers, lawyers, satirists, historians, and doctors, a diverse group of ritual specialists grew their trade between the first and fourth centuries CE. The invective weighed against these ritual specialists, combined with nineteenth-century historical discourses that discussed ritual activity and ritual actors pejoratively, has squeezed the role and importance of magicians, dream interpreters, sacrificers, astrologers, curse makers, potion brewers, and incantation writers out of contemporary re-imaginings and explorations of antiquity. Magic in antiquity has been enthusiastically studied and theorized, but the class of professionals who plied their self-help rituals have yet to be fully incorporated into our understanding of the ancient world. Heidi Wendt's research on freelance religious experts works towards this goal. Rather than treat freelance religious experts as either historical curiosities, evidence for the decline of the Roman Empire, or religious deviants, she treats the accounts and practices of this diverse group as a normal part of the Roman cultural economy.[1] She argues that studying freelance religious experts as a whole reveals a stratum of religious activity that appealed to a broad audience and was popularly used. Freelance religious experts were a vigorous and enduring part of the cultural landscape of the ancient world. Using her work, this paper attempts to rehabilitate these ritual entrepreneurs in modern scholarship. This paper will explore where this class of people came from, explain what they did and how they did it, and theorize why their trade grew between the first and fourth centuries CE.

[1] Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6.

In this work I refer to "freelance ritual specialists" rather than Wendt's "freelance religious experts." In almost all instances I am referring to exactly the same kind of people that Wendt does in her work, however I think "freelance ritual specialists" more accurately describes and identifies what these people were doing. Ritual expertise is almost always a feature of the activities of this group. "Religion" is an aqueous and problematic category for grouping together ideas and practices. "Ritual" is not a watertight category either, but I think ritual activity is a more identifiable class of activity that can be gleaned from ancient sources than "religious activity." Using "religion" as a category for grouping together certain practices involving gods and other non-obvious beings in the ancient world has a long pedigree. Carlin Boyarin and Daniel Barton argue that "religion" has been useful for scholars because it acts as a "worm hole" that transports us safely back and forth between the ancient past and the present.[2] However, Barton and Boyarin argue that "religion," when deployed to describe the ancient past, assumingly hives off a section of ancient society without critical review by historians in the present.[3] For purposes of brevity and simplicity I have avoided rehashing the broader discussion here (in part because I already discuss the use of the term "magic" to group together certain freelance ritual practices), but the decision to avoid using the category "religion" is a conscious one.

Using the analytical categories "freelance ritual" and "freelance ritual specialists" isolates an array of phenomena in the ancient world that has been described with a broad and discursive selection of terms and adjectives in both English and ancient languages. Some criteria for inclusion in this category include: self-authorization of the ritual practitioner, an emphasis on

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[2] Carlin A. Barton and Daniel Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 2.
[3] Barton and Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion*, 4-5; 213.

private ritual, the coercion of deities outside of official institutions for veneration, the itinerancy of the expert, ethnically coded ritual expertise, claims of divinely transmitted knowledge, ritual innovation, competition with other experts, and compensation for the performer's services. The definition of a "freelance ritual specialist" is a polythetic one. Inclusion in the category is based on an amalgam of characteristics the researcher must identify in each case. I intend to show not all freelance ritual specialists possessed all these characteristics. Their sphere of influence was not limited to street corners or alleyways, and it extended beyond the temple gates, contrary to what Dio Chrysostom would have us believe.[4] But I offer no compendium of criteria or a definitive system for determining who does and does not belong to the category. Rather, it is my hope that this paper shakes up the existing boundaries that ancients and academics alike have relied on to make sense of who's who in the ancient world.

In chapter one, I discuss the historical evidence for freelance ritual specialists and why that evidence suggests specialists increased in number in the first four centuries of the common era. I then discuss magic and explain why it is a problematic category for grouping together and analyzing the practices of freelance ritual specialists. I examine astrological practices in Rome to demonstrate how magic is not a useful category for grouping together diverse freelance ritual practices. I explain why I choose to use "freelance ritual specialist" as my own analytical category and explore some classificatory problems with identifying freelance ritual specialists.

In chapter two, I explore the evidence for freelance ritual specialists in more detail. I use Harold Remus' Canons of the Ordinary to understand how ancient Mediterranean people classified unusual phenomena and how the canons of the ordinary apply to the practices of freelance ritual specialists. I examine the ancient cultural reception of freelance ritual specialists

[4] Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses: To the People of Alexandria*, 32.9.6-10.

and attempt to understand them in their historical contexts. I examine ancient legislation against freelance ritual specialists, ancient medical treatises and their connection to ritual specialists, and I explore freelance ritual specialists in Greco-Roman narrative art. The goal of this chapter is to see freelance ritual speciality through an ancient Mediterranean lens.

In chapter three I theorize the rise of freelance ritual specialists by examining the effects of a rapidly changing intellectual and social space in the ancient Mediterranean. I explore how the effects of writing as a technological innovation, new understandings of the cosmos, and a rapidly expanding Roman empire each impact traditional ways of cultivating relationships with the gods. I use David Frankfurter's examination of itinerant Egyptian lector priests to theorize how the effects of empire contributed to the growth of freelance ritual specialists, and theorize how Frankfurter's itinerant lector priest can serve as a prototype for understanding displaced priests from other ancient near east temple cultures disrupted and colonized by the Roman empire.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to our understanding of the cultural landscape of the ancient Mediterranean world by treating seriously the group of self-authorized practitioners who performed private ritual services to clients and followers. This research is important because firstly, it provokes a new set of questions that need answering (e.g., How did the expansion of the Roman empire impact traditional relationships with the gods of other ancient near east temple states?) and secondly it broadens traditional understandings of how ancient peoples cultivated relationships with the gods.

Chapter 1: Freelance Ritual Specialists, Theories of Magic, and New Analytical Categories

The rise of freelance ritual specialists, who operated outside of state-sanctioned temple complexes, voluntary associations, and Roman religious colleges, should not be seen as unique or unusual, but rather as an expansion and growth of pre-existing professions and practices[5] that increasingly filled social roles displaced by the decline of temple and sanctioned divination practices (e.g., the Oracle at Delphi and the College of Augurs in Rome).[6] The rise of freelance ritual specialists had clear historical antecedents rooted in the cultural milieu of the day. For example, specialists who performed freelance rituals (including "magical" practices) appropriated characteristics of temple worship (e.g., its pantheon of gods and daemons, its symbols, its architectural features, its organization of sacred space) and appropriated features of priestly activity (e.g., ceremonies and rites, liturgical language, clothing, and tools). Freelance ritual specialists took these temple features and priestly practices and repackaged them for their own purposes.[7] Freelance rituals exploited cultural traditions of establishing and maintaining relationships with the gods, but specialists claimed better results than those achieved by traditional forms of divine veneration or divination.[8] In Rome, freelance ritual specialists frequently emphasized the exotic or foreign nature of their skills and services. Yet even when they did this, they operated within a known framework of cultural attitudes towards cultivating

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[5] Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 40.
[6] Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Temple and The Magician," *Map Is Not Territory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 186-188.
[7] Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 2. See also David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 198-237, for in-depth discussion on how Egyptian priests became, from non-Egyptian perspectives, associated with magicians.
[8] Luck says this of magic, not freelance rituals. See Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 2.

relationships with the gods. These cultural attitudes included ideas of reciprocal exchange with the gods, sacrifice, ritual invocation, and the ability to read the divine into and out of one's surroundings.

The number of ancient sources that discuss freelance ritual specialists grew exponentially between the first and fourth centuries CE. This suggests that specialists became more numerous and visible across towns and cityscapes during this period.[9] Ancient historians such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius describe imperial decrees for the expulsions and executions of *mathematici*, *magi*, *astrologi*, *goetes* and other ritual specialists from Rome.[10] Paradoxically, these same sources also describe occasions when emperors hired these same ritual specialists for help—sometimes the same emperors who initiated the expulsions![11] Satirists such as Juvenal and Lucian often targeted diviners, astrologers, oracle givers, miracle workers, magicians, and sorcerers in their poems and prose.[12] The book of Acts records more than one showdown between the apostles and other freelance ritual specialists.[13] Philip's confrontation with Simon (the so-called "magus") is a unique example of how freelance ritual specialists could encounter one another and jockey for superior spiritual and ritual knowledge and authority.[14] Spell books and fragments such as those collected in the Greek magical papyri and the Oxyrhynchus papyri

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[9] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 44.
[10] Dio Cassius, *Historia Romana*, 49.43.5, 52.36.1-2; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 36; Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.32.
[11] Tiberius both expelled and consulted with astrologers and diviners. See Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.32; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 14.3-10. For discussion on the imperial hiring and firing of freelance religious specialists in Rome, see Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 45-47, and Pauline Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions: Astrologers at Rome," *Classical Philology* 106 (2011): 115-54.
[12] E.g., Juvenal's third satire and Lucian's *Alexander*.
[13] Acts 8:9-24; Acts 19:11-19.
[14] For a brief discussion on how the writer of Acts drew on second-century stereotypes about magicians to denigrate the actions of Simon, see Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 188.

suggest an increase in demand for ritual texts used by ritual specialists and their clients in the first few centuries of the Common Era.[15]

The invention and changing use of professional titles and language in ancient texts suggests ritual practitioners creatively manipulated titles for themselves in an effort to gain social prestige in a growing competitive field. The term *sortilegus*, which first appears in Cicero's *On Divination* (written in 44 BCE), became a stock title in the first and second centuries CE for specialists who practiced divination with lots.[16] *Chaldeus*, a term that made use of the ethnic stereotype that Chaldeans possessed natural divinatory powers, later split into *mathematicus* and *astrologus*.[17] The latter two terms lacked the ethnic coding of *Chaldeus*, which enabled people from outside the region of Chaldea to appropriate and claim the powers traditionally held by Chaldeans.[18] Wendt argues that the interchangeable Latin and Greek term *Iudaeus* functioned in the same ethno-stereotypical way that *Chaldeus* did. From the Roman and Greek perspective, Judeans, like Chaldeans, possessed natural powers of divination and dream interpretation.[19] Even the Latin term *magus*, which is commonly translated to magician, had an ethnic valence—it referred exclusively to Persian priests prior to 50 BCE.[20] From late Classical times until the first century CE the Greek term *magos* also referred to Persian priests who performed Zoroastrian

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[15] The *PGM* are dated by Betz to stretch from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE, so the time period for which I argue could perhaps be expanded by a hundred years or so. See Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 2nd ed.(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xli.

[16] William E. Klingshirn, "Inventing the Sortilegus: Lot Divination and Cultural Identity in Italy, Rome, and the Provinces," *Religion in Republican Italy*, ed. Paul B. Harvey and Celia E. Shultz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 137-138.

[17] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 43.

[18] James B. Rives, "Magus and its Cognates in Classical Latin," *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón(Leiden: Brill, 2006). See also Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 43.

[19] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates,* 43.

[20] Rives, "Magus and its Cognates," 61.

rituals and teachings. However, towards the first century CE it acquired the additional meaning of pejoratively referring to traveling ritual specialists.[21] The Latin term *magus* continued to refer to Persian priests in the first century CE, even when the Greek term *magos* had lost this technical definition. *Magos* by the first century CE referred pejoratively to freelance ritual specialists. The changing use of terms to describe ritual specialists who trafficked in cure-alls, love potions, binding spells, divination, and other forms of private unsanctioned rituals suggests a broadening of the profession and increased competition between specialists.[22]

Changing legal codes from the Roman Republic to Empire periods also reflect an increase in freelance ritual speciality. Since the fifth century BCE, there had been laws and prohibitions on the use of magic, spells, incantations, curses, and a plethora of other popular ritual practices in the ancient Mediterranean world. Despite this, ritual specialists who engaged in these practices were ubiquitous by the first century CE. Roman legal codes slowly became more nuanced and codified to accommodate a growing diversity of crimes involving so-called improper ritual activity. For example, early Roman legislation such as the *Twelve Tables* punishes the *damage* incurred by magic rituals and incantations but *not the use of the rituals themselves*.[23] Late Republic legislation such as the *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficiis* proscribes the use of *veneficium*—a term that could refer to poison or private ritual practices

[21] Rives, "Magus and its Cognates," 60-61.
[22] Rives, "Magus and its Cognates," 60.
[23] Rives states that the *Twelve Tables* "criminalized certain actions that were later reconceptualized as instances of magic. […] As several scholars have argued, however, a conceptual category of magic, what Richard Gordan has called a "strong view" of magic, did eventually develop in the Roman world, probably sometime during the first centuries BCE and CE. This development in turn had an impact on Roman law, so that at some point people became liable to general charges of engaging in the *artes magicae*." See James B. Rives, "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime," *Classical Antiquity* 2 (2003): 316.

such as binding spells.[24] Additions to the *Lex Cornelia* in the first century CE further categorize and delineate the differences between poisoning, love potions, and private ritual practices. They also link the terms *maleficium* and *magus* to private ritual practices that harmed or disrupted social order.[25] By the third century CE, laws and punishments regarding magical practices were rigorous. The Roman legal codex *Pauli Sententiae* contains detailed laws and punishments for possessing spell books, practicing nocturnal rites, casting binding spells, using divination to enquire about the health or future of the emperor, and introducing new unsanctioned religious practices.[26]

Despite early legislative attempts to limit and control the use of magic (as demonstrated in the *Twelve Tables*, the *Lex Cornelia*, and Plato's *Laws*), its popularity grew over time as a result of numerous political and social changes within the late Roman Republic and Empire periods. There is strong evidence to suggest that freelance ritual specialists grew in popularity and number in the first three hundred years of the Common Era. The expansion of this class appears to slow in the mid-fourth century CE, and eventually wane after the Council of Laodicia in 363-364 CE.[27] [28]

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[24] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 319-320.
[25] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 321.
[26] Hans G. Kippenberg, "Magic in Roman Civic Discourse," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Symposium and Seminar,* ed. Peter Schaffer and Hans G. Kippenberg (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 149. See also Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 54.
[27] Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 23.
[28] Most scholars consistently identify the late fourth to early fifth centuries CE as the terminus for the growth of freelance ritual specialists. However, there is debate about when the trend towards freelance ritual expertise began. Smith argues for an early date and suggests the trend began with the cessation of native kingship during the period of Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE). See Jonathan Z. Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 332. I explore his reasons in more detail in the final chapter.

The majority of the evidence examined in this paper dates from the Late Republican Period (~100 BCE) to the Late Antique Period (~250-400 CE), so I constrain most of my discussion to this timeframe. When pertinent to my argument (particularly in the second and third chapters), I use evidence from the third and fourth centuries BCE. In terms of geography, I use evidence from across the ancient Mediterranean. In chapters one and two, I draw on literary texts written in various places in the Greek and Roman empires, with a particular focus on major text-producing centres such as Athens and Rome. In the third chapter I focus on textual and some material evidence from Egypt and ancient Judea.

"Magic" and Freelance Rituals

I have so far used the word "magic" without explanation. The term will appear a few more times in the coming pages, but its use must be qualified and explained. Numerous sources consulted for this paper made explicit reference to "magic" in their titles (e.g. Magic in the Ancient World by Fritz Graf; Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds by Georg Luck; Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds by Daniel Ogden) and even the chosen title for this paper makes an indirect reference to magic by referring to its practitioners: magicians. This paper is not about magic, but it will be necessary to briefly discuss two interrelated issues I encountered with the term while writing this paper. If any progress is to be made in understanding the role, status, and diversity of freelance ritual specialists, "magic" as a category must be dealt with. The first problem is with the construction of the category "magic" and why the phenomena it seeks to incorporate resist the label "magic."

The second is why, as a result of those classificatory problems, magic remains a poor identifier for detecting and identifying freelance ritual specialists.

"Magic" as a stand-alone category was popularized by James Frazer, who argued that "magic" had no connection to "religion" except as an evolutionary stage toward the latter. Pure magic had no connection to deities, spirits, gods, or other divine actors.[29] For Frazer, the logic behind magic was sound, but the application of that logic to generate positive outcomes for the practitioner was flawed. Magic was understood to be closely related to science because they both used a coherent rationale (absent in religion) to make conclusions about how the world functioned.[30]

This view of magic was challenged by Émile Durkheim who recognized that magic and religion were closely related. They shared not only "beliefs and rites" (Durkheim's basic two-fold criterion for "religion") but also myths, dogmas, "ceremonies, sacrifices, lustrations, prayers, chants, and dances, as well."[31] More than just sharing features, Durkheim further argues that the deities or supernatural forces magicians attempted to coerce and invoke were similar or identical to those found in religious settings.[32] What made magic different from religion was its social context. Magicians operated in private settings with clients, rather than with public

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[29] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1890; repr., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), 56.
[30] In Frazer's words: "In short, magic is a spurious system of natural law as well as a fallacious guide of conduct; it is a false science as well as an abortive art. Regarded as a system of natural law, that is, as a statement of the rules which determine the sequence of events throughout the world, it may be called Theoretical Magic: regarded as a set of precepts which human beings observe in order to compass their ends it may be called Practical Magic." See Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 13.
[31] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (USA: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1915; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1968), 57.
[32] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 57.

congregations.[33] Durkheim's sociological definition of religion refutes the designation that magic rituals belong to the category of religion because they do not unite the practitioners or clients into "one moral community."[34] This is the key difference between magic and religion for Durkheim, but not the only one. He points out that magic often subverts religious practices and appears to take "a sort of professional pleasure in profaning holy things."[35] In contrast to Frazer, Durkheim's understanding of magic was contextual, rather than substantive or essential.

The illicit nature of magical rituals has been a popular and lasting identifier of the practices. As Bill Arnal points out,[36] Marcel Mauss and Mauss' co-author Henri Hubert argued this point more than a hundred years ago;[37] it has been reaffirmed by more contemporary theorists such as Jonathan Z. Smith.[38] Smith notes that every society in the world has a term or collection of terms to designate certain ritual activities, ritual actors, and beliefs as socially unacceptable, illegal, or dangerous.[39] Yet he is doubtful that the English terms "'magic,' 'witchcraft,' [and] 'sorcery'" can convey the meanings and nuance of the ethnic terms for which they stand in.[40] When "magic" is deployed as a translation for other terms, there is an overall reduction and oversimplification of meaning.

Wendt argues that "magic" was a discursive category in Roman antiquity that acquired new and usually pejorative meanings as the cultural landscape of the Roman Empire changed

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[33] Cf.: "*There is no Church of magic*." (italics original); Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 60.
[34] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 62.
[35] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 58.
[36] Bill Arnal, "Textual Healing" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for Biblical Studies, Calgary, AB., 29 May, 2016), 4.
[37] Marcel Mauss. *A General Theory Of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain (France: Presses Universitaires France, 1950; repr., London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 27.
[38] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 219.
[39] Smith, "Trading Places," 219.
[40] Smith, "Trading Places," 219.

over the first four centuries of the Common Era.[41] She cites James Rives' research, which shows how the meaning of the Latin term *magus* changed to include the practices of "magicians," rather than referring to just the art and practices of Persian priests.[42] The Latin term *magia* in the second century CE was, according to Rives, a rare word.[43] Apuleius, the second-century Roman author and purveyor of mystery cults, took advantage of *magia*'s ambiguous meanings to defend himself against charges of *crimen magiae* and *magica malefica*.[44] He argued that *magia* was the art of Persian priests. His own esoteric knowledge of communicating with the gods came from respected Persian practices and was therefore not illegal or malicious.[45] While Apuleius' opponents deploy *magia* pejoratively (they accuse him of *crimen magiae*) Apuleius argues *magia* is simply the skill and practices of a *magus* (in the Persian sense of the word) to cultivate relationships with the gods.[46]

Identifying and classifying magic in the ancient world is a problem. An expansive and changing lexicon arose in the ancient world to describe unauthorized or unsanctioned ritual practices (e.g., The Latin words: *magia*, *magicorum maleficiorum*, *veneficium*, *cantamina, alia maleficia, crimen magiae, superstitio,* and the Greek words: *mageia, epoidai*, *goetia, pharmakia* etc.). Does "magic" refer to all these things? Or just some of them? Are *goetia* (sorcery)*, veneficium* (poison)*,* and *cantamina* (incantations) subcategories of *mageia*/*magia*? Or are they synonyms? As I shall show, the ancient people who used these terms did not themselves have

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[41] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 116.
[42] Rives argues that the Latin term *magus* referred to Persian priests until the latter half of the first century CE. This usage of *magus* was stable until first century poets like Lucan began to link Persian priests to the broader practices of ritual specialists practices. These broader practices were sometimes described using the adjective *magice*. See Rives, "Magus and its Cognates," 72.
[43] Rives, "Magus and its Cognates," 57-58.
[44] Kippenberg, "Magic in Roman Civil Discourse," 143.
[45] Apuleius, *Apologia*, 25.10.
[46] Rives, "Magus and its Cognates," 55.

clear classification systems for the different varieties of freelance rituals. Often these terms and others were used discursively to support the arguments of their wielders.

For scholars who support the category "magic" there is a two-fold task of identifying magic in the ancient world. First, scholars may identify first-order terms that self-evidently belong to the English word "magic," (e.g. *magus*, *magia, mageia*, *magice*, etc.). Secondly, there is the task of identifying phenomena that look like magic but were never classified by ancient commentators as such. This second task involves superimposing the scholar's own notion of magic onto ancient phenomena. The ancient phenomena that are magical are self-evidently so, and thus a wide range of phenomena in the ancient world could be described as magic with little justification or explanation. Bill Arnal, in re-examining the question of the presence of magic in the New Testament, notes that most scholars who argue for its presence or absence base their conclusions on "a set of essentially random characteristics the scholar impressionistically associates with magic."[47] This is magic's main categorical problem.

Fritz Graf identifies a variety of phenomena as "magic," including mystery cults,[48] neoplatonic theurgy,[49] and the hymns[50] and prayers[51] found in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (*PGM*). Recent scholarship has categorized magic more delicately,[52] but some phenomena, such

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[47] Arnal, "Textual Healing," 1.
[48] Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 34., c.f. Graf, *Magic*, 18.
[49] Graf, *Magic*, 214.
[50] Graf, *Magic*, 215.
[51] Graf, *Magic*, 218.
[52] David Frankfurter productively re-categorizes some "magical" practices under the rubric "ritual expertise" and argues that the latter term generally refers to "the making of amulets and remedies, the performance of small-scale rituals for explicit ends (like healing), and the oral or manual synthesis of local materials and 'official' symbols to render sacred power." See David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World,* ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer; Vol 141 of *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. R. Van Den Broek et al.(Leiden: Brill, 2002), 160.

as the *PGM*, are almost always considered essentially magical in scholarship, even if there is some theoretical discussion about the *PGM*'s relationship to religion.[53] Identifying what does and does not belong to the category "magic" is a controversial exercise: some scholars such as Jonathan Z. Smith argue the category should not exist at all.[54]

A whole range of phenomena in the ancient world falls outside the ancient magical lexicon but still appears as though it should self-evidently belong to the category "magic." The ancient world was full of inexplicable and unusual stories that were never considered magic by contemporaries. Scholars use the terms *paradoxigraphia* and *terrata* to describe ancient literary descriptions of unusual phenomena found in the natural world.[55] For example, Pliny describes a waterfall in Hestiaeotis (northern interior Greece) that can change a sheep's fleece from white to black.[56] Pseudo-Aristotle's *On Marvelous Things Heard* tells stories of goats that can expel arrows after being shot,[57] whirlpools that restore life to dead animals,[58] and iron-eating mice.[59] Phlegon of Tralles' *Book of Marvels* recounts the capture of a live hippo-centaur,[60] a woman who gives birth to a ball of snakes,[61] and the discovery of bones belonging to giants.[62]

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[53] See Fritz Graf, "Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual," in *Magika Hiera,* ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 188-213; and Hans Dieter Betz, "Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Magika Hiera*, 244-259.
[54] Smith questions the assumed magical essence present in the *PGM* and argues that the label "Greek Magical Papyri" distracts scholars from seeing the papyri as something other than mere magical spells. Smith highlights the ritual, sacrificial, and mobile elements of the rituals described in the *PGM*. See Smith, "Trading Places."
[55] Wendy Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 2.
[56] Pliny, *Natural History,* Book 31.9.
[57] Pseudo-Aristotle, *On Marvelous Things Heard*, 830b20-830b24.
[58] Pseudo-Aristotle, *On Marvelous Things Heard*, 832b4-832b7.
[59] Pseudo-Aristotle, *On Marvelous Things Heard*, 832a22.
[60] Phlegon of Tralles, *Book of Marvels*, 34.1-35.
[61] Phlegon of Tralles, *Book of Marvels*, 24.
[62] Phlegon of Tralles, *Book of Marvels*, 11.1-18.

Marvelous Things Heard reads like a series of mariner's tales: each marvel is introduced with "men say" or "they say," followed by an unusual and wondrous story or factoid. Phlegon of Tralles' *Marvels* is more elegantly composed and, given Phlegon's position within the Emperor Hadrian's entourage, is designed for an elite audience, but both Phlegon and Pseudo-Aristotle record the same kind of fantastical stories and unverifiable rumors. Catalogues of bizarre natural wonders were so popular that the second-century author Lucian of Samosata parodies the genre in *A True Story*.[63]

Ancient authors and commentators do not explain these weird and inexplicable stories as resulting from magic, sorcery, miracle, incantations, or spell-casting. There are some exceptions in which ancient commentators explain oddities by the presence of gods,[64] or are interpreted as bad omens from deities,[65] but these appear in the minority.[66] Paradoxigraphic stories tend to be solely documentary, and leave the explanation or meaning open to the reader.[67] The lack of detailed explanation or meaning suggests weird occurrences in the natural world were understood to be a part of the natural order of the universe.

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[63] Lucian, *A True Story*, 1-4 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).
[64] E.g., Phlegon's ghost stories. In one story, a dead girl appears to a household guest. After the girl's parents are notified that their deceased daughter is walking around and taking meals, they run to the apparition to verify the stories. Upon seeing her parents, the deceased girl (more like a zombie than a ghost) gives a speech to them and declares she came by divine will (1.11). After she returns to her fully dead, non-animated state, a seer inspects the corpse and orders sacrifices be made to Hermes Chthonios and the Eumenides. See Phlegon, *Book of Marvels*, 1.1-1.18.
[65] Again, in Phlegon's *Book of Marvels*, the Emperor Claudius reportedly erects an altar on the Capitoline Hill to "Jupiter the Averter of Evil" after hearing the story of a woman who experienced a sudden and painful transformation from female to male. See Phlegon, *Marvels*, 6.1-6.4.
[66] In Remus' words: "Many times, however, puzzling phenomena are not referred to deity, or there is dispute over whether they should receive such reference." See Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983), 28.
[67] Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 28.

Harold Remus sees the natural world phenomena as congruous and argues ancient authorities relied on tacit explanations of unique geography (i.e., "foreign" or "exotic" places) or unique circumstances to explain weird stories from the natural world.[68] Unusual phenomena from the natural world were rarely explained in supernatural terms by ancient authorities,[69] but for modern observers, there is something self-evidently "magical" about them. Stories of ghosts, centaurs, and sudden inexplicable sex changes would arguably fall under the modern category of magic.

With these complications in mind, I ask: what does "magic" refer to? Even if I constrain my use of the term to its meanings in Roman antiquity, and temporarily forget the meanings it has acquired after that period (what Graf asks his readers to do),[70] magic is still a mutable term that is subject to the motives of its users.[71]

"Magic" and its Latin and Greek derivatives are poor identifiers for freelance ritual specialists. Many freelancers self-identified or were labelled as magicians (*magoi*/*magi*) who performed magic (*mageia* or *magia*). These titles may have been useful if a practitioner wished to link their ritual activities with the practices of Persian priests. Part of the task of restoring freelance ritual specialists to their proper place in antiquity is to examine whether magic as a first-order category appropriately describes ancient activities. Paying attention to accusations and evidence of being a *magus* or of practicing *mageia*/*magia* may uncover the activities and practices of freelance ritual specialists.[72] However, freelance ritual specialists were not a homogenous group. Many, if not most, freelance ritual specialists did not portray themselves as

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[68] Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 27.
[69] Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 28.
[70] Graf, *Magic*, 18-19.
[71] Arnal calls it "positional." He argues scholars "must pay attention to *who* is making the judgement." See Arnal, "Textual Healing," 8.
[72] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 116.

magi. Nor did they see their own activities as being *mageia*/*magia*. Few saw themselves as sharing resemblances with magicians.[73] Accusations, polemics, narrative art, and court proceedings against freelance ritual practitioners also did not always contain references to *magus* and its related nouns and adjectives.

