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Male Magicians and Female Victims: Understanding a Pattern of Magic Representation in Early Christian Literature

Résumé:

Les écrits du monde antique tendent à stéréotyper la magie comme une entreprise féminine (par exemple Médée d'Euripide, Erichtho de Lucain, Canidie d'Horace, Simaitha de Théocrite, et plusieurs femmes, jamais nommées, qui pratiquent la sorcellerie dans le Talmud Babylonien). Les écrits chrétiens, par contre, s'écartent de ce modèle sexué; les rôles de «magiciens» hérétiques sont presque toujours occupés par des hommes, alors que les femmes sont caractérisées en tant que victimes crédules et hystériques de la manipulation des magiciens. Que suggère ce motif à propos de la fonction des femmes (ou de certaines femmes) dans le discours chrétien sur l'hérésie? Les femmes ne semblent pas avoir été ciblées comme «autres» que les Pères de l'Église cherchaient à marginaliser. Plutôt, les hérésiologues s'en prennent à des hommes lorsqu'ils formulent une attaque contre les menaces à leur autorité. Les femmes sont alors utilisées pour rendre «autre» les concurrents religieux en les identifiant aux superstitions insensées, à l'immoralité sexuelle et l'indécence générale. De plus, les représentations spécifiques des réponses féminines aux attaques magiques reflètent le point de vue idéologique de leur auteur envers l'autorité de l'Église, l'ascétisme et l'autonomie des femmes.

It is well known that ancient literature commonly and stereotypically depicted women as practitioners of magic arts. The association of women with magic was so strong in fact that a first century rabbi, Hillel, could blithely state that the more wives one has the more witchcraft one has as well (*Mishnah Avot* 2:8).¹ The trope of predatory women, using magic to seduce men or seek revenge haunts the pages of Greek and Roman literature from at least as early as the fifth century before the Common Era (BCE), where women's use of either poison or magic (the word is the same: φαρμακεία) figures in Attic tragedy and forensic speeches. Magic was, in many ways, 'feminized' by this period - it was associated with gender inversion, effeminate lack of self-control, and barbarism. By the first century BCE, depictions of women's sorcery was a familiar trope in both Greek and Latin literature. Theocritus' second *Idyll*, for example, imagines the intimate gestures and actions of a spurned young woman, conjuring Hecate to win back her errant lover. This poem influenced Virgil's eighth *Epode* and subsequent portraits of women's magic in Roman literature. By the first century CE woman's magic powers darkened: Canidia of Horace's literary legacy, for example, prowls cemeteries, looking for human remains to employ in her magic spells.² She

practices necromancy as well as infanticide - killing a young boy to get the power of his liver after she has starved him to death with a plate of food before his face (*Epode 5*). It seems that his liver distilled the power of his suffering desire. Similarly, Lucan's portrait of Erichtho in his *Pharsalia* draws on grotesque imagery almost to the point of being pornographic: she scoops out the eyeballs of corpses and scrapes the flesh of criminals off their crosses (538-546).³

In the second century, Apuleius employs this trope of predatory women using magic to satisfy their lust as the central element of the plot in his novel, the *Metamorphoses*. Women's magic, combined with ill-fated curiosity, lead to the protagonist's transformation into an ass. Plutarch attributes the use of magic (φαρμακεία and γοητία) to Cleopatra (ὡς ὑπὸ φαρμάκων τιῶν ἢ γοητείας), explaining her ability to seduce and manipulate Antony (*Antony 37.4*). Jewish literature from around this period similarly identifies women with sorcery. Second-Temple writings, for example, attribute knowledge of 'magic' to the fallen angels of Genesis 6:2, who taught this dangerous art to human women.⁴ An anonymous Tanna in the Babylonian Talmud states that "most women engage in magic" (בכשפיים מצויות) as a way to explain the gendered prohibition of magic (כישוף) found in Exodus 22:17.⁵ Other Tannaim similarly demonstrate a willingness to attribute magic arts to women: Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai and Rabbi Yosi both declare a majority of women to be involved in the practice of magic (*Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 64b, Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 53a, Jerusalem Talmud Kidushin 48a*).