The names of freelance ritual professions were as diverse and manifold as the practices in which these professions engaged: *sortilegus, manis, auger, haruspices, hariolus, isiaci coniectores, interpretes somniorum, mathematicus, astrologus, Chaldaeus*, *sacrificuli, vates, magus,* etc.[74] These professions, with their attendant practitioners and practices, share the common thread of performing private rituals on behalf of clients. Their shared trait is not *mageia/magia*. If *mageia/magia* and related words were our only search terms for finding freelance ritual specialists, most of the ritual professions would escape our results. Magic in the first-order categorical sense is therefore poor evidence of freelance ritual, even if some freelance ritual specialists claimed to be *magi* and use *mageia/magia* in their practices.

Restoring freelance ritual specialists to the tapestry of antiquity also requires moving beyond ancient accusations, claims, and discussions of being *magi* and practicing *mageia*/*magia*. To understand the breadth of freelance ritual specialty, my methodological net must capture phenomena that share no first-order similarities with these terms. By doing this, I can place both

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[73] Wendt argues that pejorative discourses about magic in the first-fourth centuries CE stem from earlier assumptions and observations made about freelance religious specialists operating in the Graeco-Roman world. She argues that the conflation of different freelance professions into general pejorative categories of "magic" and its practitioners was a result of different freelance specialists competing against each other. The implication of this argument is that few freelance religious specialists wanted to be seen as magicians except in those circumstances when the title *magoi* or *magus* could be useful or empowering to the practitioner. See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 117-118.

[74] Wendt offers several short lists for the names of professions of what she calls "freelance religious experts." See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 5, 41, 43. See also Cicero, *On Divination*, 1.132.1-6, for his list of divinatory professions around Rome.

"magic" and non-magic-related terms and practices into a broad conceptual framework that brings into focus resemblances between practices performed by a variety of actors who occupied various and sometimes duplicitous positions in the ancient Roman world. When *mageia* becomes the yardstick against which similar data is compared, we fail to move beyond the framework of the ancient writers who used these terms. Lightstone argues that "to wholly adopt the subjects' classifications, unable to move beyond them in acts of interpretation, is to become a member of the group, bound by its framework."[75] Using the analytical category "freelance ritual specialist" attempts to counter this problem.

"Magic" is a term lacking clear referents. For this reason, and the other classificatory issues I have outlined, I will use the term "freelance rituals" rather than "magic." I want to include phenomena that may not be classified as magic in either ancient or contemporary usages of the word. Rives argues that there has been a general assumption amongst classical scholars that the English term "magic" can naturally be interchanged with *mageia/magia* because of their etymological proximity.[76] Even though some work has arguably been done to make "magic" a useful scholarly category,[77] "freelance ritual" can better encompass the wide range of terms used in Roman antiquity to describe unsanctioned private ritual practices performed by a variety of ritual specialists. A brief look at astrologers around Rome will provide a good example of how freelance ritual can encompass those practices that might escape the category "magic," and provide support for a broader category that includes *magi* and *mageia*/*magia*.

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[75] Jack N. Lightstone, *Commerce of the Sacred,* 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 4.
[76] Rives, "Magus and its Cognates," 53.
[77] See Einar Thomassen, "Is Magic a Subclass of Ritual?" in *The World of Ancient Magic*, ed. David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen (Athens: Bergen), 55-66, and Arnal, "Textual Healing."

Understanding Roman Astrology as Freelance Ritual

Astrology became a popular mode of divination from the Augustan period onwards, and because of this, astrologers found themselves in high demand.[78] Those who possessed the right education and pedigree were frequently employed by emperors and Roman elites,[79] while less prestigious astrologers offered their services to anyone willing to pay.[80] Astrology, as a powerful divinatory tool rooted in observation of the natural order of the universe, was both extremely useful and threatening to Roman elites. Ancient sources discuss emperors identifying rivals through astrological practices and subsequently eliminating them.[81] Astrologers also seemed to pose a general threat to Roman virtues and order. They were periodically expelled from Rome, but exactly who these expulsions targeted and how they were carried out is unclear. Ripat problematizes the expulsions of astrologers and argues that the practices themselves were not the primary target of the expulsions; divining one's future outside of official Roman institutions was not an issue, but individuals or groups who represented threats to Roman ideals were.[82] Problems

[78] Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "*Mutatas Formas*: The Augustan Transformation of Roman Knowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, ed. K. Galinsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 64-65.
[79] Some examples include the Thrasyllus (Tacitus, *Tiberius,* 62.3), Balbillus (Suetonius, *Nero*, 36.1), and the unnamed astrologer present at Nero's birth (whom we can probably assume was in the employ of either Agrippina or another noble close to the Julio-Claudians) (Cassius Dio, 61.2.1).
[80] We do not have their names because lower-class astrologers did not work in the employ of those who kept records. For a brief discussion on high- and low-class astrologers, see Pauline Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions: Astrologers at Rome," *Classical Philology* 2 (2011), 123.
[81] E.g., Tiberius (Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 57.19.3-4; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 62.3), Domitian (Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 67.15.6), and Caracalla (Herodian, *History of the Empire*, 4.12.3-5).
[82] Pauline Ripat argues that the primary reason for the expulsion of astrologers from Rome was not due to conspiracy against the emperor, but rather the desire by Roman magistrates to be rid of un-Roman elements. Nonetheless, she notes that historians cannot deny the complicated relationship between emperors and their astrologers, but she importantly argues that the threats

must have arisen when instituting the expulsions because the criteria for who met the description of an astrologer were nebulous.

Ancient sources are inconsistent in their identification of astrologers, and people who dabbled in astrological practices were not necessarily astrologers.[83] Sosigenes, who was employed by Julius Caesar to correct the astronomical calendar, is described as a *perito scientiae*, which literally translates as "expert [in] knowledge."[84] Plutarch, in describing the same episode (without referring to Sosigenes by name), notes that Caesar employed philosophers and *mathematikon*.[85] The Latin singular equivalent is *mathematicus* which, according to Wendt, is similar in meaning to *astrologus*.[86] Suetonius writes that Tiberius expelled the *mathematicos* from Rome,[87] yet also describes Thrasyllus (Tiberius' court astrologer) as a *mathematicum* and a *sapientiae professorem* (a teacher of wisdom or a "learned man").[88] Thrasyllus' son Balbillus is presented by Suetonius as an *astrologo*,[89] yet we know from Tacitus that Balbillus was also the Prefect of Egypt,[90] as well as an accomplished author.[91] No one would accuse the divine Augustus of being involved in astrological practices, yet the publication of his own horoscope,

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posed by astrologers' alleged ability to predict conspiracies did not result in the expulsions. See Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 116-118.

[83] Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 122.

[84] Rackham's translation of this phrase is "astronomer." Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 28.11 (H. Rackham, LCL).

[85] Plutarch, *Lives*, Caesar 59.2 (Bernadotte Perrin, LCL).

[86] Latin words with Greek roots do not necessarily have a one-to-one equivalent (as Rives shows with the term *magus*), but Plutarch wrote at a time when astrology was thoroughly incorporated and appropriated by Romans as a form of divination, so we might hypothesize that Plutarch was referring to astrological specialists. See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 43, 80.

[87] Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 36 (J.C. Rolfe, LCL).

[88] Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 14.

[89] Suetonius, *Nero*, 36 (J.C. Rolfe, LCL).

[90] Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.22 (Clifford H. Moor and John Jackson, LCL).

[91] Balbillus wrote a tract describing a battle between dolphins and crocodiles that won admiration from Seneca (see Seneca*, Natural Questions*, 4A.13). For further discussion on the problems of identifying Balbillus as a court astrologer amongst the Roman elite, see Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 122-123.

along with the dissemination of the Capricorn image and the construction of the Horologium, suggest Augustus saw his victory and rule as an expression of divine will that was "written in the stars."[92] Tiberius was never accused of being an astrologer, but judging by Tacitus' account, he functions in exactly this way when he issues Galba a prophecy of future emperorship; Tiberius discovered this from his "knowledge of the Chaldean art," (*scientia Chaldaeorum artis*) which was astrology.[93]

Court astrologers were important to emperors, and yet the astrologers who sold their skills to the general populace appeared to pose a threat to Roman society.[94] Most classicists conclude that Roman elites wanted to preserve the power of divination for their own purposes while eliminating the threat of divination practices performed by rivals, but Ripat says this conclusion is oversimplified.[95] She argues that the Republican-era expulsions were issued out of concerns that foreign ideas were being introduced by ethnic groups (e.g., Chaldeans or Judeans) and thus constituted an erosion of Roman society and values.[96] These ethnic groups are frequently associated with astrological and divinatory practices.[97]

Astrology, like magic, is not a clear-cut category. As I have already noted, practicing astrological practices did not mean someone was an astrologer. Therefore, if my scope of study focused only on astrologers and my search terms were limited to *astrologoi* or *astrologus*, I would miss swaths of text describing the activities of other people involved in analyzing the

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[92] Wallace-Hadrill, "*Mutatas Formas*," 65.
[93] Tacitus, *Annals*, 6.20.
[94] Ripat argues that Cicero's distaste specifically for astrologers of the circus (*de circo astrologi*), rather than all astrologers, is telling (Cicero, *On Divination*, 1.132). Similarly, she highlights Livy's distaste for "prophetic charlatans" who deceive peasants (Livy, *History of Rome,* 25.1.8 and 39.8). See Ripat "Expelling Misconceptions," 124..
[95] Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 116-117.
[96] Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 118.
[97] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 80, 94.

movement of stars and planets for the purpose of foretelling the future (e.g., Tiberius issuing a prophecy to Galba). More problematic is the observation that astrological practices *could* be associated with *goes*, *magoi*, *chaldeos*, *iudeosmoi,* and *sortilegi*, but they could just as likely not be, especially when astrological practices were used by elites. By using the broader category of freelance ritual specialists, I am able to include those specialists who practiced divination to foretell the future, even when their practices would not be described as *astrologia*, let alone *magice, magia,* or *goetia*. This term enables me to cut across category boundaries to find and include specialists by evaluating both practices *and* ethnic terms, rather than the ethnic terms alone.

Traditional categories and separations are like a butcher's map. Clear boundaries separate round from sirloin (or priest from magician), chuck from brisket (astrologer from Christian), and flank from tongue (Judean and diviner). New analytical categories redraw boundaries between groups that are normally not compared. For example, "stewing meats" (i.e., freelance ritual specialists) may group together tail, brisket, flank, and chuck (i.e., lot specialists, Christians, Judeans, and astrologers) to stimulate new comparative activity. Setting aside the traditional boundaries that have structured our understandings of the ancient world (which are often unquestionably imported from ancient sources) and re-drawing new boundaries will yield new knowledge and insight about the ancient world. By de-territorializing the artificially factionalized intellectual and cultural terrain of competing groups in antiquity, we can see beyond the discursive and polemical language that separates priest and magician, philosopher and astrologer, Judean and Chaldean, apostle and charlatan, and instead focus on a broad class of individuals who, while not necessarily homogenous, performed similar kinds of activities for similar purposes.

Classificatory Problems: Paul, Alexander, and Vespasian

The theoretical underpinning of this paper is easy to state, but some difficulties arise when analyzing the evidence. As a way of illustrating the complexity of the categorization process, I will briefly discuss some categorical problems as they relate to three specific examples of freelance ritual expertise: Paul of Tarsus, Alexander of Abonoteichus, and Vespasian.

Wendt notes that many of the people in the freelance ritual category need little explanation or justification for being included: "self-proclaimed priests, prophets, mystery initiators, *magi*, sacrificers, [and] most astrologers" all fall into the category.[98] There are also freelance specialists in Rome who are easy exclusions. Wendt's example is a Roman jurist who provides a private paid service, writes texts and gives advice, and works against other rivals for personal gain (just as an enterprising astrologer, diviner, or healer would).[99] However, jurists did not engage in ritual activities to coerce supernatural forces on behalf of their clients. The category also excludes instances in which rituals were performed by state or temple employees on behalf of the state and its religious institutions (e.g. the Augural, Pontifical, or Vestal colleges, or the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill).

The de-territorializing nature of the category sees some historic people and some professions differently than religious traditions do. For example, Wendt argues that Paul of Tarsus (the apostle) should be understood as a freelance religious expert.[100] Paul is traditionally interpreted as a church missionary and leader, so this characterization is a departure from Christian tradition. On the surface, Paul appears to have more in common with the synagogue

[98] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 17.
[99] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 17.
[100] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 146-148.

leaders with whom he argues than with the astrologers and dream interpreters who sold their services to clients, but Wendt's case for Paul's freelance activity is convincing.

Paul makes distinct claims to private, special, and uniquely transmitted knowledge that was divinely acquired.[101] While traveling throughout the Mediterranean world, he shared this knowledge, recruited followers to his sect of Judaism, and performed services for those followers that required compensation.[102] Wendt also argues that Paul's desire to denigrate, attack, and discredit the practices of other freelance religious specialists suggests that these were his primary competitors.[103] Furthermore, she notes that Paul's letters lack any rivalry with the Jerusalem temple priesthood or the intense scribal exegetical reflection and commentary displayed by other Judaic sects such as the community at Qumran, which suggest his main objective was not positioning himself against the religious elite in Jerusalem.[104] Wendt is also critical of how scholars have understood Paul as someone unique in the historical record and unequivocally honest about his own reflexive intentions. Many contemporary scholars uncritically accept Paul's self-proclaimed title "apostle," while simultaneously ignoring the plethora of titles self-

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[101] Wendt sees Rom 3:1-2; 1 Cor 15:8-9; Gal 1:12, 2:2; and 2 Cor 12:2-4 as evidence in the New Testament of Paul's display of esoteric knowledge. See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 159. See also: Rom 3:1-2; 1Cor 15:8-9; Gal 1:12, 2:2; 2 Cor 12:2-4. Wendt also argues that Paul appears to reserve the exegesis of Judean texts for himself, even though he does not overtly forbid his readers from engaging in exegetical practices themselves. Nevertheless, he does not encourage his readers to actively mine Judean texts for divine instructions or prophecies, which suggests this was a coveted area of freelance expertise. See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 158.

[102] The services might include sharing divine "wisdom, knowledge, healing, miracle-working, prophecy, discerning spirits (πνευματα), speaking in tongues, and interpreting tongues." See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 184. Wendt also discusses Paul's careful discussion of being compensated for his services without appearing like other freelance ritual specialists who performed rituals on a for-fee basis. See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 179-183. For examples of Paul's financial compensation, see 1 Cor 9:11, Phil 4:15-19, and 2 Cor 9:4-7.

[103] In Wendt's words: "evidence of rivalries in the epistles only strengthens the case for Paul's inclusion among other freelance experts who shared his competitive interests." See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 173.

[104] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 158.

authorized ritual experts applied to themselves.[105] There seems to be a general understanding that Paul was an "apostle," while those other people were just magicians. Understanding Paul this way is the result of the evidence left behind and the church traditions in which he is revered; Paul's letters justify his own actions and control his self-image while church tradition preserves his memory as a leader and church founder.[106]

Understanding Paul as a freelance ritual specialist demonstrates how useful the analytical category is. While elements of Paul's activities suggest he was a roaming specialist who traded doctrinal and ritual expertise for personal gain, the counterargument that he was an early Jesus movement leader who oversaw a network of churches suggests a degree of commitment, permanency, and interconnectivity that rules out the independent and itinerant nature of those practitioners who sold cures, horoscopes, spells, incantations, dream interpretations, lots, and personalized sacrifices for clients. The analytical category "freelance ritual specialist" works around the Christian narrative. Paul was not a *magos*, but he was definitely a freelance ritual specialist. Reframing Paul in this way brings to the fore new evidence for freelance ritual specialists in the ancient world.

In similar fashion to Paul, Alexander of Abonoteichus was someone whose activities could be described as freelance ritual, yet he appears to resist full membership in the category because of the permanency and nature of the cult he created. Alexander had formal training in selling cure-alls and potions to the public, yet managed to set up a far bigger operation in the new cult of Glycon. Surviving material and literary evidence suggest the cult of Glycon was well known in its day.[107] Alexander's cult is a successful example of cultural entrepreneurship, but does he still

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[105] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 187.
[106] Wendt, *At The Temple Gates*, 188.
[107] Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, 6.

count as a freelance ritual specialist after the cult was founded? He ceased to be itinerant, and furthermore, positioned Glycon as a manifestation of Sarapis, to whom numerous officially sanctioned temples already existed. This would appear to put him at odds with the freelance ritual category. Yet, enough characteristics remain to meaningfully include Alexander in the category. While no longer itinerant, he was a ritual innovator who made unique claims to divine knowledge. His use of an animal proxy and other known oracular practices, combined and redeployed in new ways, suggests Alexander was doing something new and innovative to compete with other oracles. He and his cult personnel were compensated for their work. Like the writers of the *PGM*, Alexander drew on the authority and tradition of known gods such as Sarapis and reimagined their existence in new and different contexts.

The last example of categorical problems is illustrated by Vespasian's healing acts in Alexandria. Vespasian's alleged success at healing two men in Alexandria in 69 CE (recorded by both Suetonius and Tacitus) could be described as a freelance ritual. Firstly, ritual action is present in the episode; according to Suetonius, Vespasian ceremonially spat into the eye of the blind man, and touched the lame man's leg with his heel.[108] The intentionality of the actions, spitting and touching, performed ceremoniously by an emperor in front of an audience indicates there was something special about the episode.[109] Secondly, the scene occurred in Alexandria which, as a well-known second-century hangout for magicians, wisdom seekers, diviners, astrologers and itinerant priests, seems the perfect setting for a story containing supernatural

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[108] Suetonius, *Vespasian*, 7. It should be noted that Tacitus' perspective of this event is highly pragmatic and rational. Rather than describe the ritual activity in any detail, he merely states that Vespasian "did as he was asked to do" (i.e., heal the two men). See Tacitus, *Histories*, 4.81 (Clifford H. More and John Jackson, LCL).

[109] Cf. Roy Rapport's definition of ritual: "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers." See Roy Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 24.

assistance.[110] Alexandria was renowned for its numerous temples and the frequent visitations gods were said to make to them. Chief among these was Sarapis, Alexandria's patron deity, who was said to give cures and dream oracles to those who slept in his presence.[111] According to Suetonius, before Vespasian performs his miracles, he enters the temple of Sarapis alone and, after consulting the auspices for how long he would reign, receives a vague but propitious omen from his freedman Basilides.[112] Basilides is apparently miraculously cured from crippling rheumatism such that he is uncharacteristically able to walk toward the emperor to give him the omen. Suetonius' implication appears to be that Basilides is miraculously healed by Sarapis as a sign of the god's favour with Vespasian.

Tacitus remarks in his version of the story that the event was likely "the wish of the gods" to indicate that Vespasian "had been chosen for this divine service."[113] The appeals of the two injured men healed by Vespasian support Tacitus' suggestion; the injured men claimed to have been instructed to seek out the emperor by Sarapis himself. The presence of Sarapis is important since, as the *PGM* demonstrate, freelance rituals in the ancient world often invoked the presence of gods or daimons to borrow or coerce their power to achieve the invoker's desired results.[114] Vespasian was not acting as a physician since, by Tacitus' account, Vespasian consulted

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[110] Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 150-151.
[111] Haas, *Alexandria*, 146.
[112] Suetonius, *Vespasian*, 7. It should be noted that in Tacitus' version of the story, Basilides is not Vespasian's freedman, but "one of the leading men of Egypt." Tacitus also remarks on Basilides illness, so the implication of miraculous healing is represented in both stories. See Tacitus, *Histories*, 4.82.
[113] Tacitus, *Histories*, 4.81.
[114] Fritz Graf argues that magicians in the ancient world made a distinction between which gods they invoked. The "high" gods of Olympia were never invoked, but the lower chthonic gods were always courted. See Graf, *Magic*, 197, 232. For a discussion on how the differing terms to describe conjured supernatural assistants were used in the *PGM*, see Leda Jean Ciraolo, "Supernatural Assistants in the Greek Magical Papyri," *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (Boston: Brill, 1995), 279-293.

physicians regarding the nature of the men's disabilities prior to performing the ritual healing. The presence of physicians indicates that the physicians themselves were unable to heal the men, and therefore required a divine agent to overcome the injuries of their patients. Thus, there is something akin to freelance ritual here: a divine presence (Sarapis), a ritual actor (Vespasian), and "clients" (the two men).

However, Vespasian's role as emperor indicates this instance has little to do with "freelance ritual" in the sense that freelance specialists were 1) experts (via formal apprenticeships, cult initiation,[115] or belonging to certain ethnic groups[116]) in executing ritual activity to achieve outcomes for their clients, and 2) professionals who performed their services in exchange for financial or social reward.[117] The Roman understanding that emperors were selected by the gods for divine rule, and after dying became part of the divine pantheon,[118] shows that Vespasian's healing acts were not freelance rituals performed by a professional class on behalf of clients, but were rather rituals performed publicly to demonstrate the divine power manifested in the gods' chosen leader. Tacitus remarks that the opportunity was given by the gods ("such perhaps was the wish of the gods, and it might be that the emperor had been chosen

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[115] Graf sees a variety of formal initiations into voluntary associations and mystery cults as gateways to receiving supernatural power from gods. While the evidence he cites is not proof of initiation rites for freelance ritual specialists such as magicians or astrologers, it does provide a theoretical cultural model out of which freelance ritual specialists might have legitimized themselves. See Graf, *Magic*, 89-117. Wendt also sees initiations into voluntary associations as possible places for formal rites and places of training for freelance ritual specialists. See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 15.

[116] See Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 80-100.

[117] Arnal argues that financial compensation should not be considered a part of the definition of magic because he sees it as "part of the terminology of abuse" towards magical practices. See Arnal, "Textual Healing," 7n30.

[118] Larry Kreitzer traces the cultural reception of emperor apotheosis in Rome by looking at how the deification of rulers and generals was adopted by Alexander the Great after his conquests in Asia Minor, and how the practice was slowly incorporated, via conquest and subsequent cultural interactions with eastern empires, into Roman culture. See Larry Kreitzer, "Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 4 (1990): 210-217.

for this divine service"[119]), which suggests Vespasian acted as a passive agent who conformed to the will of the gods, rather than a freelance ritual specialist who performed rituals to coerce the gods for her or his own purposes.

Yet from a functional and social perspective, Vespasian *is* acting as a freelance ritual specialist. Vespasian's actions draw on the (by this time popular) first-century cultural understanding that the power of the gods was mobile and could be focused by certain ritual actors using special ritual acts. Vespasian, while himself not a freelance ritual specialist in the sense that he had formal training, made claims to unique divinely transmitted knowledge and was itinerant. He borrowed from the cultural tradition of freelance ritual specialists in the first century to make claims of authority and legitimacy. He positioned himself as someone with a special relationship to the gods in a way that is no different from Alexander or Paul.

As the Vespasian example shows, pitting freelance ritual specialists on one side and the official temples and state religion of the Roman empire on the other is an unhelpful dichotomy. As I will explore in the following chapter, many freelance ritual specialists fulfilled dual roles: they operated within voluntary associations and cults such as those of Isis, Cybil, and the Eleusinian mysteries or official state religious cults, but they also worked as freelance ritual specialists outside or alongside their official duties. The knowledge and skills required to perform official cult duties informed the work they performed in their private practices. Differentiating between when a practitioner is performing a ritual on behalf of the state, official cult, or emperor and when the same practitioner is performing a "freelance ritual" can be difficult.

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[119] Tacitus, *Histories*, 4.81.

Deciding whether data belong to the freelance ritual specialist category is not a matter of "in" or "out," but rather of degrees of belonging. Some actors will much more strongly belong to the category than others. Vespasian's healing acts are an example of this. Regardless of the categorization problems, I still find "freelance ritual specialist" a useful category for grouping together similar characteristics and practices of people in the ancient world who performed a range of personalized services and rituals for the benefit of their clients.

Criticism of Analytical Categories

Adopting second-order analytical categories to better analyze magical phenomena has been criticized by some scholars. Kimberly Stratton argues that using second-order categories draws attention away from how emic terminology is deployed in different situations.[120] This criticism is relevant to Stratton's work, which examines how "magic" was a discursive topic in antiquity. Since my work focuses on a diverse array of specialists whose practices may have transcended the categories and labels of "magician" and "magic," the use of second-order analytical categories works to see similarities between data sets not previously compared, whilst simultaneously excluding some data that may skew the understanding of the rest. The scope of my inquiry is broader than "magic" and how it was used discursively. Engagement with emic terminology is important to my project, but I am not using "freelance ritual specialists" as a way of avoiding emic terms, but rather am using it to group together similar sets of terms to draw conclusions about the people hiding behind them. Using "freelance ritual specialists" works to isolate a class of individuals in the ancient world who performed unsanctioned rituals outside of

[120] Kimberly B. Stratton, *Naming the Witch*: *Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 13.

formal religious, philosophical, or state institutions. My research is not about analyzing how magic/*mageia*/*magia* was used by practitioners who were named or identified as magicians, but rather about understanding magic and magicians in the context of other individuals who performed similar services under different titles to create a broad understanding of the class of people who performed freelance rituals for clients in the ancient world.

Einar Thomassen is also critical of understanding magic using other substantive terms. He states that magic was a first-order term in the ancient world that clearly referred to certain practices performed by *magoi* or *goes*.[121] While recognizing that magic was frequently a discursive polemical topic, he argues that it was also a "specific activity" and profession that required formal training.[122] Thomassen is especially critical of understanding "magic" as solely ritual activity. He argues that the dichotomy of "instrumental" and "communicative" action types, on which traditional definitions of "religion" and "magic" have relied, fail to take into account the complicated nature of ritual. Understanding magic as ritual is problematic for Thomassen because it does not address clearly the complicated nature of ritual.

Since I am using "freelance ritual specialists" as my category for including those people who practiced magic, which many scholars now see as a form of ritual expertise,[123] Thomassen's criticism applies to my work. Taking the "fusion of signs and acts"[124] that constitute ritual work seriously means avoiding negative value judgments against the cognitive and intellectual

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[121] Thomassen, "Is Magic a Subclass of Ritual?" 58.
[122] Thomassen, "Is Magic a Subclass of Ritual?" 58.
[123] As Thomassen succinctly puts it: "Magic is the appropriation of ritual power for personal ends, off-setting the balance between the individual and the collective which forms the sanctioned norm of ritual practice in societies. Magic depends on the normal ritual and relates dialectically to it, by combining features which are the same as the ones performed in normal rituals—hymns, prayers, invocations, sacrifices, etc.—with features which are deliberately different from it." See Thomassen, "Is Magic a Subclass of Ritual?" 65.
[124] Thomassen, "Is Magic a Subclass of Ritual?" 62.

commitment to belief structures that enable or support ritual activity (which, Thomassen points out, was a common theme among Protestant religious studies scholars).[125] This task is not so easy when studying freelance ritual in the ancient Mediterranean world because so many ancient commentators were already committed to making pejorative value judgements against freelance ritual specialists. Taking freelance ritual seriously involves: 1) a careful negotiation of what contemporary religious studies scholarship has inherited from its progenitors, and 2) negotiating the opinions of ancient writers who wrote against freelance ritual practices. This paper will not actively speculate on the first point, but the second point is directly relevant to this thesis and must be addressed.

Sources for Freelance Ritual Specialty

Much of what we know about magic in the ancient world is derived from ancient authors who discuss magic. [126] Pliny, Plato, Cicero, Plutarch, Tacitus, Libanius, Lucian, Iamblichus and a host of other ancient authors all write about (or at the very least, hint at) questionable ritual activities that should be avoided because they are subversive, illicit, deceptive, or fraudulent. Few of these authors ever write about performing these rituals themselves.[127] These sources constitute a kind of social commentary on what elitist ancient writers thought about unauthorized private rituals occurring outside of temples or voluntary associations. Wendy Cotter calls this

[125] Thomassen, "Is Magic a Subclass of Ritual?" 58
[126] The other major literary source of freelance ritual activity is, of course, the collections of written rituals, herbal formulas, and oracles that were likely intended for first-hand use. Examples include the rituals preserved in the *PGM*, the Oxyrhynchus papyri, and herbal formulas found in the codex Matritensis.
[127] As notable exceptions, Apuleius in *The Golden Ass* describes a magic ritual of transfiguration, and Iamblichus gives loose details of Neo-Platonic theurgic rituals.

group the "blueblood *literati*."[128] We must treat their accounts of freelance ritual and ritual specialists with a hermeneutic of suspicion.