Early Christian Representations of Magic

All of these examples serve by way of introduction. They demonstrate the widespread, well-known, and popular trope of women's magic arts. Interestingly, however, archaeological evidence indicates that *men* account for the vast majority of extant 'spells' recovered from the ancient world (approximately 86% of erotic spells), suggesting that this portrait is not simply mimetic - that is, it is not directly portraying things as they are - but rather is functioning as a trope or a foil to convey some other, ideological, concern.⁷ Much can be said on this fact, which I will not address now. Rather, I want to establish the ideological nature of these representations as a pretext for exploring the interesting phenomenon of early Christian representations of magic, which oddly do *not* attribute magic to women but rather to men. Women do figure in magic accusations but they are *victims* of male predations rather than magical aggressors themselves. Let me turn to some examples:

The earliest Christian depictions of magic or 'magicians' appear in Luke-Acts. Simon, for example, is said to have amazed the Samaritans with acts of magic (τᾶς μαγείας). Later, he levels the accusation of "magic" against male representatives of sanctioned ritual such as Elymas (who is an adviser to the proconsul, 13:7) and the sons of Sceva (who is a Hebrew

priest, 19:14).⁸ Women do *not* figure as magicians in Luke's history, rather he draws on the centuries old association of μάγοι with charlatanism and barbaric ritual practices to delegitimize male rivals. Justin Martyr, writing around 150 CE, substantially expands and elaborates the account of Simon from Acts. He is the first to mention Simon's consort, Helena, to whom he attributes theological significance as Simon's ἔννοιον πρώτην or 'First Thought.'⁹ Interestingly, Justin disparages Simon as a μάγος¹⁰ but never draws on the trope of women's dangerous magic to attack his partner, Helena.

Later, Irenaeus articulates more fully Helena's central place within Simon's mythic system as well as Simon's infamous position as the father of all heresies (*Adversus haereses* 23.2). It is difficult to know what kernel of historical truth his report may contain - if such a person as Helena really existed and what, if any, theological significance she held in Simon's teachings. In the passages following this one, Irenaeus describes Helena's 'fall' and enslavement in human form along lines that resemble the well-known 'Sophia myth' from sources such as the *Apocryphon of John*. Helena is subject to Simon as his ἔννοιον πρώτην and he is said to be her source and savior. While accorded a prominent place in Simon's soteriological cosmology, Helena remains utterly passive in relation to him: Irenaeus describes Helena as Simon's subordinate and side-kick - she rides with him to demonstrate his soteriological power. Simon alone receives the designation *Magus*.

A later portrait of Simon Magus in Hippolytus' *Refutatio omnium haeresium* more clearly demonstrates the pattern of representing men as magicians and women as victims; according to this depiction, the relationship between Simon and Helena appears to be objectifying if not a little victimizing:

And after having thus redeemed her, he was in the habit of conducting her about with himself, alleging that this (girl) was the lost sheep, and affirming himself to be the Power above all things. But the filthy fellow, becoming enamored of this woman called Helen, purchased her (as his slave).¹¹ (6.14)

In this account, Simon purchases Helena to be his sexual servant as well as to demonstrate his soteriological capabilities.

Shifting from Simon to his supposed protegee, Marcus, patristic attacks more clearly demonstrate the pattern of magic accusation in which a man is accused of practicing magic and women are portrayed as his victims. In *Adversus haereses*, for example, Irenaeus lodges an accusation of 'magic' against Marcus to explain away his apparently considerable charisma:

But there is another among these heretics, Marcus by name, who boasts himself as having improved upon his master [i.e. Simon]. He is a perfect adept in magical imposture (μαγικῆς ὑπαρχων), and by this means drawing away a great number of men, and not a few women, he has induced them to join themselves to him, as to one who is possessed of the greatest knowledge and perfection, and who has received the

highest power from the invisible and ineffable regions above. Thus it appears as if he really were the precursor of Antichrist. For, joining the buffooneries of Anaxilaus to the roguery of the *magi*, as they are called, he is regarded by his senseless and cracked-brain followers as working miracles by these means.¹² (13.1)