These authors, whose writings represent a small and privileged collection of work preserved from the ancient world, give us a myopic yet grossly over-emphasized view of what the ancient world looked like. Stratton argues that magic was primarily a mode of discourse in the ancient world. This discourse was influenced by notions of "the other" in antiquity and embodied discriminatory prejudices against groups in society who threatened to invert social norms.[129] This perspective draws on the sociological approach deployed by Durkheim and Mauss, but Stratton's primary focus is "magic" as a discursive category. Her research examines how terms like *mageia* were wielded and used by polemicists to delegitimize individuals or groups who posed a threat to the speaker, but who may never have used *mageia* or terms like it to describe their own practices. Ancient commentaries about *mageia*/*magia* are not necessarily good data for the existence of freelance rituals. Data pulled from ancient commentaries must be treated carefully. Lucian of Samosata's *Alexander* serves as an example of the dangers of accepting the views of ancient speakers uncritically.

Lucian famously derided the cult of Asclepius in Abonoteichus, with its new manifestation of Glycon. Temples and cults of Asclepius were generally not controversial, and the one in Abonoteichus would fall outside the purview of this paper were it not for its creator Alexander who, prior to founding the shrine to Glycon in Abonoteichus, trained with someone who sold medical cure-alls, love potions, enchantments, and curses openly in the streets.[130] Lucian characterizes these activities as quackery (*goeteuontes*) and sorcery (*manganeutes*), and says

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[128] Wendy Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 176.
[129] Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 12-13.
[130] Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, 6 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).

their practitioners styled themselves in the "traditional patter of magicians" (*magon*).[131] Lucian goes on to explain how Alexander set up the shrine to Glycon and how he performed a variety of deceptive tricks to make his clients think he could tell the future.[132]

Lucian is the only source for Alexander of Abonoteichus, so there are no other means of verifying or falsifying his narrative, but given that the genre is satire, scholars must be careful about what information they pull out of it. Harold Remus shows that Lucian's accounts of people and events around the empire do not corroborate accounts given by other sources.[133] Remus notes that Lucian's reporting of first-hand conversations was a well-known rhetorical device used by many ancient authorities. The technique lent credulity and a façade of first-hand knowledge of a historical event.[134] It is doubtful that Lucian or his sources ever overheard a conversation between Alexander and his temple staff or patrons. Remus also points out that Lucian undermines the authority of the cult in Abonoteichus by portraying its adherents as imbeciles. Lucian, using the voice of Alexander, says that adherents of the shrine must have "fat-heads" and be "simpletons," to fall for the tricks Alexander and his conspirator deployed. Abonoteichus, according to Lucian's Alexander, was swarming with superstitious dolts and was therefore the perfect site for their shrine.[135] Throughout *Alexander*, Lucian consistently insults

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[131] Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, 6 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).
[132] Lucian describes a number of "devices" Alexander used to deceive his audiences. These could be interpreted as oracular innovations introduced by a freelance ritual specialist. Some examples include the use of a snake wearing a mask with a human likeness as the proxy of Asclepius (12); the opening and closing of the mask's mouth using horse hairs (17); the use of crane windpipes tied to the inside of the mask worn by Glycon to deliver audible oracles from another room (the "autophones") (26); and the dispatching of oracles to cities across the empire to warn them of coming calamities (36). See Lucian, *Alexander*, 12, 17, 26, 36.
[133] Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*,168-169. For an overview of how scholars have characterized Lucian see Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 165.
[134] Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 167.
[135] Lucian, *Alexander,* 9.

the inhabitants of Abonoteichus, and by doing so makes the point that only simple folk could have been taken in by Alexander's oracular gimmicks.[136]

Lucian's account of Alexander can be characterized in several ways: 1) as an attack on an opponent of Lucian who had power and influence across the Roman Empire;[137] 2) as a general critique of divination and superstitious practices from an epicurean philosophical perspective;[138] and 3) as a satirical lampooning of a religious strawman created by Lucian. The discovery of material evidence for Glycon has worked against the rhetoric of Lucian.[139] An inscription found at the city of Antioch dated to the mid second century CE is dedicated to Glycon and asks the god to protect the city from the plague.[140] Coins minted in Abonoteichus and Tieion (approximately 150 kilometres away from Abonoteichus) dated to the reign of Antoninus Pius (r. 138-161 CE) bear the name and image of Glycon. Statuettes of Glycon have also been found in the area.[141] The material evidence shows that the cult was influential across the eastern Roman provinces and likely received wide patronage and respect. Lucian's disgust and criticism of Alexander may reflect a historical confrontation or rivalry, but the cult of Glycon was far from the swindling backwoods roadside attraction Lucian makes it out to be. On the contrary, it was widely respected and provided a valuable service to those willing to pay.

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[136] Lucian, *Alexander*, 9, 17, 45.
[137] C.P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 133. See also Lucian, *Alexander*, 47, 61.
[138] Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 147.
[139] For more on the material evidence of Glycon, see Jones, *Culture and Society*, 46. For a description of a medallion bearing the image of Glycon and Fortuna found at Chersonesus (on the Crimean Peninsula), see M.Y.U Treister and V.M. Zubar, "A Gold Medallion Representing Fortuna and Glycon from the Necropolis Of Chersonesus," *Ancient Civilizations* 3 (1994): 334-345.
[140] Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 142.
[141] Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 138.

Lucian's account is an illustration of the cultural forces and frictions at work in the period. Despite its rhetorical and hyperbolic nature, the narrative is important in aiding our understanding of Roman cultic shrines and oracles, but as is often the case with Lucian, we cannot take his perspective at face value.

Lucian's *Alexander* is an example of the literature produced by the Roman literati that saw freelance rituals as superstitious and deceptive and the specialists who sold them as greedy swindlers, charlatans, and crooks. However, it is also an excellent example of how ancient sources can reveal important nuggets of information concealed beneath the vitriol. Jones and Remus productively offer against-the-grain readings of Lucian to glean some insight into the cult of Glycon.[142]

Being an effective freelance ritual specialist required a certain skillset. Charisma, a gift for speech, herbal expertise, and knowledge of the divine pantheon are likely at the top of the list. These skills helped freelance ritual specialists establish credibility and a clientele. In one of the few passages in which Lucian affords Alexander anything close to a compliment, he notes Alexander possessed a talent for healing.[143] If we can trust Lucian on this point, then we might conjecture that Alexander learned this skill while working as an apprentice to a Tyanean doctor prior to the cult's founding (this latter point also comes from Lucian).[144] The corroboration between healing and the new manifestation of Asclepius in Glycon go hand-in-hand, and Alexander's alleged success at healing individuals who visited his shrine likely served to reinforce its prestige and renown.[145]

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[142] Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 169-173; Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* 138-147.
[143] Lucian, *Alexander*, 22.
[144] Lucian, *Alexander*, 5.
[145] Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 135, 146-147.

Alexander's shrine may have created some cultic innovations that could arguably be traced to his background as a freelance ritual specialist. Wendt uses the example of Alexander's Glycon as an example of how a freelance ritual specialist might "set up shop."[146] Alexander's oracles appear not to have been especially profound,[147] yet combined with the use of an animal proxy,[148] some sleight-of-hand tricks, aggressive marketing, and his own charisma, he captured a broad audience and patronage that allowed for the creation and maintenance of a large cultic shrine with numerous employees and attendants.[149] When deployed by the right leader, these oracular innovations might be seen as authentic and real to the participants.

A contemporary analogy might be the sale and use of certain homeopathic health products. Compare the practices of a self-proclaimed health food specialist at the local farmer's market against the cure-alls pushed by Dr. Oz. Both merchants peddle similar kinds of medical silver bullets for a variety of ailments, and both capitalize on the desire to get healthy quickly and easily. While some health food advocates might brush off the farmer's market specialist, Dr. Oz's power of celebrity makes a more convincing argument for the cures he sells (or vice versa: perhaps a health nut prefers the farmer's market specialists because she or he knows Dr. Oz is a fraud).

Lucian derided all forms of divination and oracle-giving, so neither Dr. Oz nor the farmer's market specialists would have escaped his polemic, but his attacks may have had little effect on

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[146] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 2.
[147] Lucian remarks on one occasion that a reply to Rutilianus's question concerning the future tutor of his son was "Be it Pythagoras; aye, and the good bard, master of warfare." See Lucian, *Alexander*, 33.
[148] It is worth noting that the use of an animal proxy is not without precedent. The only example in the *PGM* uses a dead falcon as a proxy for a god in one ritual: "take a Circaean falcon / and deify it […] speak directly to the bird itself after you have made / sacrifice to it, as you usually do […]." See *PGM* I. 1-26 in Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, 3.
[149] Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 170.

the reputations of his targets. Despite scholarly scientific studies and criticisms from health care professionals about the failure of nutritional supplements to give the benefits they claim, the supplement industry still thrives. The same might be said of antiquity; despite numerous tirades and invectives against freelance ritual specialists, these experts grew in number during the first four centuries CE. The timing of the growth of this class suggests an especially fecund environment for private individual concern about relations to the gods and utilizing their power for private purposes. I shall focus next on the cultural environment that fostered a growing class of freelance ritual specialists. Exploring the ancient intellectual strategies for demarcating (or lack of demarcating!) some practices as legitimate and others as illegitimate is crucial if we are to understand how freelance ritual specialists operated in the Roman world.

Chapter 2: The Cultural Reception of Freelance Ritual Experts

The boundaries between the human and the divine were especially loose in the Roman world. Signs in the stars and birds,[150] objects spontaneously catching fire,[151] moving,[152] or refusing to be moved,[153] dreams,[154] oracles,[155] strange animal behavior,[156] and mythical beasts,[157] all appear in Roman histories as signs from the divine. Willi Braun has described the Roman world as a "semiotic tableau" whose signs and signals were constantly interpreted to determine divine will and foreknowledge. Interpreting omens and portents played an important role in

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[150] E.g., Dio Cassius relates a story about how a young Octavian had a loaf of bread snatched away from him by an eagle, but the eagle returned it promptly. See Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 45.2.1. In a related story, Suetonius recounts how Octavian found an eagle perched on top of his tent defending itself from two crows. This was taken as an omen to indicate that Octavian would rise above Lepidus and Marc Antony to assume complete control of Rome. See Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 2.96.1.

[151] E.g., While on campaign, the young Augustus (still then Octavian) consulted some Thracian priests concerning his future. After pouring wine on the altar to divine the future, it suddenly ignited and sent a pillar of flame that rose into the sky. It was taken as a favorable omen. See Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 2.94.5.

[152] E.g., Tacitus and Pliny report that the Ruminalis tree located outside the curia was able to spontaneously move, and that its movement was a positive omen. See Tacitus, *Annals* 13.58; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 15.20.77-78.

[153] E.g., Dio Cassius reports that prior to the battle of Carrhae in 53 BCE, an eagle standard of one legion was reluctant to be moved as if it had grown roots. Crassus, in command of the legion in question, died at Carrhae. See Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 40.17.2.

[154] E.g., Augustus' father dreamt (prior to Augustus' emperorship) that Augustus came to him dressed as Jupiter Optimus Maximus pulled by a twelve-horse chariot. See Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 2.94.6.

[155] Examples abound with the use of oracles in the ancient world, but for sake of providing an example I use the oracle given to Caligula to warn him of "Cassius." Caligula, thinking the reference was to the governor of Asia, let his guard down at dinner and was murdered by the command of his guard named Cassius Chaerea. See Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 59.29.2.

[156] E.g., Tiberius was exiled in 30 CE, but on one particular occasion desired to return to Rome. On his journey towards Rome, his pet snake was consumed by ants. Tiberius took this as a portent to fear the multitudes. He never returned to Rome. See Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* 3.72.1-2.

[157] E.g., Giants (Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 66.22.2-3; Phlegon of Tralles, *Book of Marvels* 11.1-18.).

Roman imperial decision-making and the professions to procure them were under state patronage. That the gods chose to reveal their wills through portents and omens was a widely accepted cultural convention (though it was not beyond skepticism).[158] Yet against this background, one might still wonder why Pliny the elder complained of "*magicae superstitio*."[159]

For Pliny and others,[160] there was at least a loose classification system for interpreting phenomena that lacked human agency or explanation. The inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean took it for granted that the world was inhabited and influenced by a vast range of deities.[161] For example the *PGM* contains a wide array of deities from cultures across the Greco-Roman world including: Egyptian deities like Horus,[162] Re,[163] Thoth,[164] Isis,[165] Osiris,[166] Seth-Typhon,[167] and Anubis;[168] Hebrew mythical figures like Solomon[169] and Moses;[170] Syrian deities like Semea;[171] Christian deities like Jesus;[172] and a host of other Greek,[173] Roman, and near east

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[158] Cicero doubts the existence of portents and omens in *On Divination*. He argues that every portent and omen can be explained by its cause. If no cause is found, then the portent does not exist. See Cicero, *On Divination* 2.28.60 (W.A. Falconer, LCL). See also Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 35.
[159] Pliny, *Natural History* 30.18.
[160] E.g., Libanius, Plutarch, Cicero, and Augustus.
[161] Stanley Stowers, "The Religion of Plant and Animal Offerings Versus the Religion of Meaning, Essences, and Textual Mysteries" in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice* (ed. Jennifer Wright Knust and Zsuzsanna Várhelyi, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 36.
[162] E.g., *PGM* III.670-675; IV.455.
[163] E.g., *PGM* III.635, 680-685; IV.125-130.
[164] E.g., *PGM* III.346 (see note 72 on p. 27 in Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*); IV.20; IV.95-100, 105.
[165] E.g., *PGM* IV.94, 105-100; IV.1470-1475.
[166] E.g., *PGM* III.440; IV.10; IV.125-130; IV.187, 225-230.
[167] E.g., *PGM* IV.1380; CXVI.1-17.
[168] E.g., *PGM* I.251-252; IV.15-20; IV.125-130.
[169] E.g., *PGM* IV.850-929.
[170] E.g., *PGM* III.445; XIII.345 In addition to the presence of Hebrew deities, there are also instructions for using the Hebrew language in some of the *PGM* (e.g. *PGM* III.120).
[171] E.g., *PGM* III.29; III.207; V.429.
[172] E.g., *PGM* IV.1230-1235.

deities.[174] These deities could be invoked, channeled, and utilized for the ritual practitioner's own purposes. One of the functions of freelance rituals was to summon supernatural help. One or a group of deities could be invoked to assist the client or practitioner in carrying out a series of tasks. Beckoning or invoking daemons to assist with completing desired ritual outcomes is a prime feature of the *PGM* ritual texts.[175]

How people interacted with these powers was a concern for the ancient world and was subject to much debate. Much of this discussion can be seen in the cultural reception of freelance ritual specialists. Legal codes, plays and stories, biographical works, inscriptions, philosophical treatises, letters, histories, ritual texts, and cultural commentaries tell a great deal about what Romans thought of channeling and invoking supernatural deities. Before discussing the cultural reception of freelance ritual activities, I will contextualize them against the backdrop of all the bizarre phenomena that appears in ancient sources. Contextualizing freelance ritual activity will demonstrate why these activities were contentious in a world where unusual phenomena (from our contemporary perspective at least) appear just about everywhere.

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[173] Esp. Helios (*PGM* I.131-133; I.225; III.4,100; III.197; III.271, 275; III.470-475; III.494, III.690.); Apollo (*PGM* I.262, 296; II.8, 27; II.79-85; II.140; III.229); Zeus (*PGM* I. 300; II.10; II.85-90; IV.5-10; IV.467-68; IV.825), Selene (*PGM* II.27; IV.2622-2707; IV.2785-2890).
[174] E.g. Mithras (*PGM* IV.475-829).
[175] There are numerous examples in the *PGM.* For specific examples see: *PGM* I.1-42; *PGM* III.230; *PGM* XII.121-43; *PGM* IV.1840-1850; *PGM* IV.3086-3124. Each of these rituals requests the help of a divine assistant to help accomplish the task set forth by the ritual practitioner. Often there is a procedure at the end of the ritual to dismiss the summoned daemon (e.g., *PGM* III.187-262).

Canons of the Ordinary

Freelance ritual specialists operated at the culturally defined boundaries of the ordinary and the extraordinary. On the one hand, freelance ritual specialists did nothing outside of the broad cultural convention that humans had to maintain appropriate relationships with the gods (for example: to welcome, venerate, host, feast, appease, and worship them).[176] Maintaining proper relationships could result in positive outcomes for devotees. On the other, they propagated and capitalized on the idea that humans could interact with the gods, coerce them, and cheat the limitations and boundaries of everyday life through supernatural help. At times, the promises of freelance ritual specialists depended on fantastical outcomes not possibly achievable. Rituals for rendering oneself invisible[177] or to raise the dead[178] are impossible activities, yet people still performed them. Other rituals produced less fantastical outcomes. Rituals for wisdom, dream divination, healing, divine wisdom, love spells, and binding spells, did not depend on verifiable material observation for their success. The success of a wisdom or dream divination ritual is subjective to the user. The efficaciousness of healing spells, love spells, and binding spells was also subjective. If statistics are an indicator of which rituals were most popular in the *PGM*, then we might infer that rituals for coercing lovers, and for divine wisdom were most popular, while rituals for invisibility are rare (perhaps because practitioners soon found out these particular rituals never worked).

By operating at the boundaries of the ordinary and the extraordinary, freelance ritual specialists capitalized on the desire and willingness of clients to get ahead in life through

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[176] Stanley Stowers characterizes these activities as basic hospitality practices towards the gods. See Stowers, "Religion of Plant and Animal Offerings."
[177] E.g., *PGM* I.247-62; XIII.265-269; VII.619-27.
[178] E.g., *PGM* XIII.242-44, 261-65, 277-82, 290-96 (trans. Georg Luck).

supernatural means, but at the same time rarely offered anything that shattered the suspension of disbelief. Stories like *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, *Acts of the Apostles*, *The Illiad*, *The Odyssey*, and legends about Pythagoras and other semi-divine philosophers all propagated the idea that the ordinariness of life could be overcome in some situations under certain circumstances.

Inexplicable occurrences and unusual phenomena were not uniformly understood in the ancient world. There were classification systems for deciding how unusual phenomena could be understood or interpreted. Implicit in every marvelous, unusual, or fantastical story is what Harold Remus calls a "canon of the ordinary."[179] In any society, socially constructed ideas about the extraordinary and inexplicable can only appear against the background of the ordinary and explainable. Canons of the ordinary are categories of Roman explanations for observed phenomena. The "normalness" of everyday experience, the permanence of death,[180] the ordinariness of the human body,[181] the special nature of rulers, heroes, or "others,"[182] flora and fauna,[183] and especially the philosophical concepts of *physis* or *natura* and their attendant "laws" (the nature of the world or the way things should be)[184] could all be used to explain and normalize something unexplainable *or* to categorize something as special or extraordinary. Phenomena that could not be explained by a canon of the ordinary could be attributed to a deity and described with a variety of Greek and Latin terms including *semeion*, *teras*, *prodigium*, *ostentia*, and *miraculum*.[185]

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[179] Harold Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 7.
[180] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 8.
[181] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 9.
[182] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 9-11.
[183] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 13-14.
[184] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 14-24.
[185] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 51-52.

Concluding that a deity was directly responsible for an unusual occurrence was never made hastily or without debate. Even in situations where conventional canons of the ordinary could not readily explain the cause of an unusual occurrence, there were often competing explanations available to interpret it. For example, in discussing the Athenian general Pericles' rise to power, Plutarch notes that the birth of a single-horned ram was identified by the seer Lampon as a sign from the gods that Pericles would rule. However, the philosopher Anaxagoras argued the single horn was a result of the way the skull and brain had developed.[186] Determining whether the horn was a portent from the gods or the result of natural causes was difficult because of the complicated idea that the gods played a role in *physis* and the laws of nature.

Derek Collins has argued that from as early as the eighth century and continuing into the fourth century BCE, Greeks understood that "nature itself could be interpreted as divine."[187] The "crucial intellectual divide" between those who argue for either natural causation or divine causation occurs when natural phenomena could be linked to "determinate causes only" which therefore excluded "divine interference," or when divine interference was allowable as a "suspension of natural laws."[188] In the story of the single-horned ram, Anaxagoras attempts to prove natural causation by splitting the ram's skull in half to explore the determinate causes of the deformity. He observed that the brain had not filled out the cranial cavity, but was drawn to a point where the horn was developing.[189] The question in this case was: did the single horn develop because natural laws were suspended by the divine (i.e., did the gods suspend natural development of a two horned goat to give a sign to humans) or was the single horn the result of

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[186] Plutarch, *Lives: Pericles*, 6. See also Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 42.
[187] Derek Collins, "Theoris of Lemnos and the Criminalization of Magic in Fourth-Century Athens," *The Classical Quarterly* 2 (2001): 480.
[188] Collins, "Theoris of Lemnos," 480.
[189] Plutarch, *Lives: Pericles* 6 (B. Perrin, LCL).

other natural causes (for example, the result of a birth defect that occurred within the womb)? Plutarch resolves the tension between the two interpretations by arguing they are not mutually exclusive and are thus both correct (the "both-and" explanation as Remus calls it).[190] Ancient authorities did not always agree on why something unusual should exist, but canons of the ordinary provided a cultural framework to understand unusual phenomena; it was a system for structuring and understanding the world.

That some ancient Mediterranean inhabitants questioned the efficaciousness of freelance ritual activities shows that the canons of the ordinary were not static or uniformly understood everywhere. Remus notes that some authors (e.g. Cicero and Lucian) deny the presence of miracle and the miraculous altogether.[191] Other critics of freelance ritual activity may have affirmed the presence of miracles and similar extraordinary phenomena but denied it as a possible outcome of freelance ritual activity. Others sought to deny the status of miracle from a rival group's deity and re-describe it as demonic. We observe this in the Gospel of Luke when Jesus drives a demon out of a man unable to speak. Onlookers see the act as resulting from demonic power rather than from the Judean god Yahweh.[192] Note how interpreting miracles as demonic does not question the existence of the phenomenon, but rather who is responsible for it. Critics who labeled miraculous acts as demonic affirm in some way that freelance ritual activity could produce real outcomes, but only in pejorative ways (i.e. freelance ritual activity really could heal someone, but this was undesirable because it came from demonic forces).[193]

The story of Simon the so-called magus from Acts serves as another example. Simon was performing acts of ritual power in Samaria when Philip arrives and begins preaching. The author

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[190] Plutarch, *Lives: Pericles* 6. See also Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 42.
[191] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 35; 41.
[192] Luke 11:14-15.
[193] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 40.

of Acts tells us that people listened to him because of his magic.[194] The author clearly wished to portray Simon's activities pejoratively by labelling his activities "magic" (*mageiais*).[195] The question of where his ritual power comes from is never disclosed in the episode. Readers are only told that Simon's power does not come from Jesus or Yahweh. Aware of the greater power that Philip wields, Simon tries to purchase it with money. Philip curses Simon and admonishes him for thinking he could purchase the power of his god with money. Divine power must be appropriately drawn and channeled. Simon, as a magician,[196] is an unreliable conduit for the power wielded by Philip because Simon appears to confuse the power of the apostles with the type of ritual power one can purchase (e.g. a ritual text like those in the *PGM* or an apprenticeship with an Egyptian priest). The author of Acts does not dispute the unexplainable phenomena in the episode (i.e. Simon's magical abilities), but only that Simon's power does not come from God and is therefore improper and dangerous. Simon's magic is not described by the author as illusory or deceptive (although arguably this could be implied).

In another episode, when the apostles suddenly restore a man's ability to walk in Lystra, the wondrous act is attributed by the local populace to Zeus and Hermes. The crowds believe the Greek deities are manifest in Barnabas and Philip. Despite Barnabas and Philip pleading the contrary, the local populace is not dissuaded from believing it was the power of the Greek gods.[197]

Yet another example comes from Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* where the hero Apollonius is accused of improper appropriation of divine power. Writing to the emperor

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[194] Acts 8:11.
[195] Acts 8:11.
[196] From the viewpoint of the apostles that is. He may have been a competing faith healer or some other freelance ritual specialist, assuming the story is historically reliable.
[197] Acts 14:8-18.

Domitian, Apollonius defends himself against the charges of being a magus or sorcerer and instead attributes his miracle (saving the city of Ephesus from the plague) to Heracles.[198] Domitian and the relevant authorities are not concerned with the act of salvation but rather with the improper focus of power. After all, an individual with such a powerful tool could be dangerous to the ruling elite. Again, the question is not whether the conciliation of the plague happened, but rather where the power to stop it came from.

In contrast to the above examples, Lucian and Cicero deny most manifestations of godly power in humans, but not the existence of the gods themselves. For these two cultural critics there is no "miraculous" or extraordinary category. On the problem of linking prophecy, portents, and divinatory practices to the gods, Cicero remarks "we run the risk of committing a crime against the gods if we disregard them, or of becoming involved in old woman's superstition if we approve them."[199] Lucian mocks the strange and wild stories about the uncivilized world in *A True Story* and thus denies the canon of the ordinary that explains unusual phenomena (in this case the presence of exotic beasts, strange flora and fauna) as a result of their geographical location (i.e. being sufficiently far from the Roman world such that the reader is unable to verify the accounts). He also mocks freelance ritual experts like Alexander of Abonoteichus who claim to receive divine prophecies.

Social and class difference may account for the different explanations within the canons of the ordinary.[200] Ancient authorities with better educations offer a wider array of explanations for phenomena.[201] For example, Plutarch interprets the accounts of marble statues excreting bodily fluids as the result of atmospheric humidity, yet he concedes this is a method of the divine

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[198] Philostratus of Athens, *Life of Apollonius* 8.7.28 (C.P. Jones, LCL).
[199] Cicero, *On Divination* 1.4.4. (W.A. Falconer, LCL).
[200] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 25.
[201] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 25.

to communicate with humans.[202] In this way both the naturalistic interpretation and the divine portent interpretation could be preserved. In describing Vespasian's healing miracles, Tacitus preserves the naturalistic interpretation and the divine interpretation of the ritual action. Tacitus preserves the authoritative medical advice of the physicians by remarking that

> [the physicians] said that in the first [patient] the power of sight had not been completely eaten away and it would return if the obstacles were removed; in the other [patient], the joints had slipped and become displaced, but they could be restored if a healing pressure were applied to them.[203]

Yet Tacitus also notes that the opportunity to heal the men "was perhaps the wish of the gods, and it might be that the emperor had been chosen for this divine service."[204] Clearly, ancient authorities had a range of options for determining the nature of inexplicable events.

Despite the differences in interpretation and explanation of bizarre phenomena by ancient authorities, there was a concept of the regular rhythms and occurrences of everyday life that were more or less universally understood across class and social boundaries. That the sun would rise everyday was a normal occurrence, yet at certain rare times it was blocked out by the moon. While this may seem obvious, it is an important starting point for arriving at a consensus for

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[202] In Plutarch's words: "For that statues have appeared to sweat, and shed tears, and exude something likes drops of blood, is not impossible; since wood and stone often contract a mould which is productive of moisture, and cover themselves with many colours, and receive tints from the atmosphere; and there is nothing in the way of believing that the Deity uses these phenomena as signs and portents." See Plutarch, *Lives: Caius Marcius Coriolanus* 38.1 (B. Perrin, LCL). See also Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 43.
[203] Tacitus, *Histories* 4.81 (C.H. Moore, LCL).
[204] Tacitus, *Histories* 4.81 (C.H. Moore, LCL).

unusual phenomena. As the examples from Plutarch and Tacitus show, conflicting conclusions about an unusual occurrence could be harmonized.

In his examination of miracles, Remus argues that when phenomena did not fit neatly into a canon of the ordinary, there were three categories into which extraordinary phenomena were generally placed: 1) a phenomenon is deemed "wondrous" but is not, or has not yet been, attributed to the divine (in Remus' view these are not miracles); 2) unusual phenomena are explained by using the canon of the ordinary with the deliberate intent to remove divine action (i.e., a rare and unusual occurrence, but still within the category of the ordinary– like an eclipse);[205] and 3) an unexplainable phenomenon is attributed to a deity, even though another explanation is possible (or had already been given).[206] In short, the categories are: 1) wonderous or amazing, but not a miracle; 2) miracle refuted by canon of the ordinary; and 3) miracle affirmed (but a competing explanation may also be given).

Remus argues that miraculous occurrences were far from understood as everyday events in the ancient world. Paradigms expressing the contrary (especially present in early twentieth century classics scholarship)[207] ignore the evidence that Romans not only had a concept of what was normal or ordinary in everyday life, but also an awareness of events or occurrences that

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[205] Remus provides an account from Livy regarding a scenario in 168 BCE when an eclipse was observed the eve of the battle of Pydna between the Romans and the Macedonians. The Roman tribune Gallus came from an aristocratic background and was educated in astronomy and receives permission from the consuls to instruct the legions not to interpret the eclipse as a *prodigium*, and to instead see it as part of the natural order of the world. The Macedonians, receiving no such instruction, understand the eclipse to be a bad omen, thus giving the Romans an important psychological advantage over their opponents. Interestingly however, Gallus' explanation does nothing to change the soldiers' view that the world is governed by portents and omens. Instead they name Gallus' wisdom as almost divine ("*sapientia prope divina videri*"), suggesting that Gallus had the power of foreknowledge. See Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 4-6. See also Livy, *Roman History* 44.37.5-9 (trans. A.C. Schlesinger, LCL).

[206] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 27.

[207] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict*, 7.

were completely outside of everyday lived experiences. Viewpoints that stress Romans were obsessed with portents, superstition, omens, and miraculous occurrences, also ignore the corpus of Roman knowledge that try to explain unexplainable phenomena. Remus notes that the deployment of *adynaton* or "the impossible," in Roman drama and poetry is only effective if the audience has an understanding of what is and is not normally experienced in everyday life. Remus also argues that miracle accounts and similar narratives were often "singled out for telling."[208] This implies Romans had an understanding of "a world of the ordinary against which such 'miracle stories' stand out as extraordinary."[209]

Remus' research focuses on how Christians and other cults jockeyed for the absolute claim of miracle, but his research can easily be applied to freelance ritual specialists. While freelance ritual specialists engaged in a variety of practices that included what onlookers may have regarded as miracles,[210] the question of separating the ordinary from the extraordinary still applies to their practices.

The services offered by freelance ritual specialists worked in opposition to canons of the ordinary. The creators of the Greek magical papyri offered clients an alternative way to negotiating life's difficulties. By performing the correct rituals and invoking the right gods, clients believed they could circumvent their problems without recourse to 'ordinary' problem solving. Ritual practitioners purposefully inverted the normalness of everyday life for the needs of the client.

Pliny's "*magicae superstitio*" suggests the illegitimacy of certain ritual practices, but as I shall demonstrate, Pliny's own testimony to the effectiveness of certain cures (e.g. using an

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[208] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict, 8*.
[209] Remus, *Pagan Christian Conflict, 8.*
[210] E.g., Luke-Acts and Paul's formulaic reference to "signs and wonders" (*semeion kai teraton*) e.g.: Acts 22:2; Acts 4:30; Acts 5:12; Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12.

amulet to cure malaria)[211] shows that Romans were generally supportive of the application of certain freelance rituals. However, the source of those freelance rituals was crucial in determining whether they were charlatanry or legitimate. Characterizing the rituals performed by freelance ritual specialists (especially the "street" or "low" class of ritual practitioners) as ineffective and fraudulent was one way ancient authorities could criticize this class of cultural entrepreneurs.[212] On the other hand "high" class specialists (i.e. those employed by the aristocracy) were protected from criticism because of their pedigree and education.

The degree to which freelance ritual specialists were tolerated, accepted, and often employed by the Roman cultural elite depended on where each practitioner was able to position him or herself on the social register.

Cultural Reception of Freelance Ritual Experts

Material and literary evidence show the persistence of private ritual activity throughout the Classical, Hellenistic, and early to late Roman empire periods. Curse tablets surrounding ancient Athens date as far back as the fifth century BCE.[213] Price notes that the topical interests of classical Greek curse tablets are not confined to simple peasant's concerns about stolen goods or attracting mates. Binding curses against lawyers, orators, and politicians were common. This suggests aristocratic classes used curse tablets to undermine opponents.[214] There was no specific

[211] Pliny, *Natural History* 30.30 (trans. H. Rackham, LCL).
[212] Thanks to Dr. Willi Braun for loaning this term.
[213] Simon Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 101. See also, Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p. 210.
[214] Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks*, 210.

legislation against using curse tablets in classical Athens, and the practice is rarely mentioned by classic Greek authors who rail against other ritual practices deemed unacceptable.[215]

At roughly the same time as the earliest curse tablets were being manufactured in Athens, the founders of the Roman Republic were crafting *The Twelve Tables* (c. 450-451 BCE).[216] These early laws would become the foundation of Roman jurisprudence.[217] As with any good city management the founders were concerned about food supply, and included in their laws two prohibitions against using private rituals to steal or "bewitch" another farmer's crops.[218] A third law proscribes the death sentence against anyone caught "casting an evil spell" (*malum carmen incantassit*).[219] Rives and Kippenberg both argue these laws were designed to protect the property and reputations of Roman citizens.[220] They were not designed to stamp out unsanctioned ritual practices.

Food security laws could be applied in unusual ways. Pliny tells the story of a liberated slave named Gaius Furius Chresimus whose small land holding produced much more food than neighbouring larger estates (presumably owned by wealthier Roman citizens). The owners of the large estates accused the former slave of using private unsanctioned rituals to steal crops. At the time of determining the verdict, Chresimus brought all his farm labourers, tools, and oxen to court and declared that these were his incantations and spells. The court determined he was

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[215] Plato mentions *katadesesi* (Bury translates this to "curses" while T.L. Pangle translates this as "binding spells") which is likely a reference to curse tablets. Plato also mentions the use of "molded waxen images," which was a sympathetic form of inflicting harm on someone. See Plato, *Laws* 933a-933b (trans. R.G. Bury, LCL) and Thomas L. Pangle, *The Laws of Plato*, (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 336.
[216] Kippenberg, "Magic in Roman Civil Discourse," 144.
[217] Kippenberg, "Magic in Roman Civil Discourse," 144.
[218] The *Twelve Tables* mentions bewitching the crops (*fruges excantassit*) and luring away "another's grain" (*neve aleinam segetem pelexeris*). See Kippenberg, "Magic," 145.
[219] Kippenberg, "Magic," 145.
[220] Kippenberg, "Magic," 146; James B. Rives, "Magic in the XII Tables Revisited" *The Classical Quarterly* 1 (2002): 277.

innocent.[221] The story of Chresimus demonstrates how *The Twelve Tables* were used to prosecute citizens who resorted to incantations and spells. Rives notes there are several conventional ways to steal crops from a field without resorting to private rituals. However, *The Twelve Tables*' law is not concerned with simple theft, which was already illegal and covered by other Roman laws.[222] Rather it was meant to clarify the application of the law in certain instances where the crime was not obvious. Chresimus was not accused of physically stealing or transporting crops from his neighbours' fields. Rather he was accused of "channeling the fertility of their fields into his own."[223] This is a very different sort of crime which requires legal clarification to carry out justice.[224]

While the laws ban the use of private rituals that threaten food supply, personal safety, or personal character[225] (problems primarily concerned with maintaining the social good), the obvious omission from *The Twelve Tables* is the use of private magic rituals to do anything else! Love spells, divination spells, horoscopes, charms for success, and healing spells all escape the Roman legal net in this period.

Writing roughly one hundred years after *The Twelve Tables* were first created, Plato stakes a more acute and definitive position on private ritual practices. In *Laws*, Plato argues that "prophets" (*mantikes*) or "diviners" (*pharmakeias*) convicted of injuring someone through the

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[221] Pliny, *Natural History* 18.8.41-43. (Rackham, LCL). See also Kippenberg, "Magic," 145.
[222] Rives, "Magic in the XII Tables Revisited," 278.
[223] Rives, "Magic in the XII Tables Revisited," 278.
[224] Fritz Graf sees the story of Chresimus differently. He argues that the large estate owners were threatened by the success of Chresimus and his farm. The success of a former slave threatened the natural order of Roman society. Therefore, charges were brought against Chresimus to reassert citizen control of resources. See Graf, *Magic*, 62-64.
[225] Cicero contextualized *The Twelve Tables*' law prohibiting evil spells as a protection against defamation of character through the use of magic. See Kippenberg, "Magic," 145.

use of binding spells, charms, incantations, or poison, are to be put to death.[226] While an eye-for-an-eye approach might seem reasonable in cases of murder, Plato argues that people who simply engage in practices that "entice the souls of the dead" or "persuade gods by bewitching them, as it were, with sacrifices, prayers and incantations" for money, should face life imprisonment and an open burial beyond city borders after dying.[227]

Under a broad section discussing piety laws and charges of impiety, Plato argues that private freelance rituals undermine and corrode the state and its institutions. First, Plato recognizes that people who personally claim to channel the power of the gods are dangerous because they have the power, by means of their sophistry, to bring large groups of people to their cause.[228] He targets the *agurtai*, or "beggar priests" who by various means of trickery dupe clients into believing their authority to communicate and command the gods, and thus make a profit by the gullibility of others.[229]

Secondly, Plato sees the actions of private ritual specialists as a threat to the state and populace's piety in relation to its patron deity.[230] Allowing private freelance ritual specialists to freely operate could risk compromising the patron deity's favor. In addition to this, the profitability of performing freelance rituals deprives state temples of donations from the

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[226] Plato, *Laws* 11.933d-933e (trans. T.L. Pangle).
[227] Plato, *Laws* 10.909b-909c (trans. T.L. Pangle).
[228] In Plato's words: "[out of this class] are manufactured many diviners and experts in all manner of jugglery; and from it, too, there spring sometimes tyrants and demagogues and generals, and those who plot by means of peculiar mystic rites of their own, and the devices of those who are called "sophists." See Plato, *Laws* 10.908d (R.G. Bury, LCL).
[229] Derek Collins, "Magic" in *The Oxford Handbook of Hellenic Studies* (ed. George Boys-Stones, Barbara Graziosi, and Phiroze Vasunia, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 545.
[230] Plato argues that the beggar priests who "propitiate the gods privily by sacrifices and vows, and thus increasing infinitely their own iniquity, […] make both themselves and those better men who allow them guilty in the eyes of the gods, so that the whole State reaps the consequences of their impiety in some degree—and deserves to reap them." See Plato, *Laws* 10.910b (R.G. Bury, LCL).

public.[231] Plato's position goes several steps further than *The Twelve Tables* because it adds the subversion of the gods' authority to the list of social institutions potentially harmed by private freelance rituals.[232] People who believe the gods to be "careless, or appeasable" are placed in the same category as those who deny the gods altogether.[233] Importantly, and perhaps laying the groundwork for future concerns in the Roman empire, Plato argues that the use of private freelance rituals has the power to damage the structures of society and state.[234]

The Roman legal code continually expanded from the Republican period into the later empire to reflect the changing concerns with freelance ritual and freelance ritual specialists. The *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficiis* was a piece of late Republic legislation introduced by Sulla

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[231] Plato does not expressly argue this; however, I believe an argument may be made about the desires of the state to control the commerce of sacrifices, goods, and donations destined for temples. In arguing for state control over relationships with the gods, Plato argues that "no one shall possess a shrine in his own house: when anyone is moved in spirit to do sacrifice, he shall go to the public places to sacrifice, and *he shall hand over his oblations to the priests* and priestesses to whom belongs the consecration thereof; and he himself, together with any associates he may choose, shall join in the prayers. This procedure shall be observed for the following reasons:—*It is no easy task to found temples and gods*, and to do this rightly needs much deliberation; yet it is customary for all women especially, and for sick folk everywhere, and those in peril or in distress (whatever the nature of the distress), and conversely for those who have had a slice of good fortune, to dedicate whatever happens to be at hand at the moment, and to vow sacrifices and promise the founding of shrines to gods and demigods and children of gods;" (italics mine) See Plato, *Laws* 10.909e-10.910a (R.G. Bury, LCL).

[232] The line of reasoning here is that preserving the authority of the gods, and ensuring their well-being was part of ensuring the continued well-being of the *polis*.

[233] In Plato's words: "Then there are those who, in addition to not believing in the gods, or believing them to be careless, or appeasable, become like beasts…" Plato, *Laws* 11.909b (trans. T.L. Pangle).

[234] Plato argues that "to all those who have become like ravening beasts, and who, besides holding that the gods are negligent or open to bribes, despise men, charming the souls of many of the living, and claiming that they charm the souls of the dead, and promising to persuade the gods by bewitching them, as it were, with sacrifices, prayers and incantations, and who try thus to *wreck utterly not only individuals, but whole families and States for the sake of money*,—if any of these men be pronounced guilty, the court shall order him to be imprisoned according to law in the mid-country gaol, and shall order that no free man shall approach such criminals at any time, and that they shall receive from the servants a ration of food as fixed by the Law" (italics mine). See Plato, *Laws* 10.909b-909c (trans. R.G. Bury, LCL).

in 81 BCE. It is likely a series of amendments to pre-existing legislation.[235] The legislation is notable because it clarifies how justice should be applied in cases where murder is committed covertly. This includes the use of poison (*venenum*) to kill someone, as well as other methods of assassination.[236] *Venenum* at this time could refer to both poisons and "potions," with an emphasis that the latter achieves its results supernaturally.[237] Remus notes that while many authors have noted the double meaning of *venenum*, Romans would not have distinguished between the two because both poisons and potions achieve their results surreptitiously.[238] Their effects cannot be observed or explained. *Veneficium* was the use of *venenum*, but the *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficiis* only declares *veneficium* a crime when bad poison/potions (*venena mala*) are used to kill. This implies that other potions or poisons that did not kill (e.g. a love potion) were allowable under Roman law at this time.

Inferring that the *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficiis* was a law against freelance ritual specialists is premature. Rives argues the statute punishes those who use uncanny and occult means to kill people, while permitting (or at least not declaring 'illegal') the production of other types of potions.

This does not mean that the Roman state permissibly allowed freelance ritual specialists to operate so long as they did not kill anyone. We know from expulsion accounts that foreigners, especially those who were ethnically thought to possess some kind of exotic, but problematically un-Roman knowledge, were expelled from the city. For example, in 139 BCE all Chaldeans were expelled from Rome because, according to Valerius Maximus, they "spread profitable darkness

[235] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 318.
[236] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 319.
[237] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 319. See also Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 15.
[238] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 320.

with their lies over frivolous and foolish minds by fallacious interpretation of the stars."[239] In the same year Jews (*Iudaeoi*) were also expelled from the city for contaminating "Roman manners with the cult of Jupiter Sabazius."[240] One hundred years later, Agrippa expelled astrologers and sorcerers from Rome.[241]

Freelance ritual specialists were targeted from time to time because of their foreignness and the perceived threats they posed to Roman society. By Agrippa's time there was nothing specifically illegal about making potions or curses that did not kill, but this did not mean those people who engaged in such practices were beyond the purview of Roman magistrates. Lower class astrologers, dream interpreters, lot specialists, magicians, and other ritual specialists were periodically expelled whenever their activities were thought to be too unsavoury for Roman society. That Augustus felt it necessary to publicly burn prophecies and oracles by "authors of little repute"[242] shows that, while some practices were officially outside the law, emperors periodically saw freelance ritual specialists as a threat to Roman society.

The *Lex Cornelia* was a continually changing and expanding corpus, and clarifications to what ritual practices (including the production of potions) were permissible and illegal occurred rapidly over the next one hundred years. In the mid-second century CE the *Lex Cornelia* included "wicked sacrifices" (*mala sacrificia*) as a punishable offense.[243] Unfortunately, there are no details explaining what constituted a wicked sacrifice. Comparisons with other sources

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[239] Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 1.3.3 (D.R. Shackleton Bailey). See also Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 118.
[240] Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 1.3.3 (D.R. Shackleton Bailey). See also Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 118. Beard, North, and Price argue that the identity of *Iudeaeos* is not entirely clear, and therefore concluding that "Jews" were expelled from the city is oversimplified. See Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 113.
[241] Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 49.43.5. See also Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 118.
[242] Suetonius, *Augustus* 31 (J.C. Rolfe, LCL).
[243] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 321.

suggest it could be similar to "cursing rituals, *devotiones*."[244] *Devotiones* were associated with *venema*, murder, and nefarious nocturnal rites as early as the second century CE. Tacitus reports three times in *Annals* of accusations against people for using *devotiones* in conjunction with *venema*, *carmina*, or *magicis sacris*.[245] Over time, ritual acts that did not harm or kill, but were nonetheless of bad intent became punishable under the *Lex Cornelia*. Quintilian, writing in the first century CE, hints at legal arguments about whether love potions could be considered *venema*.[246] Love potions did not kill, but since the intent was to coerce someone into a relationship against their will, and therefore violate their agency, the practices were deemed illegal.

The trial of Apuleius, who was likely charged under the *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et Veneficiis* in the second century CE, shows how the Latin word *maleficium* (a wicked deed, but not necessarily associated with divine forces) became associated with *magus* and its related terms.[247] Apuleius, a successful lawyer, writer, and practitioner of mystery cults, was formally charged by relatives of Apuleius' new bride Pudentilla (who was previously widowed, very wealthy, and ten years older than Apuleius) of being a *magus* who used *crimen magia* (criminal magic), *magicorum malificorum* (malevolent magic), and "harmful magic" (*magica maleficia*)[248] to bewitch his new bride Pudentilla into marrying him. Despite the *Lex Cornelia*'s first-century expansion of ritual related crimes under which someone could be charged, Apuleius was

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[244] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 321.
[245] The first were rumours reported to Germanicus that Piso, the governor of Syria and enemy of Germanicus was using "carmina et devotiones" to bring down Germanicus (*Annals* 3.13), the second were formal charges against Claudia Pulchra for using "veneficia in principem et devotiones" (*Annals* 4.52), and the third were accusations against a young woman named Servilia before the emperor Nero (*Annals 16.31*).
[246] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* (7.3.10). See also Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 321.
[247] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 324.
[248] Apuleius, *Apology* 1.5 (C.P. Jones, LCL).

successful in his defense. Notably he did not kill or harm anyone, but he was accused of using "*carmena et venena*" to seduce Pudentilla.[249] Apuleius' defense drew heavily on what Rives calls 'disputing the character of the crimes.'[250] Apuleius' defense shows that still at this time, the boundary between what were considered unsavoury nocturnal rituals and the private veneration and esoteric knowledge of foreign deities was still disputed.

Apuleius successfully deflected the charges by drawing attention to the noble Persian practices of Zoroastrian priests. Recall that the Latin term *magus* referred exclusively to Persian priests up until the mid-first century BCE.[251] Apuleius intentionally deploys the term to conflate and confuse the accusations brought against him with the respected practices of Persian priests.[252] Apuleius also beat his accusers by demonstrating his own knowledge of *ars magica* (taught to him by Greek mystery cults) to undercut the fabricated rituals he was accused of carrying out.[253] Having in-depth knowledge of what effective freelance rituals actually looked like gave Apuleius a distinct advantage over his accusers who had no idea how to create love spells or potions. Apuleius demonstrates to the court that the love spell rituals he was accused of doing could not possibly have worked because they were inventions of the imaginations of his accusers, and not spells that were known, sold, and performed by magicians.

Apuleius also defends himself by linking his own ritual practices to famous philosophers (e.g., Plato and Pythagoras)[254] and heroes (e.g., Odysseus)[255] who either performed private ritual

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[249] Apuleius, *Apologia* 69.4.
[250] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 325.
[251] Rives, "Magus and Its Cognates," 61.
[252] Apuleius, *Apologia* 25.10.
[253] Kippenberg, "magic," 149-151.
[254] Apuleius, *Apologia* 26.1; 31.2.
[255] Apuleius, *Apologia* 40.3.

activity or commented positively on it. Apuleius is aware that ritual activity performed outside of the appropriate formal venues is only as good as its giver.[256]

Harsher prosecutions for freelance ritual specialists appear to have been the norm by the late third to early fourth century CE. Legal opinions in the *Pauli Sententiae* (*The Opinions of Paulus*) suggest a shift towards more severe punishments for a wider array of freelance ritual activities. At the time of its compilation the *Pauli Sententiae* was not a law in the way the *Lex Cornelia* was. It represents the opinions of the famous jurist Julius Paulus, whose stance on legal matters carried significant weight in the Roman world.[257] The work itself was not authored by Julius Paulus but is an abbreviated compilation of his legal opinions created by later jurists.[258]

The *Pauli Sententiae* argues that people who administer love potions, even if the intent is not malicious and even if they do not inflict harm, should be punished by hard labour or exile.[259]

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[256] Apuleius argues that *magus* used to refer to Persian Zoroastrian priests, and states that "if a magician in the Persian language in what a priest is in ours, as I have read in many authors, what kind of a crime is it to be a priest and to have the right information, knowledge, and mastery of the ceremonial rules, ritual requirements, and sacred law? *Provided of course that Plato understands what magic is when he recalled the lessons that Persians use to initiate a youth in kingship*." (italic mine) (Apuleius, *Apologia* 25.10 (C.P. Jones, LCL)) Apuleius' deployment of Plato is intentional because Plato was a philosophical hero and a respected authority in the ancient world. Apuleius argues next that Persian priests must have taught Plato "the magic love of Zoroaster, […] which is the worship of the gods." (Apuleius, *Apologia*, 25.11(C.P. Jones, LCL)) The implication here is that, if Persian priests taught Plato the worship of Zoroaster, then Plato logically must be considered a magus (in the Persian sense of the word) himself. Apuleius argues that therefore *magia* (magic) is therefore nothing less than the worship of the gods. (*Apologia,* 26.1 (C.P. Jones, LCL)) Apuleius also argues that Pythagoras too was a disciple of Zoroaster, and therefore "no less skilled in magic." (*Apologia*, 31.2 (C.P. Jones, LCL)) If the inclusion of Plato, Zoroaster, and Pythagoras were not enough, Apuleius also cites the use of incantations to staunch the blood of Odysseus' boar inflicted leg wound in *The Odyssey*. (*Apologia*, 40.3) Apuleius recasts his activities as being consistent with the activities of respected gods and heroes.

[257] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 328.

[258] Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 331.

[259] *Pauli Sententiae* 5.23 (trans. J.B Rives). See Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 329.

If potions or curative medicines (*medicamen*) kill, the accused should be put to death.[260] It also states that "those who perform, or arrange for the performance of, impious or nocturnal rites (*sacra impia nocturnave*), in order to enchant (*obcantarent*), transfix (*defigerent*), or bind (*obligarent*) someone, shall either be crucified or thrown to the beasts."[261] In the same section is a proscription for the death penalty for anyone caught performing human sacrifice, taking blood omens, and polluting a shrine or temple. Anyone who is guilty of "the magic art" (*magicae artis conscious*) is liable to the same punishment. Anyone in possession of spell books is to be exiled, while self-professed magicians should be burned alive.[262] The profession of being a magician, and the knowledge (*scientia*) of it are prohibited.[263]

Clearly opinions towards some practices of freelance ritual specialists had hardened since Apuleius' time. While Roman law in the first century BCE was primarily concerned with ritual practices that caused bodily harm or even had the potential to cause bodily harm, by the third century many more practices (blood omens, polluting shrines or temples, possessing spell books, claiming to be a magician) could also be considered illegal. Excluding the obvious practices that might impinge on someone's well-being (administering potions, casting binding, transfixing, or any other enchanting spell), the phrase "nocturnal rites" could be used to describe most of the divination rituals in the Greek magical papyri. These rituals usually required the beckoning and assistance of a daemon, an altar, ritual ingredients, and their ritual manipulation to bring about the desired effects. Such practices, which were likely not a concern in the first century BCE, were labeled by Roman magistrates in the fourth century as illegal activities. Concerns with "harmful and uncanny actions" as a result of ritual activity gradually expands to encompass a

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[260] *Pauli Sententiae* 5.23 (trans. J.B Rives). See Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 329.
[261] *Pauli Sententiae* 5.23 (trans. J.B Rives). See Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 329.
[262] *Pauli Sententiae* 5.23 (trans. J.B Rives). See Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 329.
[263] *Pauli Sententiae* 5.23 (trans. J.B Rives). See Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 329.

concern for how individuals interacted with the gods.[264] Rives argues that the association in the *Pauli Sententiae* of binding spells with temple pollution shows there was concern about how private practices might affect public places for venerating gods.[265] The concerns in the *Pauli Sententiae* are similar to Plato's concerns about the proper way to respect and interact with the gods.

I believe the increasingly codified punishments for private ritual practices indicates, in conjunction with the other evidence presented in this paper, an increasing popularity and interest in the use of private freelance rituals in and around Roman empire. That the council of Laodicea (363-364 CE) had to clearly state that Christian priests could not also be "sorcerers [*magoi*], enchanters [*epaoidoi*] or astrologers [*mathematikoi*],"[266] suggests there was not only widespread interest in these ritual practices even in the fourth century, but that the line between what were culturally acceptable and unacceptable ritual practices had still not been clearly drawn.[267]

Freelance Ritual Practices and Medicine

Plato's understanding of how private freelance rituals work is unique in the ancient world. He offers what Collins calls the first psychological theory of magic. The spells, curses, and incantations cast over a victim do not themselves exert any kind of real power. Rather, it is the knowledge that one has become the victim of a spell that causes that person to act out the

[264] Rives, "Magic and Roman Law," 335.
[265] Rives, "Magic and Roman Law," 335.
[266] Luck, *Arcana mundi*, 23.
[267] I agree with Luck's conclusion on the meaning of the canon 36 from the Council of Laodicea. He states that "if these practices were condemned so strongly, they must have been fairly common, and the archeological evidence suggests that they did not cease for a long time." See Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 23.

symptoms of it.[268] Plato appears to reject the idea that private freelance rituals have any real power.[269]

Or does he? When discussing medicine, the boundaries between spurious ritual and effective healing practices blur. Plato approves of the administration of drugs *and* incantations (*epoidai*) to take away a woman's pain in child birth.[270] Plato saw spells and amulets as a necessary part of a doctor's toolkit.[271] The presence of incantations, spells, and amulets, are not a problem for Plato when they are included as part of the corpus of known healing cures.

Linking private ritual practices to healing practices was an organic muddling of professions between "magical healers and professional physicians,"[272] but the problem of determining legitimate remedies from magical deceptions arose early in the development of Greek medicine. *On the Sacred Disease* is a fifth century BCE Greek text that criticizes the practices of doctors who treat epilepsy with rituals. Epilepsy was understood to be a disease sent

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[268] Collins. "Magic," 545. See also Plato, *Laws* 11.933B: "Now it isn't easy to know how these and all such things are by nature at any time, nor, if one should know, is it easy to persuade others; it's not worth trying to persuade the souls of human beings who are suspicious of one another in regard to such things that, if they should ever see molded waxen images at doorways, or at places where three roads meet, or at the images of their own parents, they must pay little attention to all such things, and to urge them to do so because they lack a clear opinion about them." (trans. T.L. Pangle).

[269] Later third-century CE prohibitions against magic in the Roman legal corpus, reinforced the death penalty against magic practitioners (especially where divination into the fate of the state and emperor was concerned), among numerous other evidence for magical practices and accusations after Plato's time, shows that his explanation of magic was not widely popular. See Fritz Graf, "How to Cope with a Difficult Life. A View of Ancient Magic," In *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium* (ed. Peter Schaffer and Hans Kippenberg. *Studies in the History of Religions*, 75 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 114.

[270] Collins, "Magic," 545. See also Plato, *Theaetetus*, 149c.

[271] Collins, "Magic," 545. See also Plato, *Republic*, 4, 426b.

[272] Fritz Graf, "How to Cope with a Difficult Life," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, (Ed. Peter Schaffer and Hans Kippenberg, *Studies in the History of Religions*, 75 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 110.

from the gods.[273] The author of *On the Sacred Disease* argues that the people who first linked epilepsy with divine causes were like the "magicians, purifiers, charlatans, and quacks of our own day."[274] He goes on to criticize treating epilepsy with diet, bathing, and clothing restrictions.[275] These illegitimate cures stem from understanding epilepsy as the result of divine origin, rather than interpreting it as the product of rational causes (which in this case means an imbalance of humours and a restriction of veins).