To further delegitimize Marcus, he compounds his accusation of magic with allegations of sexual deviance and of appealing to ‘foolish’ women:

Moreover, that this Marcus compounds philtres and love-potions, in order to insult the persons of some of these women, if not of all, those of them who have returned to the Church of God - a thing which frequently occurs - have acknowledged, confessing, too, that they have been defiled by him, and they were filled with a burning passion towards him.¹³ (13.5)

Irenaeus portrays Marcus here as a sexual predator, seducing women away from the ‘true’ church.¹⁴

The writings of Christians belonging to groups eventually deemed ‘heretical’ by the imperial church also demonstrate this pattern of magic representation, according to which men use magic to seduce women. The second-century apocryphon, *Acts of Andrew*, for example, narrates a story of magical attack in which the magician is a sexually predatory male and the victim is female. The story begins with four soldiers surrounding the apostle Andrew and his followers. One of the soldiers, possessed by a demon, suddenly shouts out and falls down, foaming at the mouth. Andrew, empowered by the Holy Spirit, divines the poor man’s situation as follows:

This young man, who is (so) tormented in his body, has a sister, a virgin (παρθένος), who is a great ascetic (πολιτεύτης) and champion (ἀθλητής). Truly I say, she is near to God because of her purity and her prayers and her alms.¹⁵

According to this narrative, a young magician sees the consecrated virgin praying on her roof and like David, desiring Bathsheba, seeks to have her. Using magic, he summons a demon, Semmath, who enters into him and using his demonic power conjures greater powers to control the virgin. Based on the familiar pattern of ancient ἄγωγή spells, it would seem that the magician sought to have these demons bring her to him.¹⁶ However, the virgin possessed a power stronger than the magician - she was a “great ascetic (πολιτεύτης) and champion (ἀθλητής)” who had drawn “near to God because of her purity and her prayers and her alms.” The virgin is thus able to overcome the magician’s demonic retinue with the power of her spiritual charisma.

A similar story appears much later, in Jerome’s *Vita S. Hilarionis eremitae* where Jerome narrates the story of a young virgin who is attacked by magic. Eventually she is cured through the intervention of the aged saint Hilarion, who is able to release the girl from a demon that has possessed her. According to Jerome’s account, a young man desired to seduce a consecrated virgin of the church, and at first attempted to do so through the standard means

of seduction: namely, “touches, jests, nods, and whispers” (*tactu, / jocis, nutibus, sibilis et ceteris*, 21).¹⁷ When that failed he went to Egypt to learn the art of magic. Upon returning, he cast a binding spell on the virgin through a method widely attested archaeologically - the *defixio* - which he buried under the threshold of her house.¹⁸

Thereupon the maid began to show signs of insanity, to throw away the covering of her head, tear her hair, gnash her teeth, and loudly call the youth by name. Her intense affection had become a frenzy. Her parents therefore brought her to the monastery and delivered her to the aged saint. No sooner was this done than the devil began to howl and confess. (21)¹⁹

In Jerome’s account, the virgin falls victim to the magic, reacting exactly as ancient ἀγωγὴ spells sought their victims to react - that is, the girl goes mad with desire for the magician and exhibits signs of possession.²⁰ This narrative contrasts sharply with the one from *Acts of Andrew*, despite the nearly identical plot of seducing virgins through magic. While the *Acts of Andrew* portrays the virgin as powerful and self-reliant - she is able to fend off the demons through her great spiritual power - the virgin in Jerome’s *Vita S. Hilarionis eremitae* depends on the Saint to release her. Furthermore, she is victimized not only by the magician but by the saint as well; he accuses her of being responsible for her own attack. According to Jerome, Hilarion “sharply rebuked the virgin when she had recovered her health for having *by her conduct (cur fecisset talia)* given an opportunity for the demon to enter” (21).²¹ Thus she is doubly victimized in this story.