In Pliny's *Natural History*, healing practices are generally written about favorably, but Pliny's pejorative stance on magicians is clear. He argues that the practices of the magi arose naturally out of medicine as an extension of the promises private freelance rituals could provide the body. While medicine could preserve the body, the introduction of private freelance rituals (i.e. the activities performed by magicians) promised to extend those benefits by helping predict what might befall someone in the future.[276] What follows in Book Thirty is a positive exposition of Roman medical cures that could not possibly work from a contemporary medical standpoint (e.g., kissing a mule's snout as a cure for the common cold).[277] In the same book, Pliny also

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[273] Graf discusses how epilepsy was understood as either an illness sent from the gods or was a result of natural forces. The fifth century BCE medical treatise *On the Sacred Disease* is an exposition by a Hippocratic doctor arguing against understanding epilepsy as a divine illness. See Graf, "How to Cope," 110-111.
[274] Hippocrates of Cos, *The Sacred Disease,* 2. (W.H.S. Jones, LCL).
[275] Hippocrates of Cos, *The Sacred Disease,* 2. (W.H.S. Jones, LCL).
[276] In Pliny's words: "Nobody will doubt that it first arose from medicine, and that professing to promote health it insidiously advanced under the disguise of a higher and holier system; that to the most seductive and welcome promises it added the powers of religion (*religionis*), about which even today the human race is quite in the dark; that again meeting with success it made a further addition of astrology, because there is nobody who is not eager to learn his destiny…" See Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 30.1-2 (Jones, LCL).
[277] Pliny, *Natural History* 30.11 (Jones, LCL).

rejects the magicians' cures and medical explanations that Pliny himself finds impossible to believe (e.g., placing the tooth of a mole around one's neck as a cure for toothache).[278]

These examples demonstrate the most arbitrary distinctions Pliny makes between "legitimate cures" and the fraud of magicians. Pliny regularly criticizes any cure that includes the presence of incantations, amulets, offerings, written formulas or spells, and fixing or encasing animal or plant parts to areas other than the human body (walls, doors, holes, etc.). However, Pliny makes some exceptions depending on the source of his information. The application of an amulet is recommended as a cure for "Quartans" (mild malaria) because the prescriber is the philosopher Chrysippus.[279] Ancient medical advice is only as good as its giver, regardless of how effective the cure might be.

Similarities between the cures of freelance ritual specialists and the cures of physicians suggest a degree of homogeneity in the ancient medical world. Without having tested the efficaciousness of Pliny's cures, I think it reasonable to argue that both types of cures were equally effective or ineffective at curing maladies,[280] but Pliny's point is that there *was* a difference between what worked as a medical cure and what was charlatanry. His criteria for deciding this are determined not by the presence of magical "stuff" (amulets, incantations etc.), but by the source of its authorship.

Pliny remarks that while "magic is detestable, vain, and idle; and though it has what I might call shadows of truth, their power comes from the art of the poisoner, not of the Magi."[281] Pliny, like Plato, appears to argue that magicians have no real power, and the power they are

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[278] Pliny, *Natural History* 30.20 (Jones, LCL).
[279] Pliny, *Natural History* 30.103 (Jones, LCL).
[280] Some of Pliny's listed cures must have been effective. One cure for stomach pain is the consumption of cooked rooster liver mixed with poppy juice. See *Natural History* 30.60 (Jones, LCL).
[281] Pliny, *Natural History* 30.17-18 (Jones, LCL).

understood to have comes from their poisons. However, his inclusion of magicians' cures for some maladies[282] demonstrates he was not entirely ready to shut the door on their effectiveness. With one hand Pliny brushes off the ritual power wielded by magicians as nonsense, but with the other, fails to let go completely of the power that freelance ritual practices contain.

Numerous rituals in the *PGM* attest to the importance of freelance rituals in attempting to cure maladies. Cures for scorpion stings,[283] headaches,[284] coughs,[285] hard breasts,[286] breast and uterus pain,[287] swollen testicles,[288] hemorrhaging,[289] gout,[290] epilepsy,[291] and especially fevers,[292] are well-attested in the *PGM*. After divination and love spells, healing rituals comprise the third largest group of rituals in the *PGM*. Many of the cures in the *PGM* are for maladies that lack clear causation. Perhaps tellingly, there are no cures for broken bones. I do not think it is a coincidence that the most numerous cures are for headaches and fevers. One of the spells for curing epilepsy (*PGM* CXIV. 1-14) commands a god to protect the afflicted from "[every] demonic visitation"[293] which corroborates the critique in *On the Sacred Disease* that many people thought epilepsy and other illnesses were the result of daemons. Hemorrhaging and

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[282] "In quartans ordinary medicines are practically useless; for which reason I shall include several of the magicians' remedies, and in the first place the amulets they recommend" See Pliny, *Natural History* 30.98 (Jones, LCL).
[283] *PGM* VII. 193-96; CXII. 1-5; CXIII. 1-4
[284] *PGM* VII. 199-201; XVIIIa. 1-4; XX. 1-4; XX. 13-19; LXV. 4-7; XCIV. 39-60; CXXII. 50-55.
[285] *PGM* VII. 203-5.
[286] *PGM* VII. 208-9.
[287] *PGM* XXIIa. 9-10.
[288] *PGM* VII. 209-10.
[289] *PDM* xiv. 956-60; 961-65; 970-77; 978-80; 981-84
[290] *PDM* xiv. 985-92; 993-1002; 1003-14.
[291] *PGM* CXIV. 1-14.
[292] *PGM* VII. 211-12; 213-14; XVIIIb. 1-7; LXXXIII. 1-20; LXXXVII. 1-11; LXXXVIII. 1-19; LXXXIX. 1-27; XC. 14-18; XCIV. 10-16; CXV. 1-7; CXIXb. 1-5; CXXVIII. 1-11; CXXX.
[293] *PGM* CXIV. 1-14 (trans. Roy Kotansky).

scorpion stings have clear causation (child birth and scorpions) but lack a clear remedial path. In the absence of a cure, appealing or coercing the gods was the next best course of action.

Freelance Ritual Specialists Represented in Ancient Mediterranean Art

Story-telling, drama, performance poetry, and other narrative performances were intrinsic to ancient Mediterranean life. In a world where communication was dominated by speech and visual iconography, the representation of freelance ritual specialists in poetry, drama, and story-telling deserves its own sub-heading because the dissemination of ideas through drama and performance would naturally outpace the dissemination of more technical, written tracts by Pliny, Plato, Plutarch, and Cicero in the ancient world. Narrative performance was the dominant cultural art form of the Mediterranean world. If scholars want to gain insight into how the Ancient Mediterranean populace understood ideas, they would benefit by examining the representation of freelance ritual specialists in narrative and performative art.

Narrative and performative art is a sandbox for exploring attitudes towards cultural taboos. In the same way that contemporary artists explore ideas like murder, adultery, and incest in various artistic mediums, ancient authors could also freely play with ideas about freelance ritual specialists without violating the law. This is useful for exploring elite literary cultural attitudes towards freelance ritual specialists, but it does not represent the total range of attitudes towards freelance ritual specialists. Given the broad appeal and consumption of drama, poetry, and novel in the ancient world, the attitudes towards freelance ritual specialists contained in these works would have been pervasive in the ancient Mediterranean, even if these elite attitudes were not always shared by audiences.

Representations of magicians, sorcerers, diviners, and other freelance ritual specialists are varied and diverse in Greco-Roman narrative art. They may be deployed pejoratively as figures representing moral decay or unnecessary superstition (as in Plautus' *Miles Glorioso*, Proportius' *Elegies*, Juvenal's *Satires*, and Ennius' *Tragedies*). In these cases their skills, services, and claimed powers are portrayed as fraudulent and deceptive.

In other works, freelance ritual specialists help or perform a service for the protagonist or other characters (as in Seneca's *Heracles on Mount Oeta*, Horace's *Epodes*, Virgil's *Eclogues*, and Lucan's *Pharsalia*). In these cases, the ritual specialists have real power which should be feared and respected. The specialists typically occupy a position on the fringes of society. They either separate themselves from society and live alone, or they are socially separated within a society (e.g., by being an elderly widow).

In Virgil's *Aeneid* and Seneca's *Medea* the freelance ritual specialist is the main character of the story who uses coercive private rituals to achieve her goals, which in both instances is revenge. In these plays the power of ritual speciality is viewed as undesirable and dark, but appropriate for the protagonists to use given their circumstances. In some later Roman novels (Acts of the Apostles, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, *Metamorphosis*) combinations of all three of these positions appear in single works.

As I have done in previous sections of this chapter, I will trace the development of freelance ritual specialists in narrative art chronologically. I begin with Plautus and Ennius who wrote in the mid-third to early-second century BCE, and then explore the late Republic and early empire authors. I conclude by examining the Roman novel writers in the second century CE. Taking this approach will allow me to examine the historical development of freelance ritual ideas and also examine how some ideas appear to remain consistent through time. This approach

will also allow for a loose comparison of the chronological development of legislation against freelance ritual.

Freelance Ritual Specialists in Republican Narrative Art

Plautus (b.254- d.184 BCE) and Ennius (b.239- d.169 BCE) both include freelance ritual specialists in their work. Numerous characters come into contact with both men and women freelance ritual specialists, and the ritual specialists in both authors' works are usually portrayed pejoratively. Interestingly, both authors include lists of specialists whom they find particularly bothersome. In Plautus' comedy *Miles Gloriosus*, the grumpy yet helpful character Peroplectomenus issues a diatribe against marriage and argues that wives cost too much in part because of the bills they accrue from consulting dream interpreters, female entrails diviners, and prophetesses.[294] Similarly, in his *Tragedies,* Ennius criticizes the "Marsian augur, […] diviners in villages, […] Astrologers from the circus, […] worshippers of Isis, […] [and] interpreters of dreams." Ennius also calls them "superstitious seers" and "shameless prophets."[295] Both Plautus and Ennius include ranting compilations of the kinds of specialists whom they see as problematic. Peroplectomenus dislikes freelance ritual specialists because they ultimately cost money for services which he does not see as valuable. Peroplectomenus affirms the importance of the gods, the need for sacrifice, and the need to respect the plans the gods lay down for humans.[296] His arguments against ritual specialists do not hinge on a rejection of the existence of

[294] Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*. 692-694. See also, Wendt, *At the Temple*, 5, and Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 162.
[295] Ennius, *Tragedies*, 117b.1.132 (S.M. Goldberg and G. Manuwald, LCL). See also Cicero, *On Divination*. 1.132 (W.A. Falconer, LCL).
[296] Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 673-681; 736-739.

the gods. Rather, he appears to see any attempt at determining what the gods' plans are through freelance divination practices as useless. Ennius does not give a clear reason why he dislikes the specific selection of freelance ritual specialists he lists, but suggests, like Peroplectomenus, their services amount to little more than racketeering.[297] Financial concerns appear paramount in the critique of freelance ritual specialists here. Other critiques, like the contribution of freelance ritual specialists to the erosion of moral society, or blasphemy against the gods, are not mentioned by Ennius or Plautus.

In *Curculio*, Plautus describes a haruspex (an entrails diviner) working in a Roman market place next to a miller and a butcher.[298] The inclusion of a freelance ritual specialist alongside two other professions that: 1) have nothing to do with divination and 2) are necessary for normal everyday living, suggests these professions were common and to be expected in Rome at this time. The impression from both *Curculio* and Peroplectomenus is that, despite the annoyances created by freelance ritual specialists, they were a part of the tapestry of Roman life. The examples from Plautus and Ennius also provide some cursory observations on the gender of freelance ritual specialists. The ritual specialists mentioned by Peroplectomenus are all women, which is likely intentional because it fits his invective against wives, but the male counterparts for each of these professions are mentioned by Ennius.[299] As in everyday Roman life, Freelance ritual specialists in narrative art could be either men or women. However, in Roman dramas women characters more frequently played the role of freelance ritual specialists, and more specifically they played the role of poisoner, potion-maker, and sorceress, rather than soothsayer, diviner, or seer. The latter professions are more often played by male characters. Dickie has

[297] Ennius, *Tragedies*, 117b.1.132.
[298] Plautus, *Curculio*, 484.
[299] Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 162.

noted that Plautus, in numerous plays, draws on the stereotype of the woman poisoner. He argues that women involved in sex work and their pimps were frequently associated with erotic magic.[300] In Plautus' *Mostellaria*, one character accuses a woman brothel owner of being a *venefica*.[301] The association between poison and potion-making, women, and love or erotic desires is a consistent theme throughout Greco-Roman narrative art. Virgil, Horace, and Propertius, three of the major authors in the late republic and early empire, reproduce and further develop this theme. Virgil and Horace also develop the theme of the old hag who casts dark spells and potions. This theme is in turn reproduced by later authors (most exemplified by Lucan's necromancer Ericthro).

Freelance Ritual Specialists in late Republican and early Empire Narrative Art

In Virgil's eighth *Eclogue*, a fictional shepherd named Alphesibeous sings a song about an unnamed woman's ritual activity to return her lover Daphnis to her. The poem is based on the second Idyll of the third century BCE poet Theocritus.[302] The speaker uses a variety of ritual implements, including a wax image, three sacred threads, select herbs, and incantations.[303] These components of the ritual would have been familiar and recognizable to Roman audiences. The unnamed speaker wants her ritual to be successful (i.e., to have Daphnis return to her) but her bitterness at his absence is palpable. She wishes that Daphnis be overcome with desire for her

[300] Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 164.
[301] Plautus, *Mostellaria*, 218. (Wolfgang de Melo, LCL). See also, Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 164.
[302] J.T. Katz and K. Volk, "Erotic Hardening and Softening in Vergil's Eight *Eclogue*," CQ 1 (2006): 169-174.
[303] Virgil, *Eclogues* 8.80-8.81 (trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, LCL).

but looks forward to tormenting him by not returning his affection.[304] When placing the wax image of Daphnis into the fire, the speaker remarks "my cruel Daphnis burns."[305] The ritual is one of love, but also of a lover's revenge. Ultimately the ritual is successful, and Daphnis returns to the lovesick speaker.

Virgil elsewhere builds on the theme of the jilted lover. Dido, in Virgil's *Aeneid*, seeks revenge for Aeneas' departure and a cure for her broken heart. She resolves to kill herself in a ritual of revenge that she believes will give her the power to torment Aeneas in the afterlife. Dido resorts to the "magical arts" (*magicas invitam accingier artes*)[306] with regret, because the practices are not suitable for a queen to participate in.[307] A priestess assists with the rites, and invokes the usual chthonic deities: Erebus, Chaos, and Hecate.[308] Poisonous herbs, altars, ritual water, the afterbirth of a colt, and cake offerings are all present in the ritual activity.[309] The entire ritual episode is intertwined with Dido's conflicted emotions towards her husband Aeneas. In a fashion reminiscent of Simaetha, Dido loves him dearly yet at the same time wishes pain and suffering upon him. At one point, perhaps to illustrate the madness that has overcome her, Dido wishes she could kill Aeneas' son Ascanius and serve him as food to Aeneas.[310] Dido successfully kills herself and while the city mourns her death the gods take pity on her and release her soul from her body.[311] Dido is not punished by the gods for using magic rites for carrying out her revenge. Instead they take pity on her situation.

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[304] Virgil, *Eclogues* 8.88-8.89.
[305] Virgil, *Eclogues* 8.81.
[306] Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.493 (trans. Georg Luck).
[307] Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 115.
[308] Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.510-4.511 (trans. Georg Luck).
[309] Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.512-4.518 (trans. Georg Luck).
[310] Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.602 (trans. Georg Luck).
[311] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.693-705 (trans. Georg Luck).

Dido's comment about resorting to ritual magic only as a last resort ("I swear by the gods, my dear, and I take you as a witness, darling, that I hate to get involved in magic arts."[312]) could be interpreted as Virgil's social commentary on private and coercive ritual activity. Virgil clearly wants to emphasize the desperate nature of Dido's situation and resorting to magic in desperate times was a popular trope in ancient literature (seen in some of the examples I present here). Resorting to the use of ritual curses is unacceptable, but Dido uses them out of desperation. The ritual curse performed by Dido is effective, though not immediately so. Dido's curse that Aeneas face "a fierce, aggressive nation"[313] is by Luck's estimation, a reference to Hannibal and the Punic wars.[314] Virgil may have imagined this as the fulfillment of Dido's magical act. That the gods take pity on Dido, even though she resorted to illicit ritual activity, could suggest her actions were necessary for the fulfillment of Rome's destiny, or it suggests her actions were acceptable given the circumstances.

In contrast to Virgil's depiction of young lovers casting spells over each other, Horace draws heavily on the theme of elderly women as ritual practitioners. He specifically develops the image of "the hag." The women performing the rituals are old, hideous, and embody the opposites of civilized society. Horace's *Epodes* and *Satires* contain pejorative depictions of old, debauched, and ostracized women ritual practitioners. In *Epodes*, three witches perform a child sacrifice to produce a love potion. The women are variously described as having "rough hair bristled like a sea urchin or a running boar,"[315] snakes braided into their hair,[316] and uncut finger

[312] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.493 (trans. Georg Luck).
[313] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.615 (trans. Georg Luck).
[314] Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 115.
[315] Horace, *Epodes* 5.24. (trans. Georg Luck).
[316] Horace, *Epodes* 5.15. (trans. Georg Luck).

nails and yellow teeth.[317] In addition to the child victim, the women gather a variety of ingredients, both herbal and animal-based, to complete their potion. The ingredients are typical of the horror scene Horace paints (e.g., "fig trees torn from graves, funeral cypresses and eggs smeared with the blood of a loathsome toad and the feathers of a screech owl that flies by night […]"[318]) but they bear certain similarities to the real formulas in the *PGM*. The lead witch, Candida, is performing the ritual to seduce Varus, a desired lover. This is a notable shift from Virgil's depictions of young lovers casting erotic spells over each other. While Virgil's depiction of freelance ritual between lovers contains themes of tragic love, eroticism, and desperation, Horace's depiction of an old hag performing love spells creates feelings of disgust and shock. Candida's violation of cultural boundaries are two-fold: first, as an elderly woman who pursues young men she transgresses societal norms about the role, place, and agency of elderly women in Roman society; and second by using private nocturnal freelance rituals to achieve her desires she violates cultural norms about maintaining proper relationships with the gods.

Georg Luck argues the depiction of the witches in *Epodes* was designed to be especially grotesque because Horace was producing artistic propaganda to reinforce Augustus' new anti-magic legislation. The inclusion of the ritual's ingredients may have been for literary effect but was perhaps also recognizable to audiences as a potions list resembling those found in private home rituals. It is particularly interesting that the child victim in the episode fights back with his own curses and incantations,[319] and vows to haunt the witches as a ghost.[320] If *Epodes* is a piece of anti-freelance ritual propaganda, then it is interesting the innocent victim himself uses the very

[317] Horace, *Epodes* 5.47-48. (trans. Georg Luck).
[318] Horace, *Epodes* 5.16-5.20 (trans. Georg Luck).
[319] Luck argues that the boy's curses are an act of "black magic." See Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 110.
[320] Horace, *Epodes* 5.89 (trans. Georg Luck).

type of ritual activity the work is attempting to discredit. Note that the ritual activity of the elderly women is not successful. In running away, the sacrificial victim disrupts the ritual. This should also be considered part of Horace's social commentary on illicit private rituals. Horace appears to be saying something akin to the adage "crime does not pay."

In his *Satires*, Horace includes another vignette about Candida and her co-hags performing private rituals, but this time for the purpose of divination. Like Candida's story in *Epodes*, the description is intended to be frightening, and again includes ritual ingredients and gods recognizable to the audience (e.g., waxen dolls and the invocation of Hecate[321]) but the final scene is humorous rather than frightening. A farting wooden image scares the women away. In their hasty departure Candida's teeth fall out, and another hag's wig falls off.[322] The social commentary here is clearer than in *Epodes*. For Horace, freelance ritual activity is worthy of mockery.

Propertius, like Horace, mocks freelance ritual specialists and deploys the jilted lover theme seen in Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Aeneid*. In *Elegie*s, Propertius summons ritual specialists (referring to them as "you" or "*vos*") who can summon the moon or conjure spirits with magical fire to change the mind of his mistress and make her swoon for him.[323] If they can do this, he will give full credit to the sorcerer's power and their ability to perform their magic.[324] Dickie argues Propertius' stance is ironic, and that he does not actually believe in the efficaciousness of such

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[321] Horace, *Satires* 1.8.30-34 (trans. Georg Luck).
[322] Horace, *Satires* 1.8.45-50.
[323] Propertius, *Elegies*, 1.19-1.24 (G.P. Goold, LCL). See also, Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 176.
[324] Propertius, *Elegies*, 1.19-1.24. (G.P. Goold, LCL).

ritual activity.[325] Yet the motive to engage in ritual activity to procure love is clear, even if Propertius is mocking freelance ritual specialists.

In comparison to Plautus and Ennius, who generally seem to find freelance ritual specialists a bothersome reality of urban living, Virgil and Horace create vivid scenes of ritual activity where the ritual specialists are the focus of the audience's attention. These scenes tend to be captivating and shocking. Virgil and Horace continue to propagate the idea of the woman sorcerer found in Plautus' work (and in other Greek authors like Euripides), but Horace especially develops the image of the old, haggish, lusty woman who performs dark coercive private ritual magic. Virgil, Horace, and Propertius' work comes at a time of increased legislation against freelance ritual expertise in the Roman world. As already mentioned, Georg Luck speculates that Horace's mocking stance towards Candida is a direct result of Augustinian legislation against freelance ritual practices.

Writing slightly later in the early empire period, Seneca the Younger (b. 4 BCE- d. 65 CE) wrote his version of Euripides' fifth century BCE play *Medea.* In Seneca's version of *Medea*, the eponymous protagonist is presented as a powerful sorceress. She has several lengthy monologues where she invokes chthonic deities,[326] curses,[327] and lists herbal and animal ingredients for the purposes of poisoning and for performing incantations.[328] Medea uses her knowledge of ritual power to exact revenge on her husband by cursing a robe worn by Jason's new wife Creusa. Like Dido, Medea is presented as both a tragic protagonist and a sorceress who seeks revenge on her unfaithful husband Jason. Her sorcery and revenge are carried out with the consent (or ambivalence) of the gods. At the close of the play Medea escapes on a winged

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[325] Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 176.
[326] Seneca, *Medea*, 1-19 (John G. Fitch, LCL).
[327] Seneca, *Medea*, 19-25.
[328] Seneca, *Medea*, 705-139.

chariot (possibly that of her grandfather, the god Helios) after murdering her children and leaving their bodies to be buried by Jason.[329]

The parallels to Virgil's Dido are obvious, but Medea's actions are more terrible. Dido performs her private ritual magic to give her the power to haunt Aeneas after her own death. The cost for her revenge is her own life. Dido is willing to sacrifice her life because her emotional turmoil has made life insufferable. Dido's revenge is carried out after her own suicide, thereby allowing her to haunt Aeneas. By contrast, Medea's revenge is carried out by murder. Whereas Dido only fantasized about killing her husband's son, Medea murders her own children to exact revenge on Jason. Both Dido and Medea have divine exits at the end of the dramas. However, while Dido is pitied by the gods above, Medea's relationship with the gods is ambiguous. At the play's outset she invokes the gods to help her exact revenge, and at its close she escapes on her grandfather's winged chariot while Jason exclaims there are no gods.[330] The relationship between the protagonists and the gods is interesting because private freelance rituals were, as Plato argues, thought to be a kind of violation of maintaining proper relationships with the gods. Both Dido and Medea invoke chthonic deities in their rituals to achieve their desires, yet no negative judgments are made against them by the mainline deities.

The themes present in Seneca's Medea are more or less present in earlier versions of the play, therefore Seneca's *Medea* is not an innovation on the role of freelance ritual specialists in narrative art in Seneca's own time. Rather, I hypothesize that Seneca chose to reintroduce the play to Roman audiences because it was thematically similar to both Virgil and Horace's plays. I think the interest in private coercive ritual magic as an artistic genre reflected a growing interest

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[329] Seneca, *Medea* 1020-1025.
[330] Jason is implying that if the gods existed, they would not have allowed such a tragedy to happen. See Seneca, *Medea* 1020-1025.

in freelance ritual speciality in Roman society. I also speculate that the use of ritual power in the this play reinforced cultural ideas and fears about the dark power that could be channeled through certain ritual actions.

Seneca's *Heracles on Mount Oeta* presents a more parallel comparison to Virgil's Dido. The play features Deianira, who is concerned about her lover Heracles' fidelity. Deianira's nurse is a sorceress who performs love magic to ensure Heracles is faithful to Deianira. Again, Seneca draws on the woman sorcerer and jilted lover themes. Like Medea and Dido, the nurse's powers are legitimate (i.e., not fraudulent ritual activity) and effective. Though in this instance they are used not to exact revenge, but to ensure fidelity. The coercive ritual magic is used as an insurance policy against the need for revenge in the future.

Women use coercive private rituals against men when issues of fidelity or rejection arise in *Heracles on Mount Oeta, Medea*, Horace's *Epodes*, and Virgil's *Eclogues*. There is a consistent theme of women characters using coercive private rituals to return lovers to them, ensure the fidelity of a lover or spouse, or exact revenge on a lover or spouse. The correlation between women, erotic magic, and issues of fidelity, is representative of Roman patriarchal society. Given the time I would have liked to explore this issue in more depth. I will quickly note that the *PGM* contain numerous rituals for love and erotic spells– the vast majority of which are to be performed by men against women. The representation of women performing private rituals against men in drama is at odds with the vast number of love and erotic rituals designed to ensnare women in the *PGM*. It appears to me that there is some kind of transference or superimposition of male fears about women (finding a women partner, ensuring her fidelity, etc.) onto women in Roman dramas. Examining this relationship more clearly is beyond the scope of this paper, but I think it is an important area to explore in future research.

Lucan's *Pharsalia* is a departure from the scorned lover theme explored above, but draws directly from (and arguably perfects) Horace's depiction of the elderly woman sorceress. In addition to the horror inducing witch scene, Lucan explores other divination practices and gives a more nuanced and useful perspective of services performed by freelance ritual specialists. The *Pharsalia* contains three major divination scenes: the first occurs at the Oracle of Delphi, the second with the elderly hag Erictho, and the third with the oracle of Jupiter Hammon. The scenes are worth exploring in detail because they invite comparison of different "vendors" of divination rituals. Makowski argues these three scenes invite comparison and he takes into account 1) the type of character who approaches each oracle; 2) Lucan's description of each oracle; and 3) the direct or indirect references to the other oracles in the epic.

In the first divination scene the minor character Appius goes to the oracle of Delphi to inquire about his future. He is a coward and fearful of the impending war between Pompey and Caesar.[331] Lucan describes the prestige of the oracle and muses about the source of its divinatory power which he traces either to Apollo or another more ancient unnamed deity.[332] Lucan, a stoic, muses that perhaps the divine element is beneath Delphi to keep the world supported.[333] He goes on to describe how the oracle works; a priestess inhales the fumes from the cavern which then interacts with the soul of the priestess and allows the god to speak audibly through her.[334] Lucan also mentions the oracle's decline as a function of kings fearing knowledge of the future.[335] The

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[331] Lucan has Apollo discover the caves where the oracle of Delphi was founded. Apollo chose to dwell there because the god recognized that the chasm in the earth breathed divine truth. This would suggest that Apollo adopted the place for his own, but was divine prior to Apollo discovering the caves. See Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 5.67-70. (J.D. Duff, LCL). See also, John Makowski, "*Oracula Mortis* in the *Pharsalia*," *Classical Philology* (3) 1977: 193.
[332] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 5.86-93 (Duff, LCL).
[333] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 5.93-94 (Duff, LCL).
[334] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 5.95-99 (Duff, LCL).
[335] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 5.113 (Duff, LCL).

priestesses of Delphi were not sorry for the decline because inhaling the fumes and allowing the god to possess them shortens their lifespan.[336]

Appius' has a difficult encounter with priestess Phemonoe. Fearing the god's possession of her body, she argues the oracle no longer works (perhaps, she suggests, because the Sibylline oracles have been entrusted to the Romans and are a better divinatory source),[337] then gives a fake imitation oracle hoping this will deceive Appius. Not being fooled, Appius grows angry, and finally the chief priest throws the priestess into the cavern where she is possessed by the god and issues a real, albeit curt, oracle.[338]

Lucan's description of the oracle and his speculation about the nature of the god beneath the oracle, coupled with the priestess's resistance, creates what Makowski argues is an atmosphere of "confusion and suspicion" towards Delphi.[339] The issued oracle is short and ambiguous; it is only three lines long, and simply tells Appius he will not be at the battle of Pharsus. The oracle giver (the priestess Phemonoe) is a reluctant participant in the ritual. Makowski argues the oracle of Delphi is representative of the *superi dei* (the gods of the above), who dramatically contrast with the representation of chthonic deities (the *inferi dei*) in the next divination scene.