Magic as Trope

What sense can be made of this apparently dramatic departure from the common trope of women as magical predators, disrupting gender roles and social order in their quest for revenge or to satisfy their lust? Does this indicate that Christian depictions of men seducing women with magic more closely align with historical reality, since the majority of extant evidence points towards male involvement with the magic arts? Rather, I contend, magic functions as a trope in these passages to denigrate male rivals or contenders for divine authority. Furthermore, these texts indicate that the *way* in which magic is represented - both *who* is depicted and *how* - reflects ideological concerns.

The virgin in Jerome’s *Vita S. Hilarionis*, for example, lacks spiritual power and the ability to defend herself, reflecting an ideology in which women, even ascetical virgins, were not regarded as possessing sufficient spiritual merit to be independent. Written in a period that saw the drive to institutionalize ascetic movements and bring them under the church’s authority and supervision, Jerome’s narrative uses the story of the girl’s demonic possession (read penetration) to reinscribe a stereotype of foolish, weak, and seductible women.²² This

virgin functions like the ‘women’ seduced by Marcus; she demonstrates that ‘women’ are liable to hysteria and uncontrollable lust, despite spiritual piety and even ἄσκησις. In fact, this narrative could be read as an antidote to the message conveyed in *Acts of Andrew* where a girl is shown to possess great spiritual merit through control of her own sexuality. In Jerome’s narrative, power resides strictly with authorized men associated with orthodox institutions, such as, the monastery. Unlike the *Acts of Andrew*, Jerome does not depict the virgin as a powerful ascetic, practicing her devotion independent of church authorities. Her lack of power and her susceptibility to seduction provide a foil for demonstrating the power of male monks and institutions of orthodox authority. This ‘virgin’s’ failure reinscribes female sexual weakness and men’s authority to control them.

The *Acts of Andrew*, however, is no less ideological in its representation of men’s magical attacks on virgin women. In this text, magic functions to demonstrate the merit and power of virginity. The virgin functions as a trope to show that even a powerless young girl can overcome demonic magic through ἄσκησις. This narrative of magical attack, therefore, reinforces the larger ideological message of this apocryphon, which strongly advocates asceticism and celibacy.²³ According to Jean-Marc Prieur, the translator, *Acts of Andrew* preaches a dualistic and gnostic-influenced conception of salvation that involves the ascent of the soul toward the pure from the impure world of flesh and body.²⁴ Continence and ascetic rejection of material pleasure and possessions play a central role as features of this spiritual attitude. The ‘magician,’ therefore, could be taken as a symbol for the snares of this world, especially sexual lust,²⁵ while the ‘virgin’ signifies the pure soul, whose freedom and power triumph through rigorous ascetic practice.²⁶ Her victory over the demons dramatizes, in narrative form, the victory of the soul through ἄσκησις and γυμνάσις. Like the female victims of magic in heresiological writings, this woman also functions as a trope. She is shown to triumph due to her ascetical merit whereas the other ‘women’ failed in so far as they allowed themselves to be seduced.

It seems that Christian writings, both canonical and non, deployed magic and women in rhetorical discourse in ways that diverged from the Graeco-Roman norm. In Christian hands, the trope was inverted: men became the seducers and women the victims. Male magicians were not unknown in Greek and Roman contexts: Lucian of Samosata, for example, parodies a tutor who hires a Chaldean to draw a young woman to his ward’s bed (*Philopseudes* 14). Apuleius of Madura was accused of using magic to seduce his wealthy wife. And much earlier, in the late fifth century BCE, the Hippocratic author of *On the Sacred Disease*, disparaged other healers, whom he labels *magoi*, of practicing false medicine.²⁷ Despite these examples, the consistent representation of men as magical predators seems to have flourished part and parcel of Christian competitive discourse. The question that remains is why? Or more specifically, why *not* women? This question seems all the more pressing given the

claim of certain Christian writers that women had a predilection to heresy.²⁸ If so, why not level the charge of sorcery against these female heretics? Why only against the men?

Why *Not* Women?

While I make no pretense to having an answer for this question, I will propose two possible ways to understand this shift. First, let me point out that the change in discourse persists well into the fourth century, as demonstrated by Jerome's narrative of magical attack on a virgin. Interestingly, the non-Christian historian Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the fourth century, describes numerous trials for treason involving magic, but none of these involve women either (*Res Gestae* 19.12, 28.1, 29.1-2). This trend contrasts sharply with the historical account of Tacitus, who, three centuries earlier, documents multiple charges of sorcery leveled against women (*Annals* 3.7, 3.17, 3.22-23, 4.10, 4.22, 4.52, 12.22, 16.8). In all the cases he describes, the charges appear to be politically motivated as they are also in the later history of Ammianus. What has changed? Have women really stopped doing magic or has the use of women and magic as a rhetorical trope changed?

I propose that while Christianity did not ultimately produce the utopian equality hearkened by the famous baptismal formula of Galatians 3:28, the prominent position and influence in the early church of at least some women (probably many women in various capacities as teachers, preachers, householders, philanthropists, virgins, widows, and prophets) did influence the discourse of early Christianity.²⁹ While authors such as Tertullian certainly rail against women as the daughters of Eve and source of sin (*On the Apparel of Women*), many individual women commanded tremendous respect.³⁰ In the presence of these women, it seems, the rhetoric of alterity shifted. 'Women' as a category no longer represented the paradigmatic 'Other.' Rather, a threatening, oversexed, and predatory male serves as the model of the dangerous Other. This is not to suggest an overly simplified relationship of cause and effect between two things as complex as social discourses and women's position in early Christianity. Rather, it does suggest that representations reflect and respond to the exigencies of a particular situation, strategically drawing on particular aspects of the stereotyping constellations available at any given time. Thus, the trope of the charlatan magician finds a place in Christian discourse more than that of the dangerous witch, suggesting a different set of social concerns than those facing earlier authors or non-Christian contemporaries.

Another possible reading of these depictions ignores the issue of women's 'status' in early Christian communities and sees them, instead, as 'objects' for *male* self-identification. Drawing on the work of Virginia Burrus and Daniel Boyarin, I suggest that Christian depictions of *female* 'victims' and *male* 'magicians' reflect an ego identification on the part of these male writers with vulnerable but chaste female bodies over and against the invasive

violence of Roman masculinity.³¹ In these narratives, the magician/heretic threatens the carnal integrity of chaste Christian women. Depending on the ideological location of the writer, the virgin either succeeds or fails to defend herself through ἄσκησις. The portrayal, therefore, of male aggressors and female victims reveals little or nothing about the roles of ‘real’ women in early Christianity.³² Rather, the victimized women serve as a trope for early Christian writers to locate themselves and the church in opposition to Rome’s power and violence, imagined in terms of the sexualized masculinity and aggressivity of the ‘magician.’ Competing forms of Christianity – so-called ‘heresies’ – are likewise demonized through identification with the violent danger of the male Other.

The marginal position of early Christianity, under threat of persecution (either real or imagined), contributed to this self-perception of early Christians as Other in a hostile and alien world. Women, for this reason, especially Christian ‘sisters,’ would *not* have presented themselves as the obvious Other against whom Christians fashioned their self-identity. Rather, female members of various early Christian communities would have been perceived as Self *vis à vis* the violent and threatening outside world and as such constituted a *topos* for men’s self imaginings. According to this line of thinking, early Christianity’s marginal status is what determined its discourse on ‘magic’ and its choice of stereotypes in the contest for authority that defined its early history.

This explanation, however, does not account for the persistence of this representational pattern in the period following Constantine’s conversion when the church became aligned with imperial power. On the other hand, discourses can demonstrate an internal logic and self-sustaining power that defy real world experience – or better, shape the experience one has of the world. Augustine, for example, could still imagine Christians as sojourners in a foreign and hostile world in the early fifth century (*De civitate Dei* 1.29). Thus, it appears that for a variety of possible reasons, the social context of early Christianity contributed to reshaping the deployment of magic discourse in early Christian rhetoric, shifting the emphasis from predatory women and gender subversion to male magicians and the seduction of Christian virgins and matrons. This shift reflects a change, not in the actual practice of magic, but rather in how women’s bodies functioned as a rhetorical trope in male competition over legitimacy and authority.