In the necromantic divination scene Pompey the Great's son consults the sorceress Erictho prior to the battle of Pharsalus. The scene contains many of the archetypal private divination elements like ritual herbs and poisons, invoking chthonic deities including Hecate, reciting incantations, and the presence of an ugly, hag-like witch figure. Like the Delphi scene, the character who searches for an oracle is not a person of good standing. Sextus is a coward and

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[336] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 5.114-119 (Duff, LCL).
[337] Lucan, *Pharsalia,* 5.136-140 (Duff, LCL).
[338] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 5.141-196 (Duff, LCL).
[339] John Makowski "*Oracula Mortis*," 197.

wants to discover who will win the battle to decide if he should avoid it.[340] Interestingly Sextus rejects all forms of divination which have their source in the *superi dei*. He rejects Delphi, Delos, astrology, haruspicy, augury, or lighting strikes as useful forms of divination since they reveal only what the gods above know about the future.[341] Sextus rejects any form of divination that is a legitimate and socially acceptable avenue for determining the future. Sextus prefers the illegitimate avenue of necromantic divination, which he sees as more powerful and authoritative.[342] Sextus interestingly groups the legitimate forms of divination together not by who is doing the consulting (i.e. the proper officials) but rather by who is being consulted (the gods above). His categorization of divinatory practices runs contrary to the high-brow cultural understanding that any divinatory practices performed outside of official avenues for interacting with the gods were seen as problematic. For example, Sextus groups together Delphi (acceptable) with haruspicy and astrology (potentially unacceptable avenues of divination).

In contrast to the legitimate priestess and vehicle for divinatory power at Delphi, Erictho is the fearsome archetypal hag figure. She is hideous, evil, and of course performs unsavoury and socially unacceptable night-time rituals. If this were not bad enough, she feeds on human corpses in horrifying fashion.[343] Her power is feared by the gods above who, at the sound of her voice, "grant her every kind of horror" because "they are afraid to hear the second spell."[344] The scene's climax comes when Erictho, through a series of incantations, herbs, poisons, and post-

[340] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.423-424. For a more detailed explanation of Sextus' character description, see Makowski "*Oracula Mortis*," 198.
[341] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.425-430 (Duff, LCL).
[342] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.430-434. See also Makowski "*Oracula Mortis*," 198.
[343] To cite one example: "she feasts greedily, savagely, on all the limbs, thrusts her fingers into the eye sockets, scoops out gleefully the frozen eyeballs, and gnaws the yellow nails on the withered hand." See Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.540-543 (Georg Luck).
[344] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.527-528 (Georg Luck).

mortem surgery, resurrects a corpse to divulge the future.[345] The reanimated corpse gives an honest assessment of Sextus' future (a warning that Pompey will lose to Caesar). Erictho's magic is successful, albeit horrifying and disgusting. In comparison to the oracle given at Delphi, the corpse' oracle is much longer and more detailed. Makowski argues Lucan is intentionally showing Erictho's superior power to determine the future by coercing and communicating with the dead.[346]

It is tempting to read into Sextus' speech about legitimate forms of divination. The mentioning of Delphi, Delos, augury, and lighting strikes all suggest legitimate institutions within the Roman empire where divination practices were controlled by a priestly class. However, haruspicy and astrology were often performed by freelance ritual specialists working outside of those institutions. Sextus is himself willing to consult with Erictho, a Thessalian sorceress, which obviously implies he has no problem consulting diviners outside of officially sanctioned avenues for divination. This scene is important because it shows that some forms of freelance ritual activity (in this case, haruspicy and astrology) are not automatically lumped into pejorative ideas about witchcraft and magic. I argue that Sextus' remarks on divination are a tacit acknowledgment that freelance ritual specialists were not always understood in pejorative ways. Sextus after all rejects haruspicy and astrology because they are divination forms which court the gods above. This suggests they are "good" or socially acceptable forms of divination. Sextus' stance towards astrology and haruspicy may indicate a cultural acceptance of these forms of divination, even if the use of these forms of divination was restricted by Roman magistrates.

Makowski points out that Sextus' desire to consult with Erictho at the exclusion of all other forms of divination is because Sextus sees the gods of the underworld as more powerful

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[345] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.762-820 (Georg Luck).
[346] Makowski, "*Oracula Mortis*," 198.

than the gods above. The *superi dei* have limited power in this epic. It is the gods of the underworld, and ultimately death itself, which have control of the world and the fate of people.[347] Makowski argues that a central thesis of the *Pharsalia* is that death has the final say, regardless of what people may try to do about their futures.[348] It is interesting that haruspicy and astrology are assumed to court the gods above.

The final divination scene in the *Pharsalia* has a respected oracle (that of Jupiter-Hammon) and a respected consulter (Cato). Cato refuses to engage with the oracle because he recognizes the futility of divination and understands that knowing the future changes nothing about a person's fate. All people die. Thus, the final divination scene bears little similarity to Erictho and Delphi. It is the "anti-divination" scene where the seeker of the future (who does not actually want to know what the oracle has to say; Cato is only there at the behest of the Senate) already knows what fate has instore.

Both consulter and oracle are portrayed favourably against the previous divination scenes. In contrast to Appius and Sextus, Cato is wise and brave. The temple of Jupiter-Hammon is portrayed favorably in comparison to Delphi and Erictho. Lucan describes the temple as humble, and the resident god defends it against "Roman gold."[349] Proof of the god's presence is indicated by the only green trees in Libya which surround the temple.[350] Once inside the temple, Cato refuses to engage in any divinatory practice. He already knows that "only cowards and fools require from oracles the truth they cannot find in themselves" and that "death is the only certitude, and oracles can find no other."[351] Cato's (and perhaps Lucan's) conclusion about

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[347] Makowski, "*Oracula Mortis*," 197-198.
[348] Makowski, "*Oracula Mortis*," 197-198.
[349] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 9.520-521 (Duff, LCL).
[350] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 9.522 (Duff, LCL).
[351] Makowski, "*Oracula Mortis*," 202.

oracles is that they are useless. All humans should know their fate, which is death.[352] Makowski argues Lucan elsewhere portrays himself as a "rationalist or *contempior divum*."[353] Lucan, like Horace and Seneca, shares a disdain for divinatory practices, and like these two earlier authors, Lucan argues that freelance ritual activity is ultimately useless. Good, intelligent, and rational citizens (like Cato) should avoid such rabble.

Unlike Lucan, Seneca, Horace, and Virgil, who each recreate stereotypical depictions of witchcraft and sorcery in their stories, Juvenal harkens back to the lists of freelance ritual specialists in Rome first proposed by Plautus and Ennius. Juvenal's depictions are more descriptive and offer an updated early second-century picture of the kinds of people who performed freelance rituals in Rome. For example the character Umbricus from Juvenal's third satire complains to his companion about Rome's lack of respectable employment, and argues the city is awash with a variety of ritual experts who claim to interpret and channel divine will and power. He asks:

> What can I do at Rome? I don't know how to tell lies. I can't praise a bad book if it's bad and ask for a copy. I'm ignorant of the movement of stars. I won't and can't predict someone's father's death. I've never examined the entrails of frogs.[354]

In this excerpt, Umbricus presents his thoughts on Rome in Juvenal's time. Umbricus states he cannot be an astrologer (and thus can't claim to tell the future or interpret the will of the gods) because he doesn't know astronomy, nor does he know how to practice *haruspicy* (inspecting the

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[352] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 9.583-584 (Duff, LCL).
[353] Makowski, "*Oracula Mortis*," 201.
[354] Juvenal, *Sat*. 3.40-3.44 (S.M. Braund, LCL). See also Wendt, *At the Temple*, 114.

entrails of animals to determine the will of the gods). But Umbricus' main complaint is that these practices are fraudulent, and professional lying is something he cannot commit himself to. The inclusion of his refusal to endorse poor literature (something which has no evident connection to freelance ritual practices) shows his critique of Roman professions is not limited to freelance ritual specialists and could be seen as a critique of all forms of professional lying, but freelance ritual specialists appear to be the main targets of his invective.

In his sixth satire (a general tirade against the practices of women) Juvenal expounds a long polemic against different freelance ritual specialists active in Rome. He ridicules cults like Bellona and the Mother of Gods,[355] the cults of Osiris and Isis,[356] Judean dream interpreters,[357] Chaldeans and astrologers,[358] official oracles like Delphi and Jupiter-Hammon,[359] horoscopes,[360] and freelance diviners working in the circus maximus.[361]

Rather than highlight elements of ritual, Juvenal jumps straight to the characters and groups who performed such rituals and the variety of ritual professions and cults themselves. Juvenal even mocks Tiberius' court astrologer Thrasyllus.[362] Whereas Horace and others were content to co-opt the features and components of freelance ritual into dramatic scenes of horror and stereotypical sorcery, Juvenal instead describes the people who offered freelance ritual services. Juvenal's rant includes similar specialists mentioned by Plautus and Ennius. Though Juvenal's list of specialists is broader, both he and Ennius mention the cults of Isis, dream interpreters, astrologers, and diviners. They also identify the circus as an important place for

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[355] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.513-530.
[356] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.532-541.
[357] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.542-6.552.
[358] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.553-6.555.
[359] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.555-557.
[360] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.572-576.
[361] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.582-591; 6.607; 6.610.
[362] Juvenal, *Satires* 6.575.

diviners and astrologers. The specialists mentioned by Ennius and Juvenal had probably been a standard fixture of Rome since the third century BCE and were probably the intended targets of the various expulsions instituted by magistrates and emperors.

Freelance Ritual Specialists in Greco-Roman Novels

Greco-Roman novels were a newer literary invention compared to dramatic verse. Coming into popularity around the first century CE, the details these novels contain about freelance ritual specialists are often richer and more detailed than in the poetry and drama of previous generations. Part of this may be attributable to the change from dramatic verse to prose. The freedom from meter and rhyme could create a more fecund environment for the inclusion of mundane cultural and social details. That Greco-Roman novels also contain more and varied information about freelance ritual specialists is, I think, also a product of the cultural environment in which it arose. By the second century CE, the breadth of the Roman empire with its roads and systems of exchange and commerce, facilitated a greater movement of people and ideas. There were therefore more ritual specialists from across the ancient Mediterranean working in and around Rome and other urban centres than ever before. Using Greco-Roman novels as evidence for freelance ritual specialists can support several ideas. First, evidence in Greco-Roman novels can support the idea that there was an increasing ethnic diversity of ritual specialists from across the Roman empire. Second, evidence in Greco-Roman novels can support the idea that ritual expertise was increasingly tied to ethnicity.

Lucian of Samosata, who wrote in various places across Syria and Greece, gives a good depiction of the kinds of people one could find working in cities across the empire. His work is

comparable to Juvenal's in terms of topic and time period. Both authors wrote in the late first and early second century. Like Juvenal, Lucian satirized many freelance ritual specialists (like Apollonius of Tyana and Alexander of Abonoteichus). However, unlike Juvenal, Lucian's work satirizes, mocks, and critiques a broader range of practices and ideas related to freelance ritual specialists. He not only critiques freelance ritual specialists and their practices, but targets ideas that underpin the use of private coercive rituals.

In Lucian's *Lover of Lies,* he critiques a wide range of popular practices including folk remedies, superstitious beliefs, love spells, and dialogues with ghosts and spirits. The work is both interesting and amusing because the protagonist in the story, who does not believe in the efficacy of any kind of charm, spell, or other freelance ritual, is repeatedly mocked by a group of companions for not believing in such things. No actual rituals are performed in front of the protagonist in *Lover of Lies*. Instead the protagonist listens to stories told by his companions about displays of ritual power they had witnessed. Lucian slyly observes that people often report supernatural activity and the efficacy of freelance ritual activity, but few people dare to replicate the rituals and displays of power publicly. Tychiades, the protagonist, asks why it is that perfectly good men who are "excellent in every way […] delight in deceiving themselves and their associates."[363] Tychiades is clearly critical of any ritual activity or apotropaic item that purports to miraculously heal wounds,[364] grant the power to fly,[365] walk on water,[366] raise the dead,[367] summon the infernal gods,[368] or pull down the heavens,[369] but importantly he does not

[363] Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 2 (trans. A.M. Harmon, LCL).
[364] Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 7-10 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).
[365] Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 13 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).
[366] Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 13 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).
[367] Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 13 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).
[368] Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 14 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).
[369] Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 14 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).

deny the gods.[370] Instead he affirms their presence by arguing that the gods have efficacy in producing certain outcomes (i.e., healing a wound) through empirical human knowledge. Tychiades implies that the gods have imparted to humans sufficient intelligence to learn how to solve the regular problems of everyday life without recourse to freelance ritual specialists. This stance towards the gods is similar to other authors I have examined in this chapter (e.g., Plato, Plautus, Ennius, Cicero). While the existence of the gods is seldom critiqued by ancient authorities, the ability to access the gods, and by what means, frequently is.

While Lucian's work specifically targets freelance ritual specialists, their seamless inclusion in other novels shows that by the first and second centuries CE freelance ritual specialists occupied a considerable part of ancient Mediterranean's cultural space. In the early second-century novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the main love interest Leucippe is suddenly stricken with madness that Clitophon, her lover, is at pains to explain. We learn later that she was secretly drugged with a love potion (*pharmakon*) by an Egyptian soldier named Gorgias.[371] The descriptions of the potion and Gorgias are so minimal that it seems the author, Achilles Tatius, thought the reader would have recognized Gorgias as a stock Egyptian character. A messenger explains to Clitophon that Gorgias was

> an Egyptian soldier […]. He fell in love with your chosen, and being naturally an expert in drugs, he prepared a love-philtre and bribed your Egyptian servant to take it and mix it in Leucippe's drink: but the servant by a mistake administered the philtre undiluted, and it had the effect of producing madness.[372]

[370] Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 10 (A.M. Harmon, LCL).
[371] Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 4.15.4 (S. Gaselee, LCL).
[372] Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 4.15.3-4 (S. Gaselee, LCL).

No detailed explanation or extended narrative of the activity is necessary here. The audience is expected to grasp the situation. Gorgias, an Egyptian, and therefore someone who has knowledge of creating potions, drugs Leucippe. The ingredients of the potion are not listed, nor is the ritual to create the potion. The explanation for how Leucippe was drugged is brief and to the point. Gorgias has no back story that explains his knowledge of potions. Perhaps most tellingly of all, he has no profession or title other than "soldier" and "Egyptian." His knowledge of potions is a result of his ethnicity.

The connection between ethnicity and ritual expertise is deployed in Apuleius' novel *Metamorphoses*. At a critical point in the story, an Egyptian is hired to perform a necromantic rite to speak to a victim of a murder. The portrayal of the Egyptian is different from *Leucippe and Clitophon* because the Egyptian in *Metamorphoses* sells his services (like a real freelance ritual specialist would) rather than acting on erotic impulse (like Gorgias did). *Metamorphoses* contains a unique blend of freelance ritual specialists as a professional class (who are at times satirized), Roman women-sorcerer stereotypes, and freelance ritual specialists who perform rituals in service to a deity (similar in fashion to Paul and the apostles). Apuleius presents an especially fecund environment for examining the places freelance ritual specialists occupied in Graeco-Roman narrative art because freelance ritual specialists in the novel are cast different ways. Some roles fulfilled by freelance ritual specialists are clearly pejorative, while others are positive. I will therefore deal with *Metamorphosis* in greater detail than the above novels.

Apuleius, whose trial I have earlier mentioned, writes in *Metamorphoses* about the adventures of Lucius who goes on a journey to learn the secrets of magic. We might infer from Apuleius' trial account that his stance towards freelance ritual practices was liberal. However,

while sympathetic towards mystery cults, magic, and freelance ritual practices, *Metamorphoses* is not absent of the usual tropes about witchcraft and nefarious private night-time rituals. For example: Apuleius' main character travels to Thessaly (i.e., the land of sorcerers, and the same place from which Lucan's Erictho came from); a hag-sorcerer named Meroe curses Lucius' companion and is said to have the power to lower the sky, destroy mountains, and summon ghosts and gods;[373] and there are second-hand tales of hag-sorcerers consuming corpses for magical purposes.[374] Yet the narrative breaks from the traditional tropes about coercive private ritual activity by differentiating between the practices of hag-sorcerers and the practices of freelance ritual specialists. Judging a ritual act as good, bad, or neutral is entirely dependent on whom is performing the ritual activity. Bad ritual acts are always performed by women sorcerers, neutral ritual acts are performed by freelance ritual specialists, and good ritual acts are performed by specialists in service to deities like the Isis worshippers at the end of the novel. Freelance ritual specialty often appears as the antidote to the nefarious rituals performed at night by the hag-sorcerers.

A prime example of this differentiation of ritual activity occurs in the novel's main incident. When Lucius' lover Photis discovers that Pamphile, the wife of his host, is a sorceress whom plans on turning herself into an owl, Lucius cannot resist watching. After observing the ritual (which involves a special ointment and various incantations), he desires to undergo the transformation himself. After acquiring the ointment, Lucius begins to smear it on himself, only to discover that a critical error has been made. He changes not into an owl, but a donkey. Lucius' transformation into a donkey is not portrayed as evil or even a step towards embracing the evil practices of elderly women sorcerers. We are told earlier in the novel that Pamphile is a *magus*

[373] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 1.8 (J.A. Hanson, LCL).
[374] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 2.22 (J.A. Hanson, LCL).

"of the first order" (*maga primi nominis*)[375] and is dangerous and should be avoided.[376] She is an expert in "every variety of sepulchral incantation;" she can cause the stars in heaven to fall into hell; and perhaps most threateningly of all (to the male Roman reader) she lustily pursues young men and attacks their souls. Should they resist, she transforms them into "rocks or sheep or any other sort of animal."[377] Lucius' poor imitation of Pamphile's ritual actions (which transforms him into a donkey) requires no change or compromise of his character. His encounter with the sorceress' ointment and coercive night-time ritual only changes his exterior. His actions could never be considered evil because he is not a woman sorcerer.

Another example of this moral differentiation of ritual occurs in a minor vignette involving an Egyptian freelance ritual specialist. An Egyptian prophet named Zatchlas is paid a considerable sum of money to summon the spirit of a client's recently deceased nephew from the underworld and reanimate the nephew's corpse. The purpose of the act is to determine whether the nephew's death was natural or murder.[378] This episode is reminiscent of the corpse reanimation scene in Lucan's *Pharsalia* with Erictho, though the practitioner in *Metamorphoses* is an Egyptian prophet "of first rank" (*propheta primarius*) who is expected to perform a miracle (*miraculum*).[379]

The Zatchlas episode invites even more comparison between hag-sorcerer stereotypes and freelance ritual specialists because once the reanimated corpse begins to talk, it describes how some hags attempted to steal his body.[380] As always, the activities of hag-sorcerers are

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[375] Hanson translates *maga* (nominative feminine singular of *magus*) as "witch." Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 2.5. (trans. J.A. Hanson, LCL), 2.5.
[376] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 2.5. (trans. J.A. Hanson, LCL)
[377] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 2.5. (trans. J.A. Hanson, LCL)
[378] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 2.28-29 (trans. J.A. Hanson, LCL).
[379] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 2.28 (trans. J.A. Hanson, LCL).
[380] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 2.30 (trans. J.A. Hanson, LCL).

pejorative. However, Zatchlas' power to reanimate a lifeless corpse is never portrayed as evil or malevolent. On the contrary, he provides a useful tool to discover the true nature of the nephew's death (the corpse reveals he was murdered by his wife). Zatchlas possesses the same power as Erictho in the *Pharsalia*. When the corpse initially comes back to life, Zatchlas threatens to "invoke the Furies" with his curses to torture the corpse's body into telling the truth.[381] Compare this with Erictho's act of lashing her resurrected corpse with a live snake and the series of threats she utters to force the corpse to give an oracle.[382] Erictho and Zatchlas perform the exact same activity for roughly the same purposes. Yet Zatchlas' necromancy is understood to be legitimate and serving a legitimate purpose (to discover whether or not a murder had been committed), whereas Erictho's necromancy is portrayed as evil and for petty purposes (to determine whether Sextus would die in the civil war). The revelation that some hags attempted to steal parts of the corpse' body shows that the hag-sorcerers are evil, but that Zatchlas, who wields the same necromantic power as them, is not. Zatchlas' ritual power, even though it is the exact same as Erictho's, could never be considered evil, simply because he is not a woman sorcerer.

Note also how Pamphile and the Egyptian Priest Zatchlas both share knowledge of "sepulchral incantations," yet only Pamphile is understood to be a bad character as a result of this. Just as Zatchlas can raise the dead without accruing any of the pejorative language used to describe Erictho, Lucius can innocently enough transform into a donkey without attaching to himself any of the negative character attributes assigned to Pamphile.

Lucius' desire to change into an owl and his accidental transformation into a donkey is not entirely innocent however. While he escapes the pejorative labels attached to women sorcerers, his desire to use coercive rituals to transform his body is the result of poor moral

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[381] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 2.29 (trans. J.A. Hanson, LCL).
[382] Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6.727-6.749 (trans. Duff, LCL).

character. Lucius' adventures as a donkey eventually produce a change in his moral character. After enduring numerous hardships in his donkey form, Lucius is finally granted reprieve after praying to Isis. Lucius' initial transformation into a donkey changes only his exterior appearance. His inward licentious behaviour remains the same.[383] Near the end of the novel, and just prior to meeting Isis in person, Lucius (still in donkey form) refuses to copulate with a condemned murderer in the amphitheatre at Corinth. The refusal to copulate is a departure from Lucius' hedonistic behavior earlier in the novel. Frangoulidis argues that it is at this juncture that something internal has changed for Lucius, and that this change is a "pre-requisite" for his transformation back into human form and for his salvation.[384] During the initial encounter with Isis and his post-transformation discussions with the priests of Isis, Lucius is asked to commit to changing his life and accepting the restrictions imposed on the initiates of the cult.[385] Notably for Lucius this includes a perpetual vow of chastity.[386] Lucius for his part, is happy to accept these requirements of initiation. The transformation back into a human is both a change of exterior appearance and interior moral orientation.

There is likely little doubt to observers, both ancient and modern, that the initial transformation into a donkey was a "magic" ritual (i.e., the result of illicit ritual practices on the part of a sorcerer or magus that is coded with signifiers to show this is one of those culturally inappropriate rituals that improperly focuses power on an individual. Examples of what I am describing include: a ritual that takes place in private and at night, involves the invocation of

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[383] Prior to his transformation, Lucius has numerous sexual encounters with the maid Photis at his hosts house (2.17; 3.20) After transforming into an ass, Lucius remarks that his sole consolation was the size of his donkey body's member (3.24).
[384] Stavros A. Frangoulidis. *Witches, Isis and Narrative: Approaches to Magic in Apuleius'* 'Metamorphoses.' Berlin: William de Gruyter (2008), 125.
[385] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 11.6. (trans. J.A. Hanson, LCL)
[386] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 11.6; 11.19. (J.A. Hanson, LCL)

certain indecipherable words, and involves a divinatory tool– in this case a lamp). If the initial transformative ritual can be called "magic," is the counter ritual equally so? Bill Arnal argues yes; the counter transformation is the "exact same kind of action, the transformation of a person's body."[387] While there are marked differences between the initial transformation into a donkey and the counter transformation back into a human,[388] the ritual contexts of each transformation are framed in similar ways. For Arnal, magical ritual is responsible for both.

Frangoulidis argues there is both good and bad magic in the events that transform Lucius. He states that the magic initially used to transform Lucius is "evil" magic, but the magic used to turn him back into human form is good magic.[389] Photis (Apuleius' lover– not to be confused with Pamphile, the sorcerer) is a representative of evil magic in the world and is, according to Frangoulidis, the reason why Lucius became a donkey.[390] However, when Lucius is returned to human form he does not return to Photis,[391] but instead begins a different kind of relationship with Isis, who represents benevolent magic. Lucius can continue his love and curiosity with magic, but not for sensual or hedonistic purposes.[392] Frangoulidis' designation is surely a Durkheimian one. The qualifiers 'good' and 'bad' are socially designated, and determining which qualifier belongs to which magical practitioner requires only an examination of motive

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[387] Bill Arnal, "Textual Healing," 6.
[388] Arnal notes the many differences between the two scenes: the first takes place at night, in private, at an arbitrary time, and is performed by a lay person, while the second transformation scene occurs in daylight, in a formal procession, and is performed by a legitimate actor: the priest of Isis. See Arnal, "Textual Healing," 6.
[389] Frangoulidis, *Witches, Isis and Narrative*, 124.
[390] Frangoulidis, *Witches, Isis, and Narrative*, 171.
[391] This point is especially important in light of the embedded allegorical story about Cupid and Psyche. Cupid importantly returns to Psyche at the end of the tale. However, Lucius does not return to Photis. For more on the importance of the embedded story about Cupid and Psyche and how it relates to the overall structure of the *Metamorphoses*, see Frangoulidis, *Witches, Isis, and Narrative*, 108-129.
[392] Frangoulidis, *Witches, Isis, and Narrative*, 172.

and purpose. The women sorcerers in *Metamorphoses* use their ritual toolkit for malevolent purposes. They contrast with the freelance ritual specialists (Diophanes the Chaldean astrologer and Zatchlas the Egyptian priest) whose powers are useful to their paying clients but are performed for personal or monetary gain. The freelance ritual specialists in *Metamorphoses* are neither malevolent or benevolent, but simply offer their services for paying clients. Finally, the god Isis and her followers are portrayed as unequivocally good and righteous. Their white linen garments, carefully coiffed or shaven heads, musical instruments, divine images and implements, and ritual procession indicates this group of people and their god are set apart from the rest of the actors in the story. Isis initiates include "men and women of every rank and age."[393] Isis is an inclusive universal cult. The social-ranking system of ritual activity in *Metamorphoses* sets it apart from any other example of freelance ritual speciality in Roman narrative art.

Apuleius' may have had an agenda in his portrayal of the cult of Isis. He was probably a follower and initiate of the cult himself.[394] However, his positive portrayal of the cult was not universally shared by all Romans. As Ripat has noted, there was skepticism and uncertainty on the part of Roman magistrates towards external cultural influences within the Roman empire.[395] A handful of historical examples demonstrate this: in 58 BCE a number of Egyptian altars were removed from the Capitoline hill; in 48 BCE the Senate attempted to destroy private Egyptian worship spaces;[396] and in 28 BCE Augustus, and then Agrippa banned Egyptian rites from operating within Rome's sacred boundaries (the pomerium).[397] However, at the same time

[393] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 11.10 (J.A. Hanson, LCL).
[394] Apuleius, *Apologia* 55.8; 56.1 (C.P. Jones, LCL).
[395] Ripat has noted how some of the earlier expulsion of astrologers was part of a broader attempt to clean up Rome. See Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 118.
[396] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates,* 51.
[397] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 51.

Augustus paradoxically made provisions for their shrines.[398] Wendt speculates that, in the same way that magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans were periodically expelled from Rome in an effort to preserve Roman virtues, Rome's complicated relationship with Egyptian cults may have stemmed from a desire to keep out troublesome Isis diviners (*Isiaci Coniectores*) and other itinerant Egyptian priests and magicians.[399] One divination ritual in the *PGM* requires the practitioner to clothe themselves "in pure linen, the garb of [a statue or a priest] of Isis."[400] This suggests that either certain freelance ritual specialists imitated the clothing of Isis priests as an expression of ritual power, or that Isis priests and priestesses themselves may have practiced private freelance rituals. Both are possible. In any case, performing rituals deemed unsavory by the state, whether by official Isis priests or by people dressed up as Isis priests, would have been met with the same scrutinization and punishment at the hands of Roman magistrates. I share Wendt's speculation that followers of Isis within the Roman empire may have been seen (at least by Roman magistrates) as sharing similarities with the other types of freelance ritual specialists. This would explain why they were the targets of both ridicule and state scrutiny.

Baker has shown how Apuleius' representation of magic in *Metamorphoses* serves the purpose of criticizing Roman law of which Apuleius was famously a target.[401] I conject that it is not a stretch to see *Metamorphoses* as an apologetic for the cult of Isis, while at the same time criticizing Roman legal practices. The favorable portrayal of Isis followers in *Metamorphoses* clearly positions their activities as different from those of other ritual specialists like the wandering Egyptian priest, the Chaldean astrologer, and of course, the archetypal practices of hag-sorceresses. Apuleius' portrayal of these types of ritual practitioners is unique in Greco-

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[398] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 52.
[399] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 52.
[400] *PGM* IV.3086-3124 (trans. Georg Luck).
[401] Baker, "Doing Things with Words," 352-362.