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¹ For further discussion of women and magic in Jewish literature, see Tal Ilan, "Cooks/Poisoners; Healers/Killers; Religion/Witchcraft: Jewish Women's Religious Life at Home", *Haushalt, Hauskult, Hauskirche. Zur Arbeitsteilung der Geschlechter in Wirtschaft*

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2. Horace, *Satire* 8, *Epode* 5 and 17.

3. Lucan, *Pharsalia* (Loeb Classical Library; ed. and trans. J. D. Duff; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928) 343.

4. 1 *Enoch* 6.1; 19.1; *Testament of Reuben* 5.1, 5-6; *Jubilees* 4.22, 5.1; 2 *Apocalypse of Baruch* 56.10; *Tobit* 6.14, 8.3; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.73.

5. *Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin* 67a.

6. “A magician (feminine) shall not [be allowed] to live” (מכשפה לא תחיה), Exodus 22:17).

7. The percentage is calculated from numbers provided by Christopher Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 43, note 9. Other scholars have remarked on the disproportionate number of women represented doing magic; see, for example, John J. Winkler, “The Constraints of Desire: Erotic Magical Spells,” *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York/London: Routledge, 1990), 71–98; and John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 244–5.

8. Contra Andy Reimer, *Miracle and Magic: A Study in the Acts of the Apostles and the Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series; London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 76–7, who argues that “legitimate” intermediaries in Hellenistic literature cultivate fringe status by abandoning money, family, and careers, traveling as itinerant preachers and disregarding personal safety and security. It is “official” ritual practitioners who are regarded as suspect because of their institutional status. See also my “Review of *Miracle and Magic: A Study in the Acts of the Apostles and the Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Andy Reimer,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122/1 (2003), 767–71 for more discussion of this interpretation.

9. It is difficult to determine how much Justin embellishes his description and how much what he presents is historically reliable. Most scholars accept Justin’s account as historically reliable, noting that in Justin as well as in Luke Simon is not yet identified with Gnosticism but is regarded as a widely popular and influential religious figure. See, for example, R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 74; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (J. Limburg and A. T. Kraabel, Juel; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987 [1963]) 63; and Edwin

M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 58–60.

10. [He] did mighty acts of magic (μαγικὰς), by virtue of the art of the devils operating in him (*Apologia i* 26).

11. Translation from Hippolytus, “Refutations,” *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume V: Fathers of the Third Century* (eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; 1950), 80, with some changes.

12. Translation from Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume I: The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; 1989), 334, with minor changes.

13. Translation from Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” 335.

14. See Virginia Burrus (“The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome,” *Harvard Theological Review* 84/3 [1991], 232), who describes the sexually permissive “heretical woman” as the polar opposite of the “orthodox female virgin.” The one leaves “all the gateways of her body unguarded” while the other remains obediently silent, closing her mouth as well as her genitals.

15. Translation from the Coptic [Papyrus Copt. Utrecht 1] in Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha 2: Writings Related to the Apostles: Apocalypses and Related Subjects* (eds. W. Schneemelcher and R. M. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 124–5.

16. See Faraone, *Ancient*, 41–95, and the comic example of the inflated wine skins in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* 3:18.

17. S. Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis* (studies in the text tradition of St. Jerome’s *vitae patrum*; ed. W. A. Oldfather; Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1943), 48–9.

18. The *defixio* is a common form of ancient binding spell that usually involves inscribing the name of the victim on a lead tablet, piercing it with a nail, and burying it in some liminal place such as a well or grave of someone who died a violent death. See, for examples, Gager, *Curse Tablets*, 78–115; and for discussion, Daniel Ogden, “Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds,” *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome* (eds. B. Ankarloo and S. Clark; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 3–90; Christopher Faraone, “The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells,” *Magika Hiera* (eds. C. Faraone and D. Obbink; New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3–32; and Hendrik S. Versnel, “Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer,” *Faith, Hope, and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (ed. H. S. Versnel; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 1–32.