Roman narrative art because it preserves both the negative stereotypes of women sorcerers that are ever-present in Greek and Roman drama and tragedy, but unlike the satires of Juvenal and Lucian, positively portrays the practices of some ritual specialists in the empire.

The Christian apologetic works The Book of Acts and *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* contain a sympathetic stance towards Jesus worshippers that is similar to Apuleius' sympathetic stance towards Isis worshippers. Like the actions of the hag-sorcerers in *Metamorphosis*, the accusations of magic and of being a magician serve as foils to the good actions of the main characters. This is important because the authors wish to portray the actions of their protagonists as entirely different from what other freelance ritual specialists were doing around them. In *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Paul is accused of being a magician because he appears to have bewitched the protagonist Thecla.[402] Thecla refuses to leave Paul's presence, and eventually breaks her engagement with her betrothed.[403] Thecla's family members suspect Paul of using erotic magic to bewitch Thecla.[404] For those already initiated into the Jesus cult, perhaps this part of the story would have created tension since readers already knew that Paul was not a magician. For the uninitiated, perhaps it created suspense and forced the reader to wonder if Paul was indeed some kind of magician who had bewitched Thecla. In any case, the accusations of Thecla's family in the novel presuppose a cultural awareness of itinerant ritual practitioners who sold and performed love spells. Paul's acts are positioned as good and true acts in service to a benevolent deity, just as the acts of the Isis worshippers are in *Metamorphosis*. Sympathetic readers would

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[402] *Acts of Paul* 3.15. See Jeremy W. Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla: A Critical Introduction and Commentary* (WUNT 270; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 105.
[403] *Acts of Paul* 3.20. See Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 118.
[404] Bremmer argues that the use of *dedemene* ('bound') foreshadows the accusations of magic that the family members will make against Paul. See J.N. Bremmer, "Magic, martyrdom and women's liberation in the Acts of Paul and Thecla," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* (ed. by J.N. Bremmer; Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1996), 42. See also *Acts of Paul* 3.9.

understand that the accusations of performing love spells are preposterous because Paul serves Jesus. The role of "magician" in this story, like the role of the hag-sorcerer in *Metamorphosis*, contrasts with the good nature of the protagonists. The ultimate intent of this activity is to perpetuate the intellectual, moral, and social goals of their respective patron deities and associated social movements.

In Acts 16 Paul encounters a slave girl possessed by a demon with divinatory powers. Her owners earned a large sum of money from her fortune-telling.[405] After being harassed by the girl for several days, Paul orders the demon to leave her body.[406] Her owners, having lost a precious source of income, bring accusations against Paul and his group for disrupting their fortune-telling enterprise.[407] As in *Paul and Thecla*, the powers of the girl and the greed of the owners act as a foil to the good power of Paul. Both the girl and Paul have spiritual powers, but Paul's are demonstrably superior in that he dispelled the girl's power, and that Paul's powers are good in that he claims not to work for greed. A positional argument for the acceptability of some freelance ritual power is clearly being promulgated here. The girl's powers are bad because they are demonic and are used for greed while Paul's powers are good because he works in the name of Jesus.

The same positional scenario is established in Acts 8 with Philip's encounter with Simon the Magus. Simon's powers are bad because they are done with greedy intent while the activities of Philip are good because they are done in the name of Jesus. As in Acts 16, freelance ritual specialists are pitted against the freelance ritual activities of Paul and his followers. In every encounter between other freelance ritual specialists and the apostles, the apostles always come

[405] Acts 16:16.
[406] Acts 16:18.
[407] Acts 16:19-24.

out on top while their opponents always look bad for one reason or another. The apostles are heroes while the other freelance ritual specialists are the villains.

These types of apologetic stories for ritual power are different from the pejorative rants against freelance ritual specialists told by Plautus, Ennius, Juvenal, and Lucian. While the apostles deride the powers of others and affirm their own power and its source, the Roman dramatists call into question the efficacy of any freelance ritual expertise, yet they always affirm the existence of the gods. I believe the later novels *Metamorphosis*, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, and Acts of the Apostles, demonstrate a sympathetic shift towards ritual practitioners that was unseen in the Republican period. The *Life of Apollonius*, which describes the many miraculous stories of Apollonius of Tyana could be added to this list of novels too. Apollonius performs his miracles in the name of Heracles, and he claims to derive his power from Pythagoras. Yet even this "pagan" power lineage brought him into conflict with the ruling Roman elites. The question of the efficacy of ritual power in the first century and onwards becomes a problem for ruling elites, and becomes an increasingly fecund area for the dissemination of ideas and new social movements.

"Magic" as a Literary Theme

Narrative art is an important source of freelance ritual specialty in the ancient world but drawing linear conclusions about them by simply reading the plays, poems, and novels of the ancient world would be problematic. Take for example Seneca's plays. Seneca has numerous portrayals of sorceresses, magic, incantations, poison, and dark nefarious rituals. In contrast to Juvenal's satires, Seneca never presents the ritual practitioner as a fraud or charlatan, and instead

presents their power as real and manifest. Yet we know from Seneca's other non-fiction works (e.g. *De Beneficiis*) that he was not sympathetic to freelance ritual activity nor did he see it as efficacious. Luck argues that Seneca's treatment of magic, sorcery, and other characteristics identifiable as freelance ritual activity are present because "magic as a literary theme offered great possibilities."[408] Despite this issue, narrative art tells a great deal about how inhabitants of the Roman empire thought about freelance rituals and their practitioners, and about the dominant stereotypes of people who engaged in such practices (notably the "witch" trope where old women engage in illicit private night time rituals for nefarious purposes). My goal in presenting the narrative art here is to at least make an attempt at understanding how the Graeco-Roman world saw freelance ritual specialty in their own day (respecting that there was likely a wide array of opinions on the matter). In examining Roman plays and dramas I have highlighted certain recurring features to show how these were part of the dominant tropes and stereotypes about freelance ritual activity and the kinds of people who practiced it.

Examining freelance ritual specialists in narrative art is fruitful because it allows us to examine the dichotomy between representations of witchcraft, sorcery, and magic on the one hand, and freelance ritual practices and practitioners on the other. The latter group, who performed real services and rituals for clients, stood outside stereotypical representations of sorcery and witchcraft in literature. The portrayal of freelance ritual specialists changes over the course of Republican and Empire periods. Some critiques remain more or less unchanged, like Ennius (writing in the fourth century BCE) and Juvenal's (writing in the first century CE) mocking lists of specialists working at Rome. On the other hand, the introduction of the novel coincides with new ideas about freelance ritual specialists and the legitimacy and efficacy of

[408] Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 244.

their powers. The figures who purportedly performed legitimate acts of ritual power (e.g. Paul and Apollonius) brought about state suspicion and critique. State suspicion and punishment was applied in the same way regardless of which cult or hero the ritual power was attributed too.

Conclusion

I have presented in this chapter a wide-ranging swath of evidence for freelance ritual activity in the ancient world. The legal proceedings, laws, philosophical treatises, medical and historical literature, and Graeco-Roman narrative art I present here shows that freelance rituals and practices in the ancient world held a firm grip on the ancient imagination, but occupied an ambiguous position in real life day-to-day dealings. The boundary between illicit ritual activity and legitimate avenues for channeling divine will was permeable. Determining where freelance ritual specialists found themselves on this boundary depended primarily on who was making the judgment for or against the practitioner, and where the ritual actor found him or herself on the social register. When there is slippage between the boundary separating legitimate ritual activity from illegitimate ritual activity, scholars are allowed a glimpse into the complicated arguments and jostling positions of one person's ritual cure against another. Determining the charlatans from the legitimate ritual specialists was not a simple self-defining activity. Ritual practitioners had to fight and jockey for position on the social register to avoid being labeled a charlatan, and to avoid coming into conflict with the law. As I have highlighted, the penalties for practicing unsanctioned ritual activities could be severe. Yet despite the risks and penalties, it seems that ritual activity was everywhere in the Roman world and pervaded every part of Graeco-Roman life. In taking this step of exploring the vast breadth and reach of freelance ritual expertise, I

hope to free up some intellectual space into which freelance ritual specialists can be inserted into our imaginings of the ancient world.

Chapter 3: Theorizing Freelance Ritual Specialists

Intellectual Space

In discussing the historiographical problems in the study of Christian beginnings, Luther H. Martin observes that diverse Christian communities in the first and second centuries CE shared little in common with each other in terms of doctrines, textual selection, or belief systems. These early communities shared instead a preference for the authority and transmission of written texts.[409] Brian Stock argues that the first and second century preference for the writing and transmission of texts "produced new relationships and restructured existing ones."[410] Stock argues that a preference for texts changed the way people within certain communities recalled their own experiences and structured future ones. He pointedly notes that

> the writing down of events, the editing so to speak of experience, gives rise to unprecedented parallels between literature and life: for, as texts informed experience, so men and women began to live texts.[411]

Christian texts did not represent an ideal world, or even imagined fabrications of reality, but "are better viewed as themselves a social reality."[412] The technology of writing changed

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[409] Luther H. Martin, "History, Historiography and Christian Origins" in *Studies in Religion* 1 (2000): 80.
[410] Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 4. See also Martin, "History," 80.
[411] Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, 4. See also Martin, "History," 80.

human experience, thought, and perceptions of reality in ways that were not present in previous proto-textual communities.

If Martin and Stock's conclusions hold for early Christian communities, they must also be true for most (if not all) first and second century communities that showed a preference for texts in relation to human experiences with gods. This would include all text-producing freelance ritual specialists. J.Z. Smith has noted the single most common ritual feature of the *PGM* texts is not purification, incubation, or sacrifice, but "the act of writing itself."[413] If texts are a social reality as Martin asserts, then the production of ritual texts, ritual manuals, herbal formulae, and narratives of human-god interaction are identical in purpose to the Letters of Paul, the Gospels, and other canonical and pseudepigraphal Christian texts. These texts are, like early-Christian texts, "systems of dispersion" that promulgate "their own cognitive, social, political and religious goals."[414]

Privileging texts, text-based traditions, and text-based rituals over non-textual ones demonstrates a significant change in the intellectual space of the Roman Empire. In this changing space literate textual specialists were favored over illiterate and non-text-based practitioners. Using the work of Stan Stowers and Harvey Whitehouse, Daniel Ullucci offers a typology of religious experts in the ancient world that helps demonstrate the kind of intellectual-textual changes that were occurring in this period.[415] He categorizes experts into: 1) cognitively

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[412] Martin, "History," 81.
[413] J.Z. Smith, "Trading Places" in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 226.
[414] Martin, "History," 83.
[415] Daniel Ullucci, "Towards a Typology of Religious Experts in the Ancient Mediterranean," *The One Who Sows Bountifully: Essays in Honor of Stanley K. Stowers*. (ed. Caroline Hodge et al.; Rhode Island: Brown Judaic Studies, 2013.), 93-95.

optimal experts (illiterate); 2) imagistic mode experts (possibly literate, but not necessarily so); and 3) doctrinal mode experts (very likely literate, but not necessarily so).[416]

Cognitively optimal (CO) experts are often overlooked by scholars in the ancient world because the evidence for them is scarce. They left behind no textual evidence and little material evidence of their activities. Stowers argues these experts held intuitive relationships with the gods based on ideas of reciprocal exchange, gift-giving, and ancient hospitality practices.[417] The so-called "experts" of the "religion of everyday social exchange"[418] were regular people with no special training in either ritual expertise or theological or dogmatic instruction about the gods. Their expertise derived from local and familial traditions and relationships. Ullucci argues these are the "ninety-nine percent" of experts in the ancient world.[419] These experts would have characteristically included the male heads of household, and the civic cult leaders and priests, who performed the necessary rites and sacrifices for the gods in exchange for protection and prosperity of home and city. These experts were "masters of a large and detailed body of knowledge (ritual procedures and formulae, stories about local gods, butchery skills, etc.)"[420] but this knowledge was not text-based and did not require any formal instruction.

Imagistic mode (IM) experts understood "complex nonintuitive ideas about superhuman agents"[421] and as such, required additional memorization techniques to help the practitioner remember and disseminate complex knowledge. This class developed "highly arousing rituals"

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[416] Ullucci, "Towards a Typology," 99.
[417] Stanley K. Stowers, "Plant and Animal Offerings," 36-40.
[418] Stowers, "Plant and Animal Offerings," 36.
[419] Ullucci, "Towards a Typology of Religious Experts," 94.
[420] Ullucci, "Towards a Typology of Religious Experts," 97.
[421] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 97.

that left participants seeking meaning and purpose behind their experiences.[422] The priests of the mysteries of Eleusis are a prime example of IM experts.[423]

Doctrinal mode (DM) experts also held complex ideas about the gods, but they relied largely on the reading and writing of texts to disseminate their ideas, as opposed to IM rituals. Ullucci argues that doctrinal mode experts claim "universal truths" about the gods and the superiority of their knowledge against the knowledge of cognitively optimal experts. The key feature of the doctrinal mode expert is the use of writing to preserve and disseminate ideas.[424] Ullucci's example of the doctrinal mode in the ancient Mediterranean are the various classical philosophical schools (i.e. Stoics, Epicureans, etc.).[425]

I do not think Ullucci's typography is water tight. Certainly, there was some cross-over between experts. Egyptian lector-priests (examined in depth later) blurred the lines between CO experts and IM experts. They performed their duties for the preservation of king and temple yet possessed text-based rituals for non-temple purposes. In the same way, we may consider Paul of Tarsus and Apollonius of Tyana as DM and IM expert hybrids. Both held complicated non-intuitive ideas about the gods that challenged status quo ideas, and both were said to perform or claimed to perform transformative meaning-making rituals. The opportunities for mixed categories and blurred lines between ritual experts will become important when I discuss ritual innovations by freelance ritual specialists.

None of the freelance ritual specialists I focus on in this period were cognitively optimal experts. Most freelance ritual specialists operated in the imagistic mode where special intense rituals were performed to bring about desired results. These could range from accomplishing

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[422] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 97.
[423] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 98.
[424] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 99.
[425] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 99.

everyday real-life outcomes (i.e., casting a love or binding charm; invisibility spells; rituals to acquire a 'helper' etc.) to creating powerful and enduring experiences to bring closer relationship to the gods (i.e., wisdom prayers, dream divination, foreknowledge, or demands for divine union). These rituals were most likely performed in conjunction with texts, but not always. Experts who used both the imagistic mode and doctrinal mode almost certainly relied on texts. For example, Paul of Tarsus ("the apostle Paul") engaged in textual exegesis and frequently quoted texts to underpin his arguments and authority, yet also made claims of direct revelation from Jesus[426] and encouraged ritual acts like speaking in tongues and issuing oracles.[427] As Ullucci defines the DM category, Paul also had complex ideas about the divine that required texts to aid in their transmission.[428]

Ullucci argues these different experts competed for "cultural capital" by "denigrating the capital of rival experts."[429] CO experts, who stressed the importance of venerating and preserving the local gods of city and home, were challenged by DM experts who stressed the importance of the universality of the divine.[430] CO experts in response to interactions with IM or DM experts may have augmented their practices to incorporate new ideas. Ullucci notes that DM ideas (in any religious context) can become CO ideas overtime if proper textual and mnemonic support becomes lacking.[431] Therefore it is possible that once IM and DM experts left a geographic area, their ideas slowly became part of the local CO ritual and cultural tapestry.

As the successors of Alexander the Great, and subsequently the Roman Empire, expanded their territories, increased interaction between different CO, IM, and DM experts

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[426] 1 Cor 15:8; Gal 1:12; 2:2. See also Wendt, *At the Temple*, 159.
[427] 1 Cor 14:2-7.
[428] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 98.
[429] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 100.
[430] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 100.
[431] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 102.

occurred throughout the ancient Mediterranean. In the wake of imperial expansion new opportunities for cultural interaction occurred. New ideas and social situations challenged status quo relationships with the divine. IM and DM experts more frequently challenged the ideas of CO experts. Ullucci states that "increased translocal movement and communication […] would likely favour the DM expert since it aids the DM expert's key assertion that knowledge of the CO expert is local and inferior."[432]

I think Ullucci's observations here are correct, but it is not clear how DM and CO rivalry affects freelance ritual specialists as I have defined them. The *PGM* contain a variety of rituals that are not "highly arousing," "elaborate, mysterious," "terrifying," and do not "leave participants to seek meaning and purpose in what they experienced" (Ullucci's description of IM rituals).[433] A number of rituals in the *PGM* (admittedly a minority number of them) are concerned with managing the household or curing sickness.[434] In the same way that Zeus of the Possessions protects the family grain (to use Stower's example),[435] certain rituals performed mundane functions to keep bugs out of the house, open locked doors, perform cheap party tricks, and cure headaches. It appears as if CO ritual expertise became textualized. But why? Ullucci's observations on expert competition and Martin's observations about late antique society's desire

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[432] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 103.
[433] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 97-98.
[434] See: *PGM* VII. 149-54 (Betz) which reads: "To keep bugs/ out of the house: Mix goat bile with water and sprinkle it. To keep fleas out of the house: Wet rosebay with salt water, grind it and spread it."; *PGM* VII. 167-86 (Betz) (a series of party tricks and gags) which includes "to be able to drink a lot and not get drunk: Eat a baked pig's lung. […] To be able to copulate a lot: Grind up fifty tiny pinecones with 2 ozs. Of sweet wine and two pepper grains and drink it. To get an erection/ when you want: Grind up a pepper with some honey and coat your 'thing.' "; *PGM* VII 186 (Betz) (to make a simple amulet from a gecko for victory and success); *PGM* VII 199-201 (Betz) (a simple cure for a headache); *PDM* xiv. 1046-47 (Betz) (a proscription to make a phallic ointment that causes a woman to love her husband); *PGM* XXXVI. 312-20 (Betz) (a "charm to open a door"); and *PGM* LXIII. 24-25 (a short instruction to make a contraceptive). These are but a few of the many examples in the *PGM* and *PDM*.
[435] Stowers, "Plant and Animal Offerings," 36-27.

for texts suggests that text-based rituals, despite being functionally identical to non-textual CO rituals, were more authoritative precisely because they were texts; they were a superior form of cultural capital that came from literate ritual experts capable of producing texts. Ullucci's typology is not well suited to deal with these mundane textualized rituals that blur the boundaries between IM and CO expert. Rituals for keeping bugs out of the house, curing headaches, etc., are not dramatic or shocking pageants and do not leave the participant searching for new meaning in life. There needs to be some wiggle room to accommodate experts who specialized in functional and mundane rituals. The textualization of CO rituals is a result of the kind of interaction and competition between religious experts that Ullucci has theorized.[436]

The reasons for increased interaction between different kinds of ritual experts are manifold, but J.Z. Smith suggests three main reasons for the increase in freelance ritual specialists between 300 BCE-400CE: changes to geography as a result of imperial conquests, changes to local polities, and changes to new scientific understandings of the cosmos.[437] For the moment I will focus on Smith's assertion of new cosmographies since this is a change to the intellectual space, rather than the social space. New understandings of the cosmos, the planets, and the location of the gods obfuscated traditional notions of civic and national cult (the national religion of the CO expert, or as Smith puts it: "the religion of *here*").[438] Understanding that the gods moved around the cosmos and were at times invisible to observers complicated sacrificial practices. If the gods could not be seen would sacrifices reach them? And if they moved around, were they always present to watch over and protect local spaces? As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, astrological practices became increasingly popular in the first three centuries

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[436] Ullucci, "Toward a Typology of Religious Experts," 99-101.
[437] J.Z. Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," *Relating Religion: essays in the study of religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 330-334.
[438] Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," 331.

CE. Astrological practices had the distinct advantage over CO practices of being able to question and observe the nature of the gods in their heavenly realms *regardless of the locale*.

The preference for texts as privileged forms of authoritative discourse, as well as new understandings of the cosmos, changed the intellectual space of the Roman empire such that it became favorable for freelance ritual specialists to thrive.

Social Space

Polities changed from the time of Alexander the Great onwards. This meant that local kings who had previously acted as mediators between the divine and the polis were no longer in power to perform the requisite duties.[439] Kingship became "foreign" and "remote."[440] With the help of temple priests, local kings had for centuries performed sacrifices and other CO rituals on behalf of the city or nation's patron deity. Foreign rulers had little knowledge or interest in performing the required sacrifices for a local god and city they had just conquered. The displacement of local kings by foreign rulers who had little understanding of local CO knowledge, required explanation. Imaginative meaning-making activities were practiced by colonized peoples to explain their situation on a cosmic level.[441] This opened the doors for new

[439] Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," 332-333.
[440] Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," 332.
[441] Burton Mack gives a good overview of this activity in describing the Jewish intellectual response to the problem of Roman rulership in Palestine. Mack argues patterns of myth-making take this form: 1) religious communities recognize the "promises of the past" do not match the situation of the present, 2) the stories of the past which lay out the promises are rehearsed to ensure they are still relevant and reliable (they almost always are), and 3) the promises of the past are lifted from their historical context and applied to the current situation to critique and resist it. Out of this critique come new social and cultural movements. Mack suggests the early

innovations in CO religion. Often the local mediator between the divine (the local king) was mythologized. Apocalypticism and millenarianism became new responses to foreign kings ruling over local territories.[442]

Imperial conquests vastly changed the boundaries of empires. Conquests necessitated changes in polities. As post-Alexandrian empires expanded and contracted, inhabitants of newly ruled territories often became displaced and separated from local sites of cult veneration. Ancestor worship (a CO practice) had to be reconfigured if participants no longer had access to the tombs of the ancestors.[443] New ritual practices were created in place of traditional rituals performed at family tombs.[444] Smith elsewhere suggests that, under the conditions of foreign rulership, displacement and separation from sacred places did not have to be physical.[445] The mere presence of a foreign ruler was enough to separate the local populace from their god.

Changes in polity, geography, and cosmography impacted temple worship, construction, and maintenance in conquered territories. In Roman times, temples in conquered territories typically came under the jurisdiction of a Roman administrative office. The Augustinian reforms and the later Septimian reforms restricted temple authority, lands, and revenues in Egypt.[446] Augustus installed a Roman official as the "High Priest of Alexandria and Egypt" and all temple and priestly practices, traditions, and customs were curtailed to fit the expectations of the

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Jesus movements are a result of this myth-making critique. See Burton Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1989), 36.
[442] Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," 332.
[443] Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," 330-331.
[444] Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," 330-331.
[445] Smith argues that when "there is no native king, then even the homeland is in the diaspora." See Smith, "The Temple and the Magician," *Map Is Not Territory* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 186.
[446] David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 198.

"imperial administrative office."[447] The power and authority of local temple priests were curtailed in an attempt to prevent priests from fomenting rebellion.[448] In most cases temples no longer brought in their own revenues and instead relied on the Roman administrative office to supply the resources to function. Maintenance of temple infrastructure and staff became dependent on Roman generosity. Over time this patronage system degraded temple staff and infrastructure to the point of near collapse.[449]

Egyptian Priests as Freelance Ritual Specialists

As temples became increasingly irrelevant and underfunded, some Egyptian priests broadened the geographic range of their activities and plied their skills in new contexts. A particular class of priest, the lector-priest (*hry hb*), was especially well-suited to this cultural entrepreneurship. They had extensive ritual knowledge for a variety of purposes including the celebration of festivals, the marking of agricultural changes, preservation and purification of the cult, dispelling demonic forces, cursing enemies, and beneficial healing rituals.[450] They were also literate textual specialists. It was their job to ritually manipulate and recite the temple text.[451]

The lector-priest's position was unique in that he could, when traveling to towns beyond the local temple's immediate range of influence, transform his repertoire of temple-based rituals into rituals focused on different contexts, namely those of the home and concerns of the

[447] David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 25.
[448] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 198.
[449] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 198.
[450] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 203; 211.
[451] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 203.

individual.[452] In a domestic and individual setting the lector-priest became less concerned with preservation and honoring of the cult, and more concerned with blessing children at childbirth, dispelling curses, performing various beneficial rituals (of love, protection, or healing), and creating various amulets and apotropaic items.[453] Many rituals in the *PGM* and from other sources examined in the preceding chapter are functionally similar and may indeed be examples of rituals performed by lector-priests in Egyptian temples.[454] The lector-priest performs these rituals by invoking and imbuing the power of the cult and temple into rituals and items outside of the temple.[455] Cult and temple were still important to the efficacy of rituals; their ritual power was simply mobilized by lector-priests.

The overarching result of temple degradation in Egypt was to decentralize the power of the lector-priest. When temple structures began to collapse (in both the physical and organizational sense) lector-priests carried on performing ritual services for the villages and towns traditionally under the purview of the cult and its temple.[456] The "clustering" of ritual texts from the second to fourth centuries CE coincide "precisely with the economic decline of temples."[457]

Frankfurter argues lector-priests continued to carry authority, prestige, and social value after temples no longer functioned as hubs for cult veneration. They still acted on behalf of the

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[452] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 203.
[453] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 203.
[454] Betz says in his intro that the *PGM* are in many cases "simply Egyptian religion." See Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, xlv. Frankfurter notes that the *PGM* "reflect above all an Egyptian priestly milieu." See Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 228.
[455] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 212. Bill Arnal has noted that Jesus in Mark's gospel functions in a very similar way. Just as lector priests took the power and traditions of the temple outside temple precincts and applied them to local contexts, Jesus in Mark's gospel takes "the *functions* of [the temple's] operations and brings them to bear on territory that is somewhat distant from the cultic centre itself." See Arnal, "Textual Healing," 29-30.
[456] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 213.
[457] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 228.

cult, but their income and hierarchical prestige were no longer linked to a specific temple or cult complex. Once lector-priests were no longer geographically limited by a temple (which anchored them to the surrounding geographic area), they extended their range and began doing freelance ritual work. They continued to perform their rituals for an increasingly broad group of people who may not have initially been connected to the lector-priest's original temple or cult.[458]

In contrast to local healers or wandering prophets, Frankfurter argues the social prestige of lector-priests was long-lasting and continued to carry influence even when the temples they served no longer functioned. In-depth ritual knowledge is, according to Frankfurter, what gave lector-priests this persistent and enduring social prestige. Their knowledge of oracles and festival execration rites was particularly valued.[459]

Wendt argues that over time the recognition of Egyptian priests' ritual expertise became linked not to former priestly status, but to their ethnic status.[460] In other words Egyptian freelance ritual specialists were not good at their profession because they were literate scribal priests with temple experience, but simply because they were Egyptian. Linking ritual expertise to ethnicity was a common Roman idea. A variety of non-Roman peoples (e.g. Chaldeans, Judeans, Persians) were understood and stereotyped this way.[461] Frankfurter notes that a number of Egyptians adopted Roman stereotypes of the Egyptian magician as a way of gaining influence

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[458] In Frankfurter notes that ritual texts like the *PGM* and oracular texts like the Sortes astrampyschi reflect the application of private divination rituals (usually performed by lector-priests for clientele within the purview of the temple they served) to new and wider clientele. Priests "took their training and books beyond the temples, perhaps to well-paying Roman youths in search of new religious experiences." See Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 231.
[459] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 204.
[460] Heidi Wendt devotes an entire chapter to the topic of ethnically coded experts ("Ethnically Coded Experts and Forms of Religion"). See Wendt, *At the Temple*, 74-113; esp. 80.
[461] Wendt, *At the Temple*, 80.

and popularity amongst Romans.[462] The Egyptian ritual specialist Harnouphis who accompanied Marcus Aurelius on his military expeditions, is described as a *magos* (a term whose complicated etymology I have already explored) [463] by Dio Cassius.[464] Harnouphis may have had experience working as an Egyptian temple priest, but his utility as part of the military entourage was as a Roman *magos*; he was expected to perform rituals to ensure military success.[465] Harnouphis invokes Mercury, a Roman deity, rather than a traditional Egyptian or Greek deity. Does this tell us anything about Harnouphis' background? Dio Cassius's description of Harnoupis conforms to the image of the *magos* explored in the previous chapter; they were thought to have the power to invoke and command various deities to do their bidding. On the other hand, lector-priests often performed rituals of protection or cursing for communities or individuals,[466] so perhaps we may speculate that Harnouphis was an Egyptian with possible Lector-priest experience. He may also have been an Egyptian who drew on Roman stereotypes of Egyptian magicians to perform necessary rituals. Or he may have gained ritual expertise from other non-Egyptian freelance ritual specialists operating in Rome at the time. Dio Cassius only tells us he was a *magos* and that he was Egyptian, so we can only conject about where Harnouphis' expertise came from. But the range of options available to explain his knowledge demonstrates the hodgepodge of cultures and peoples (and resulting cultural stereotyping) that were mixing in the second century CE.