19. Translation from Jerome, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 6: The Principal Works of St. Jerome* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994 [1893]), 307–8.

20. See Faraone, *Ancient*, 43–55; Winkler, “Constraints,” 73. See also Christopher Faraone, “Aphrodites’ KESTOS and Apples for Atalanta: Aphrodisiacs in Early Greek Myth and Ritual,” *Phoenix* 44 [1990], 224–43; and idem, “Clay Hardens and Wax Melts: Magical Role-

Reversal in Vergil's Eighth Eclogue," *Classical Philology* 84 [1989], 294–300, which examine issues of power and violence in ancient ἀγωγή spells.

21. [E]t magis reddita sanitate increpuit / virgenem, cur fecisset talia, per / quae daemon intrare potuisset (Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis*, 49). Translation from Jerome, *Principal Works*. My italics.

22. Gail P. Corrington, "The 'Divine Woman?' Propaganda and the Power of Celibacy in the New Testament Apocrypha: A Reconsideration," *Women in Early Christianity 14* (Studies in Early Christianity; ed. D. Scholer; New York, London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993 [1988]), 172–3, traces the long-standing association in Greek and Roman thought between women's sexual penetration and prophetic ability. Corrington notes Chrysostom's reference to Lucan who attributes the Pythia's prophecy to her "being raped by the god."

23. See Introduction to the *Acts of Andrew* by Jean-Marc Prieur in Hennecke, *Writings*, 111–2.

24. Hennecke, *Writings*, 111–2.

25. The magician could also represent 'Rome.' Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 79, for example, considers the ideological function of 'virgins' in early Jewish and Christian martyrologies; he posits that both Rabbis and Church Fathers "identified" with female virgins as a mode of "disidentification with a 'Rome' whose power was stereotyped as a highly sexualized male." This insight into the symbolic role of 'virgins' in early Christian discourse suggests a way to read the above narratives of magical attack according to which the 'virgin' represents the pure 'church' and the 'magician' symbolizes violent, invasive, and phallic 'Rome.'

26. Burrus, "Heretical Woman," 239 identifies the pure 'virgin' with the true church: "To violate the virgins constituted a rape of the true church and a defilement of its purity."

27. *On the Sacred Disease*, Littré VI.354 = 2 Jones.

28. See for, example, Jerome *Epistulae* 22; Athanasius *Orationes tres adversus Arianos* 1.8.

29. On the various roles of women in the early church, see Anne Jensen, *God's Self-Confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women* (Translation of German edition [1992]; O. Dean Jr.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 14–25; Anne Jensen, *Frauen im frühen Christentum* (Traditio Christiana; Bern: Peter Lang, 2002); Roger Gryson, *Le Ministère des Femmes dans l'Eglise ancienne* (Reserches et Synthèses; Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1972); Jean LaPorte, *The Role of Women in Early Christianity* (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982). On the dangers of lumping 'women' together into a unified category despite differences in class, social and geographical location, ethnic identity, etcetera, see Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Gender, Theory, and *the Rise of Christianity*: A Response to Rodney Stark," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6/2 (1998), 227–57.

30. Paul, for example, speaks in praise of Phoebe, a deacon (διάκονον) of the church at Cenchreae (Romans 16:1), Prisca, whom he describes as a fellow-worker in Christ (συνεργούς μου, Romans 16:3), and Chloe, who seems to lead a community of believers (1 Corinthians 1:11), among other women who seem to have assumed prominent positions as leaders and teachers in the early church. See also Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Paul on Women and Gender,” *Women and Christian Origins* (R. S. Kraemer and D’Angelo Mary Rose; New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 221–35.

31. Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 67–92; Virginia Burrus, “Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3/1 (Spring 1995), 25–46.

32. On the commodification of women’s sexuality and personal implications of women’s sexual renunciation, see Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Virginity and Its Meaning for Women’s Sexuality in Early Christianity,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2/1 (Spring 1986), 61–88.

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