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[462] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 225-226.
[463] See above pp. 4-5.
[464] Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 72.14. See also Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 225-226.
[465] According to Cassius Dio, during the campaign against the Quadi, Harnouphis invoked Mercury (note that Cassius Dio does not mention any Egyptian gods) to bring about a violent storm to crush the enemy. See Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 72.14.4. (Trans. Ernest Cary and Herbert H. Foster, LCL).
[466] Egyptian priests could serve as local protectors in times of crisis. Frankfurter cites the example of the Egyptian priest who "rendered curse materials according to books" when the Christian saint Shenoute came to Plewit. See Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 213.

The ancient travel writer Pausianus provides another example. In discussing the mystery of frightened chariot horses at the race track in Olympia, Pausianus says an Egyptian man told him the reason the horses scare is because a curse tablet prepared by Amphion the Theban magician was buried there.[467] Dickie notes the Egyptian is a fictional creation of Pausianus, but the stereotype being deployed here is that all Egyptians (priests or not) have some knowledge or expertise in curses and other private rituals.

Porphyry provides another example; an Egyptian priest (*Aigyptios gar tis hiereus anelthon*) travels with Plotinus to an Isis temple in Rome to reveal Plotinus' inner daimon.[468] Wendt argues the Egyptian was not a priest of Isis or any other order,[469] but someone who relied on Roman stereotypes of Egyptian ritual power to gain influence in Rome.[470]

As a result of interactions with non-Egyptian groups, Egyptian ritual expertise became Hellenized,[471] thus making it more relevant and palatable to non-Egyptian groups (and especially to the Romans), whilst at the same time it retained its exotic oriental status. The diffusion of Egyptian priests resulted in what Frankfurter calls a "democratization (among the literate) of knowledge and authority once truly the privilege of priests."[472] Egyptian priestly knowledge diffused to other non-Egyptian literate specialists. These literate specialists reinterpreted the

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[467] Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 2.21.18 (W.H.S. Jones, LCL).
[468] Porphyry, *The Life of Plotinus* 9.15-25.
[469] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 83-84.
[470] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 83-84. Dickie contests this view somewhat and argues the text does not give enough details about the priest to conclude whether or not this was an authentic instance of "magic working" (or legitimate Egyptian priestly practice). He notes instead that this example is "*prima facie* evidence that persons calling themselves Egyptian priests did participate in magic-working." Dickie, like Wendt, argues that Egyptian "magicians" did play the role of priest, and adopted the garments of priests to advance their freelance interests, but that also many Egyptian freelance ritual specialists were individuals with Egyptian temple experience. See Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 230-231.
[471] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 224.
[472] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 224.

rituals and knowledge received from Egyptian priests in light of their own ritual practices and gods. They created new forms of rituals that may have incorporated Egyptian deities and rituals but were divorced from traditional Egyptian understandings of the relationship between temple, script, gods, and ritual practices.

Traveling Egyptian priests themselves tweaked and altered their traditional repertoire of rituals to appeal to a "predominantly urban and ecumenical clientele."[473] Appealing to new Hellenized clients who were themselves in search of new sources of foreign wisdom and revelation, meant it was necessary for the traditional priest to adapt their practices to what was popular among clients. Supposing that the *PGM* and the *Papyri Demoticae Magicae* (*PDM*) are related and representative of this shift,[474] we might infer there was a demand for divination rituals to reveal divine knowledge to clientele.

An exhaustive comparison of lector rituals against the rituals found in the *PGM* is beyond the scope of this chapter, but a few helpful observations may be made. Firstly, as Betz remarks, the *PGM* contain practices and beliefs representative of Egyptian (or Hellenized Egyptian) relationships with the gods. I find it reasonable to conclude, for reasons explained above, that parts of the *PGM* are products of Egyptian lector-priests. The geographic distribution of the texts (and other comparable papyri fragments) coupled with the direct similarities between rituals in the *PGM* and those performed by lector-priests (love spells, healing rituals, amulet creation, cursing rituals, charms for success, and household help) suggest priestly provenance.

Conspicuously absent from the *PGM* are agricultural rituals that were utterly important to

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[473] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt,* 232.

[474] There is precedent to understand the *PGM* in this way. Betz argues that some of the *PGM* and *PDM* spells are "simply Egyptian religion" while other spells contain Egyptian content that has been "transformed by Hellenistic religious concepts." See Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (ed. Hans Dieter Betz; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xlv.

life and economic success in the Nile region. Lector-priests operating during the Roman period continued to perform temple rituals and functions dedicated to gods related to agricultural production. A papyrus fragment from Oxyrhynchus instructs a priest to visit the temple of Isis-Demeter (notably unstaffed at this time) to perform sacrifices to the Roman emperor and for "the rise of the Nile and increase of crops, and for favourable conditions of climate."[475] The temple of Kysis bears an inscription (evidently to be recited by priests) that praises Isis' "life-bearing" qualities and her ability to produce the products of agriculture.[476] The Khoiak festival of Osiris required lector-priests to perform the necessary hymns and rituals to ensure the flood of the Nile.[477] During the annual procession at the sanctuary of Pi-Neter, lector-priests praised the god Heka as the source of life behind crop production.[478]

Also absent from the *PGM* are rituals related to the maintenance of kingship, temple construction and consecration, or instruction for the sacrificial slaughtering of animals. Lector-priests performed rituals when temple foundations were laid, and also consecrated them upon their completion. Evidence of these rituals persist into the Roman period.[479] Preservation of kingship rituals were performed by lector-priests well into the Ptolemaic period and perhaps into the Roman period (though one may wonder why).[480] That agricultural and kingship preservation rituals are absent from the *PGM* should not be surprising since the *PGM* rituals are concerned

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[475] *P. Oxy* XXXVI.2782, (trans. David Frankfurter). See also Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 35.
[476] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 36.
[477] Roger Forshaw, *The Role of the Lector in Ancient Egyptian Society* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014) 59.
[478] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 38-39.
[479] Forshaw, *The role of the Lector*, 55.
[480] The Festival of Opet was a major celebration of kingship to ensure divine order was manifest on earth. The king's right to rule was reaffirmed through a series of rituals that took place in the temple. Ritual hymns and a procession were also part of the festival. See Forshaw, *The role of the Lector*, 63.

with the needs of individuals. Agricultural and kingship preservation (or emperorship preservation) rituals would have been carried out in Rome by official priestly colleges and with Roman gods.

The rituals traditionally performed by lector-priests in Egypt for clientele (public or private) would have been directly connected to the local cult or temple. As lector-priests became more itinerant, they changed and adapted their traditional repertoire of ritual, scribal, and theological knowledge to new situations. Itinerant lector-priests performed more specialized rituals that reflected concerns of the individual, rather than concerns of agricultural production and preservation of kingship. This precipitated a shift away from temples to domestic spaces. J.Z. Smith has documented how ritual spaces became mobilized in the *PGM* and elsewhere in late antiquity. The *oikos* replaces the temple.[481] Small portable altars replace large stone sacrificial ones.[482] Plant sacrifices primarily replace animal sacrifice.[483] When animals are killed, they are usually birds (and are thus small).[484]

Frankfurter argues the transformation from temple lector-priest to traveling Egyptian magician relied on the organic muddling of two separate factors: the mobilization of lector-priests, and the assimilation of the *magos* stereotype.[485] The dissemination of traditional Egyptian ritual knowledge to non-Egyptians created Egyptian-like rituals that were deployed in new creative contexts. Itinerant lector-priests themselves changed their ritual repertoire to reflect the needs of new urban clientele. Other non-Egyptian ritual specialists adopted the manner of Egyptian priests and relied on Roman stereotypes about Egyptians and the *magos* which further

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[481] J.Z. Smith, "The Temple and the Magician," in *Map is Not Territory*, 182-183.
[482] J.Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Relating Religion*, 224.
[483] J.Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Relating Religion*, 223-224.
[484] J.Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Relating Religion*, 223-224.
[485] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 224-233.

perpetuated the stereotype of the Egyptian as a magician. Frankfurter argues that while these changes were happening, a

> thorough integration of ritual expert with local culture is completely lost; traditions that originally function in a total social and economic complex now become merely the hoary accoutrements of a foreign *magos*; and a priestly literary culture, the world of the temple scriptorium, becomes the fascinatingly incomprehensible "wisdom" of the oriental guru.[486]

The influence of Egyptian lector-priests on freelance ritual specialists can act as a prototype to explain how changes to intellectual and social space produced the great increase in freelance ritual specialists from the post-Alexander period to the late Roman Empire. I believe other freelance ritual specialists with temple experience from other cultural or ethnic groups in the Mediterranean exist.

The transformation of Egyptian lector-priest to freelance ritual specialist highlights several conditions for increased freelance ritual expertise: degradation of local temples by foreign powers, the displacement of a highly skilled and literate temple elite, and innovation of ritual practices outside of their normal temple-based contexts. What happened in Egypt after it was occupied by the Romans was not necessarily the same experience of other nations and city-states swallowed up by empire, but I do believe it is emblematic of the broader situation where local gods and priests are displaced by empire.

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[486] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 237.

Judean Priests, Pharisees, and Scribes as Freelance Ritual Specialists

The invocation of Judean deities and historical figures (who are, according to Morton Smith, positioned as quasi-deities[487]) in the *PGM* suggest some level of direct or indirect Judean involvement in their writing, but the situation is more nuanced than that of Egyptian lector-priests. Judean deities appear alongside other ancient Mediterranean deities in the *PGM*, though only a fraction of times that Egyptian deities are mentioned. Hellenistic ideas about gods were incorporated into Judean concepts of the divine pantheon. Doing this required a more flexible acceptance of non-Judean deities than those proscribed in Torah law. For example, in a formulaic recipe or chant (like those found in the *PGM*[488]) when the names of non-Jewish deities precede the final usage of a Jewish deity, the author implies the preceding non-Jewish deities are either manifestations of the final Jewish deity, or are subservient to it.[489] Lighthouse suggests there is evidence that some Judean groups were involved in the production of ritual texts like those found in the *PGM* and the Sefer HaRazim.[490]

Evidence for Judean freelance ritual specialists are manifold and can be found in Mark, Acts, the Talmud, Josephus, and Greco-Roman literature. Lucian and Juvenal describe fictional Judean ritual specialists in *Lover of Lies* and the *Satires*.[491] The sons of Sceva are a group of

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[487] Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 114.
[488] E.g. "ACHNOUI ACHAM ABRA ABRA SABOATH." See *PGM* IV.20-24 (Betz).
[489] Jack N. Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred* (Montana: Scholars Press, 1984. Repr., New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 15-16.
[490] Lighthouse, *Commerce*, 15.
[491] Lucian describes a Syrian exorcist (*Lover of Lies* 16) and a man who is tricked by Judean spells (*Gout* 172-173). Juvenal describes a Judean woman posing as a high priestess, an expert of Jerusalem (Torah?) law, and a dream interpreter in the sixth Satire. See Juvenal, *Satires* VI.542-547.

Judean exorcists mentioned in Acts 19:13-17.[492] Being sons of a high priest, they would have been educated in Torah and probably had some involvement at the temple.[493] The Greek word *perierchomenon* indicates their itinerant nature, and their use of the phrase "I adjure you" resembles the same imperative commands found in the *PGM* to initiate control over demons (e.g. "I adjure you;" "I command you;" "I call on you;" "I summon you;" "I implore you;" etc.).[494] The exorcists invoke a power greater than the demon as a means to control it. In this instance they invoke the name of Jesus (used in identical fashion in *PGM* IV.3007-86[495]), yet because they are not authorized users of that power, they are unsuccessful at controlling the demon.[496] In a dramatic and humorous role reversal, the demon overpowers the exorcists and renders them "naked and wounded."[497]

A Judean example of a Judean ritual specialist is contained in the Mishnah. Honi the Circle-drawer famously risked blasphemy for manipulating God to produce rain.[498] Lightstone points out that Honi's activities go beyond mere prayers. It is not until Honi's prayers do not work, that he resorts to ritual activity (enclosing himself in a circle drawn on the ground and then

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[492] Acts 19:14.
[493] Lighthouse notes they would have "enjoyed high status even within the elitist Judaic order." See Lighthouse, *Commerce*, 15.
[494] See *PGM* IV.3080; IV.3098; IV.3220; V.99; XXXII.1.
[495] *PGM* IV.3020 reads "I conjure you by the god of the Hebrews, / Jesus" (Betz).
[496] For a detailed discussion on authorized and unauthorized agents of the Jewish god, see Arnal, "Textual Healing," 31-32. Arnal argues that Acts contains "grossly 'magical' dimensions" because the protagonists are on the one hand "*mobile ritual specialists of contested authorization*" (italics original) but on the other hand must reject and condem any other ritual specialists who practice magic. The other ritual actors the apostles encounter in Acts, regardless of their true intent, must be opposed because "they are in direct competition with [their] own project."
[497] Acts 19:16 (NRSV).
[498] Mishnah Ta'anit 3:8.

ordering God to "have mercy on [his] children," thereby willing God to produce rain) to achieve the desired results.[499]

Josephus speaks positively of an exorcist named Eleazar who, in the presence of Vespasian, drew a demon out a man by passing a special ring under the man's nose. Eleazar then spoke Solomon's name along with a series of incantations to ensure it would not come back.[500] Jesus acts a Judean ritual specialist when he expels a horde of demons from a man and allows them to enter a herd of pigs in Mark's gospel.[501] And in the Dead Sea Scrolls three fragment texts are also thought to be manuals or ritual texts used in exorcisms.[502] While two fragment texts were only for use inside to the community, the *Exorcism ar* is thought by Bohak to have come from outside the community,[503] perhaps by way of another Judean ritual specialist.

In addition to literary documents there are now over forty published amulets containing Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions from Late Antiquity that may have been produced by Judean ritual specialists.[504] As with many amulets and lamellae from antiquity, these amulets contain a written inscription, but in Hebrew or Aramaic rather than Greek or Latin. These amulets, like the *PGM,* had to have been produced by a literate group of people with knowledge of the Judean god, Israel's histories and stories, and a knowledge of angels and demons that appear throughout the *PGM* and other private ritual texts from Antiquity.

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[499] Mishnah Ta'anit 3:8. (trans. W.S. Green). See Jack N. Lightstone, 18-20.
[500] Josephus, *Ant.* 8.46-49.
[501] Mark 5:8-13.
[502] Gideon Bohak argues the *Songs of the Sage* (4Q510-511= 4QSongs of the Sage), *Apocryphal Psalms* (IIQII = IIQApocryphal Psalms), and the *Exorcism ar* (4Q560= 4QExorcism ar.) are all texts related to exorcistic rituals. See Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 107-112.
[503] Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 111.
[504] Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 149.

There is substantial evidence for Judean freelance ritual specialists. Connecting the texts and material evidence of Judean freelance ritual specialists directly to Judean temple scribes and priests is more difficult than drawing a connection between Egyptian freelance specialists and Egyptian temple priests. Yet productive (even if speculative) inferences can be made towards connecting the evidence to the temple in Jerusalem, diaspora synagogues, and other text producing schools.

Honi was sufficiently well known to the Jerusalem elite that Hyrcanus sought to use his divine power to curse Aristobulus during their conflict in the late first century BCE. Honi instead ordered God to ignore prayers from both sides since each brought conflict and suffering to all of God's people.[505] This could suggest some connection to the temple elite in Jerusalem and possibly suggests Honi was educated at the temple.

Juvenal's Judean dream interpreter claims priestly authority and knowledge of Jerusalem's laws. The dream interpreter is fictional, but if he was modeled on real experience, his inclusion in the story might suggest experts in Rome who knew Torah law and deployed it for freelance ritual purposes. Josephus refers to many "false prophets" throughout the *Jewish War* who invoke the authority and power of the temple to sway the public.[506] Many other self-proclaimed prophets active both in Rome, Jerusalem, and other urban centers drew their power and authority from prophets and leaders from the Hebrew bible, and often invoked the text itself as a means of ritual power. The invocation of Israelite prophets and heroes is akin to the use of non-Judean deities and heroes by other freelance ritual specialists. Wendt describes the use of these heroes as "imprimaturs to texts, wisdom, miracles, and other religious talents,"[507] which

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[505] Josephus, *Ant*. 14.22-24.
[506] Josephus, *J.W.* 6.285-86. See also Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 89.
[507] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 90.

suggests that the use of heroes legitimized the products and acts of freelance ritual specialists. Such use of the Hebrew bible and Judean heroes suggests a connection to formal Judean synagogue educations where sacred texts, teachings, and Israelite history would have been taught.

While the Judean freelance ritual specialist example is not identical to that of the itinerant Egyptian lector-priest, I believe connections can be made between some Judean freelance ritual specialists and traditional institutions of Judean education that might have suffered under Roman rule. The same forces that changed and manipulated traditional Egyptian structures of relation to the gods (i.e. colonial rule and Hellenization of the Mediterranean basin) also changed Judean structures of relationship to YHWH. Judean specialists were not isolated from the broad pattern of increased ritual specialization, mobilization, and movement away from formal and traditional structures of maintaining relationships with the gods. Hellenistic ideas absent in earlier Judean writings appear after Roman conquest. Complicated demonologies are incorporated into Judean literature, and the rituals to control or banish them appear too.[508] The adoption of other deities as manifestations of YHWH, as well as the incorporation of wisdom and ritual traditions purported to have come from Solomon and Moses also manifest in ritual formulas and incantations. This process began around 200 BCE when the Seleucid empire took control of Judea and began a program of aggressive Hellenization. The Maccabean takeover in the 140s BCE did little to

[508] Lightstone states that Jewish discussion of angels and demons is more often found in diasporic literature rather than in texts produced in Palestine (See Lightstone, *Commerce of the Sacred*, 27). That angels and demons are more popular in Jewish literature outside of Palestine further reinforces the notion that complicated demonologies were imported Hellenistic ideas. Goodenough has published a ritual incantation of Judean origin which includes a series of invocations to Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Arnael, Uriel, Nephael, Akentael, Asentael, Eraphael, Phanuel, and Aphael. Also present are the more typical "gnostic" angels (also common names in many *PGM* texts): Abrasaxael, Iaoel, Sabael, Adonael, and Sabaoth. See also Lightstone, *Commerce of the Sacred*, 22-27.

resolve the Hellenistic cultural conflict initiated by the Seleucids, and the corrosive results of combining the high priesthood with kingship created a situation that was resolved by Roman intervention in 63 BCE.[509]

Resistance to Hasmonean Rule and then to Roman rule created a situation with effects similar to the degradation of temples in Roman Egypt; educated ritual and textual specialists left the temple. The sect at Qumran created their own traditions that eschewed traditional temple practices in Jerusalem. The specialists at Qumran were excellent at developing their own traditions, teachings, community, myths, purity rules, and of course, rituals.[510] I have already mentioned how they developed their own rituals for exorcism. The rejection and then destruction of the temple in Jerusalem created a situation where educated ritual specialists took their skillsets elsewhere in the same way that Egyptian lector-priests did. Judean exorcism, dream interpretation, divination, temple sacrifices, healing rites, and wisdom requests all become de-linked from traditional temple practices and took the form of freelance ritual expertise.

Like the situation in Egypt, the application of Judean temple practices to new contexts did not spell the destruction of Judean ritual practices (Egyptian temple practices continued well into the fifth century CE). Judean temple practices are changed, modified, and innovated under the tutelage of the Pharisees, and they continue in diaspora synagogues through Late Antiquity and into the Middle Ages. The advent of freelance ritual specialists did not mean the destruction of traditional practices or the stifling of community innovation and invention of new relationships with the gods and texts. The persistence of the synagogue and the creation of the Talmudic tradition testify to this. Paralleling this idea is the persistence of sacred places known for healing and divination from pagan Egypt into Christian Egypt. The persistence of a sacred

[509] Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament*, 22-23.
[510] Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament*, 23.

spaces' function (i.e., a sacred area known for either its healing or divinatory powers), regardless of the God or cult being worshipped there, demonstrates a kind of continuation of Egyptian temple practices into the Christian period.[511]

Conclusion

The broad changes to ancient Mediterranean social and intellectual space, brought about by various imperial conquests, foreign rule, and Hellenization, were the catalyst for the explosion in freelance ritual specialists between roughly 300 BCE-400 CE. The cognitively optimal specialists who dominated domestic, civic, and temple ritual practices throughout the ancient Mediterranean and near east found their status and knowledge to maintain proper relationships with the gods challenged by new imagistic and doctrinal mode specialists. These new cultural entrepreneurs were better equipped with knowledge, texts, charisma, and ritual expertise to understand, explain, interpret, and render meaning in a new world where relationships between gods and people were changing.

The success of these new ritual specialists to explain and create meaning hinged on their commitment to texts. Texts begat more texts, and the tradition of textualizing narratives, stories, and rituals involving the gods structured new relationships between people and their gods. I have hypothesized in this chapter that some freelance specialists (possibly IM experts?) may have tried to textualize mundane household rituals in order to outcompete similar non-textualized CO experts. Perhaps IM experts saw a demand for household rituals (usually performed by CO experts) and created a number of their own to increase the reach of their craft. In any case, there

[511] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 186-187.

are rituals in the *PGM* that do not create arousing experiences or promulgate complicated ideas about the divine. They are simply CO rituals committed to text. This suggests to me, along with the plethora of evidence for inter-specialist competition from ancient sources (e.g., Acts, the Pauline Epistles, Josephus) that demand for text-based ritual expertise was so great that even CO household practices were challenged by freelance ritual expertise. The old system of relationships between the gods and polis, home, or temple state, were disrupted beyond the point of return to traditional ancient practices.[512] The geopolitical, social, and intellectual disruptions and changes required explanation beyond what CO experts could offer. Into this void came new philosophies, mystery cults, and ritual specialists who could impart new ways of relating to the gods and negotiating the problems of a changing uncertain world.[513]

Those with temple experience carried forward their knowledge of texts and ritual expertise and deployed them in new contexts. Distinct ritual innovations occurred as a result of this. Miniaturization of temple sacrifice suggests that temples and altars were still vitally important to ritual acts, but only so far as they occupied the imaginations of the ritual actor. Sacred spaces were decoupled from geographic location and became mobile. As ritual specialists became mobile, ritual practices and ideas were exchanged, modified, re-interpreted (or mis-interpreted), and re-deployed to new contexts over and over until a homogenous kind of ritual expertise emerges in the Roman world that simultaneously relies on and reinforces the stereotype of the magician.

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[512] Mack gives an excellent historical overview of this process. See Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament*, 19-41.
[513] Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament*, 30-32.

Conclusion

"Restoration" and "making space" are two themes from this thesis' title that I hope have been elaborated in this work. "Restoration" is important because ancient polemics and nineteenth century historical (and primarily Protestant) research on practitioners of magic have largely served to delegitimize both their function and their practices in the ancient world. Just as a restorer of fine art, hardwood, or vintage cars first pulls away the unwanted elements of detritus, damage, and additions, I hope I have pulled away (or at least reassessed) the ancient polemics, hyperbole, and invectives used to denigrate their trades. By both reading against the grain and examining a large swath of evidence for the existence of freelance ritual specialists, I have presented what I think is a clearer picture of how freelance ritual specialists worked and lived in the ancient world. Revaluing ancient viewpoints and perspectives that have been, for generations of scholarship, accepted without self-criticism allows for a reassessment of the activities of freelance ritual specialists. It allows scholars to move beyond the categorical and operative frameworks of the critics who bemoaned the presence of dream interpreters, sacrificers, lot specialists, magicians, astrologers, entrails diviners, potion-makers, Isis worshippers, and others who made their living by revealing, manipulating, placating, and coercing a plethora of deities on behalf of clients.

In moving beyond the perspectives of ancient commentators, scholars can begin seeing these individuals without the pejorative judgements or the hero-worship usually attributed to such actors. Understanding freelance ritual specialists separately from the negative (or overly positive) viewpoints of ancient commentators is important because, as I stated in chapter one, these viewpoints represent only a tiny fraction of perspectives towards freelance ritual

specialists, yet their importance has been overemphasized simply because these voices have survived. Questioning and reassessing ancient and modern value statements (both negative and positive) that are often intertwined with the evidence, as well as examining the vast breadth of evidence for the presence of freelance ritual specialists, allows for a "normalization" of these cultural activities in the ancient world. Understanding freelance ritual practices as utterly ubiquitous creates the conditions for recognizing broad patterns in the evidence. Scholars like Heidi Wendt, J.Z. Smith, Stan Stowers, Burton Mack, Bill Arnal, Daniel Ullucci, and David Frankfurter have been immensely helpful in revealing this insight.

By normalizing the practices of freelance ritual specialists, I have worked towards my second theme of making space for these cultural actors in our imaginings of the ancient world. Freelance ritual specialists had an enduring and persistent presence in the ancient world. Evidence for ritual specialists in: the collections of ritual instructions known as the Greek magical papyri, narrative art, ancient historical and natural history texts, medical treatises, gospel stories and other hero-worship biographies, show that ritual specialists were woven into the fabric of ancient urban life.

In pulling away the layers of vitriol and seeing freelance ritual specialists afresh and as belonging to the every-day activities of the ancient world, the final act of the restorative project is to glean new insights after seeing the evidence afresh. In my final chapter I worked towards this by using Daniel Ullucci's typology of ritual experts to examine and theorize inter-specialist competition, and David Frankfurter's work to theorize how and why freelance ritual specialists grew in number during the late Roman Republic and Empire periods. This secondary level of restorative work builds on the reexamined evidence and offers new productive insights and speculation about freelance ritual specialists. Using Frankfurter's model for understanding the

beginnings of Egyptian freelance ritual specialists as a result of Egyptian temple degradation and an increasingly mobile priesthood, I have suggested that other surrounding regional empires with their own local temples and priests contributed to the increase of freelance ritual specialists in the Roman empire as Roman power expanded and crippled local temple organizations and structures. Testing this theory is an area for future research, but I am confident such research would support the idea that other ethnically coded freelance ritual specialists in the empire (e.g., Chaldean, Judean, Gaulish, or Thracian specialists) could be tied to the degradation of local ethnic traditions of interacting with the gods.

I hope this thesis does not come across as an apologetic for freelance ritual specialists. I suspect the polemics written by Roman magistrates and elites against this broad professional group were perhaps warranted. Freelance ritual specialists did periodically undermine state authority, introduce culturally unacceptable practices, and generally stir-up other forms of trouble for Roman rulers. However, I want to understand freelance ritual specialists as a part of the whole of Roman society. While they were disliked by elites, their services must have been useful to others. The survival of hundreds of private rituals in the *PGM* are a testament to this. Freelance ritual specialists provided services that were thought to be important to paying clients. The nameless clients that sought out ritual specialists to perform divination, healing, binding, enchantment, invisibility, divine assistance, memory, protection, apotropaic, success charms, domestic maintenance, and hospitality rituals, did so out of the belief that ritual specialists could help them accomplish something that they, the clients, could not do alone. Using freelance ritual specialists in this way must have satisfied a variety of needs for clients. Assessing how exactly freelance ritual specialists met the needs of their clients is an opportunity for future research.

While Roman elites found the presence of ritual specialists in Rome and other urban centers problematic and potentially ruinous to Roman social order, ritual specialists fulfilled a growing demand for private ritual services. The growing demand for ritual services was in part created by Roman expansion into previously foreign territories. The destabilization of foreign cults, kings, and temple practices created the perfect environment for freelance ritual specialists to thrive. Studying freelance ritual specialty can therefore be framed as an examination of the social impacts of the Roman empire. Therefore, freelance ritual specialists should be taken seriously by scholars. The services they performed fulfilled an important social function in a world where the traditional ways of cultivating relationships with the gods were constantly being challenged and reassessed. Reassessing and revaluing the evidence for freelance ritual specialists will provide scholars with a picture of the ancient world that is less reliant on the dominant cultural vision depicted by Roman elites, and better illustrates a popular (if not dominant) cultural form of establishing relationships with divine entities in the ancient world.

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